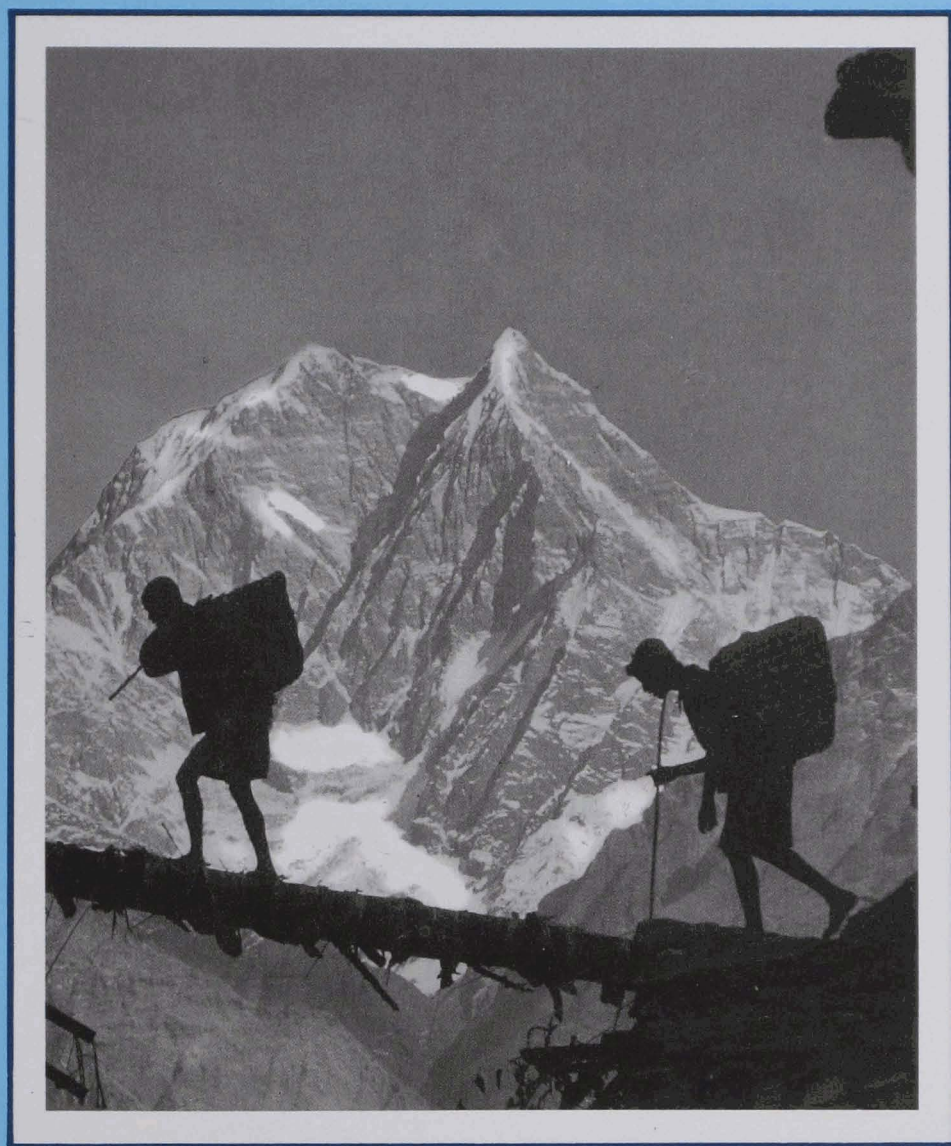


BUILDING BRIDGES TO THE THIRD WORLD



TONI HAGEN

Building Bridges to the Third World

Memories of Nepal
1950 - 1992

Toni Hagen

translated from the German by
Philip Pierce

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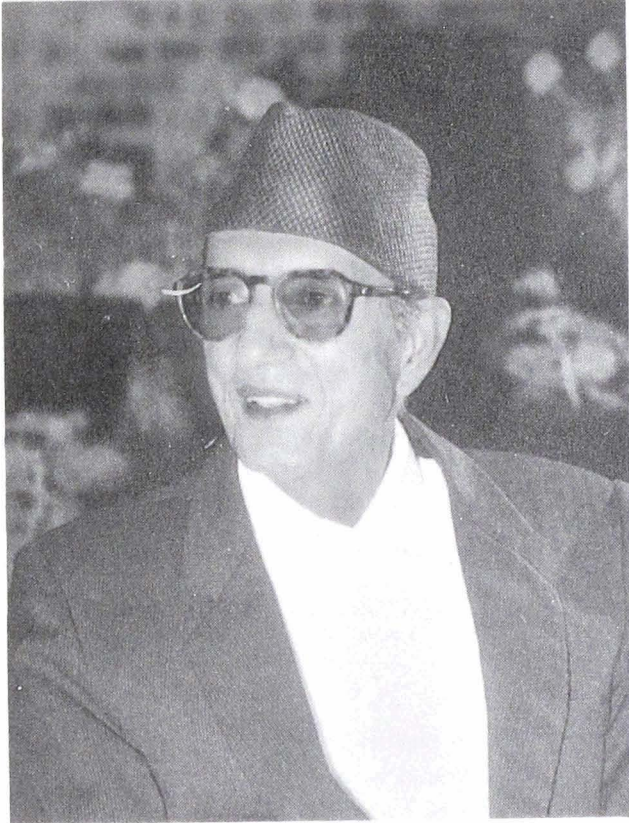
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Thanks and Dedication

This book is dedicated to my dear, brave wife Gertrud. It was due to her understanding, her readiness to take risks, her spirit of self-reliance, and her ability to assume responsibility for my family with its three children that I was able to undertake the very interesting and rewarding activities on behalf of the poor in many parts of the world. She knew how to instill in our children her own lively spirit and her interest in the world's cultures. She has kept our family and our home in the Swiss mountains together.





KATHMANDU
NEPAL

The Prime Minister

It is a pleasure to learn that Dr. Toni Hagen who has been long associated and sincere friend of Nepal is publishing his memories of Nepal 1950- 1992. Dr. Hagen's love for Nepal is known to all of us.

Dr. Hagen's association with Nepal which started with the geological research work and services in the early fifties became his extensive field of study and hard work. Over the years he made contributions in making Nepal known to the world through his publications and promoting development activities in the early period of Nepal's development efforts.

I am confident that this will be an interesting memoirs to read for all.

Thank you.

G.P. Koirala
(Girija Prasad Koirala)

Jan.25, 1994

Foreword

On the occasion of a lecture I gave in 1990 at the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne, some of my friends in the German-Nepal Society in Cologne suggested that something—what eventually turned out to be a photograph exhibition—ought to be organized to celebrate my 75th birthday in 1992. The initial propounder of the idea was Dr. Erika-Margarete Muller, and once consensus was reached Dr. Susanne von der Heide set about turning the idea into reality. Prof. Walter Raunig, director of the Bavarian State Museum for Ethnology in Munich, committed his support immediately. He suggested that the photograph exhibition start its tour in Switzerland. Roland Steffan, director of the Museum for Ethnology in St. Gallen, was quick to take him up on the idea.

Originally it was intended to cover all forty years of my development activities on all continents. This idea, however, had to be dropped due to the limited space available in the museums in St. Gallen and in Munich. The latter being under restoration at the time, the exhibition in its case had to be shifted to the affiliated castle of Oettingen. The main reason for restricting coverage, though, was the time it would have required to prepare a global exhibition. Thus it was decided to limit the photographs to the theme of Nepal.

The opening in St. Gallen took place on 1 October 1992, and in the castle of Oettingen on 18 April 1993. The exhibition has twice been extended, and will now last until March 1994. On 1 July 1993, in addition, it opened in the German National Centre for Sciences in Bonn, where it ran up to 18 August.

The Royal Nepal Academy and the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation jointly sponsored the exhibition tour to Nepal. King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya personally opened the exhibition in Kathmandu on 17 November 1993. I feel greatly honoured by this act. I also wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Baral of the Royal Nepal Academy and to Dr. Chandra Gurung of the King Mahendra Trust, and especially to my old friend Lain Singh Bangdel, former vice-chancellor of the Royal Nepal Academy.

My main debt of gratitude is owed to Dr. Susanne von der Heide. Without her tireless efforts and her matchless efficiency during every phase of organizing the exhibitions, particularly the one in Nepal, it is unlikely that they would ever have occurred.

Along with the idea in 1990 of having an exhibition, the question arose as to what kind of book should be written to accompany it. My book on global development aid had already been written, and the geography of Nepal, the ecological problems facing it, and the impact of development aid on it were well covered by the three editions of my picture book on the country, so that writing the memoirs of my experiences there seemed the obvious thing to do. The book covering my remaining activities throughout the rest of the world has still to be written.

My Nepal memoirs cover personal experiences during my eight years of field work and expeditions in the hitherto almost entirely unknown country, from 1950 to 1958 (after 1952 as a UN expert); my UN assignment as director of the Basic Survey Department of the Government of Nepal; and finally my well-documented experiences in the resettlement of Tibetan refugees in Nepal and the beginning of the carpet industry, the exceptional snowball effect of which continues to be evident even today. These accounts of my activities as the chief of the resettlement programme conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross, to which I was seconded by UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld (1960-1962), reads in places like a crime story.

After my Nepalese friends Madhav Raj Acharya and Dr. Krishna Kumar Panday, who know German, read the German edition of my memoirs on Nepal, they suggested that an English edition also be published.

I should like to thank Philip Pierce of the Nepal Research Centre for the translation. Hopefully, a translation in Nepali will also follow.

In view of the fact that I have revisited Nepal almost every year from 1968 on, many Nepalese suggested that I comment on the country's development. Consequently I have rewritten Part Four and have added some chapters containing my personal views on the impact of forty years of development aid in Nepal—what has been a success and what has gone wrong—, with some comparisons on the basis of my experiences around the globe. The mechanism of failure is shown by way of a case study of a much-publicized integrated rural development project carried out in eastern Nepal. The question is also raised as to which tasks have not received the necessary attention, and which development opportunities have not been seized and thus missed. Finally, I express my view on what, for me personally, provides reason for most concern for the future of Nepal.

It has been fascinating for me to see how this country has been catapulted, so to speak, from medieval conditions to modern times—with all the problems resulting from such a "shock therapy" that this involves. One reason why the country has

survived as a free nation between its two giant neighbours, which jealously keep an eye on each other lest one side gain too much influence, is certainly the unifying institution of the monarchy. The change to constitutional monarchy will keep the institution itself still more aloof from the day-to-day struggles of the young democracy.

In October 1992 my wife Gertrud Hagen revisited Nepal for the first time in thirty years. She was enthused by the cheerfulness of the Nepalese people, which obviously has not been lost in spite of all the foreign influence, any more than it has from the obvious poverty of much of the population.

My two daughters, Katrin and Monica, have long been Nepal "addicts," ever since their last stay in Nepal with the whole family in 1961. They visit the country frequently to meet their many friends and to trek and do mountaineering.

As I was going through my many diaries and the many reports I wrote during my activities in Nepal from 1950 to 1962, all the experiences I had and all the events I witnessed came alive to me again. I realize what an interesting and rich life I was privileged to have in Nepal among its amiable people and in the presence of its grandiose nature. It was natural that Nepal should have become my second home. For this rich life I should like to thank all Nepalese on all levels of society, and also the many Tibetan refugees who found a new home in Nepal.

Lenzerheide, January 1994

Toni Hagen

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PART I

* * *

Youthful Dreams and the First Mission to Nepal

1948-1951

Youthful Dreams

Fateful Beginnings

In Frauenfeld I had a happy youth, at the edge of the city, surrounded by nature and forest. I spent a large part of my free time in natural surroundings. Equally happy was the time I spent with lasting friends in the high school of Frauenfeld and in the school's gymnastic club.

My father, an enthusiastic hiker, mountain climber, and skier, aroused in me early on a supreme love for mountains. When I (a ten-year-old) was allowed to accompany him in 1927 to a lecture at the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) given by C. Visser, the well-known Dutch researcher of the Himalaya—in particular, the Karakoram—and an honorary member of the Thurgau section of the SAC, I was fascinated by his—at the time still necessarily—black-and-white slides that were projected from a magic lantern. The vast U-shaped valleys with their huge glaciers, some of which jutted out from the lateral into the main valleys, forming large glacier lakes, were especially appealing to me. The world of glaciers quickly began to exercise a particular fascination over me. With the changes they underwent, their advances and retreats, and their constantly shifting crevasses, the glaciers seemed to me to be living beings.

My decision came during Visser's lecture, and on the way home after it I revealed to my father that I would go to the Himalaya when I was grown up. I began to prepare myself early by devouring all the expedition books of the great Himalayan researchers, such as Sven Hedin and Wilhelm Filchner. From my school period onwards, I trained for my future research activities in practical terms by not using gloves for any mountain climbing or cross-country skiing whatsoever—this in order to be able later to draw and write better in the Himalaya. (I kept up this practice up to my 70th birthday.) This self-discipline paid off handsomely indeed during my later field surveys in Nepal.

It was my love for mountains, and for nature in general, rather than for rocks in particular, that inclined me towards becoming a geologist. The dean of Alpine geology, **Albert Heim**, also exercised a great influence upon me in this regard. The masterly and captivatingly written books and articles by this many-sided man fascinated me.

The fact that geologists from Switzerland might later only in exceptional cases be able to practise their calling as researchers in the manner of Albert Heim, being caught instead "in the oil," as it was customary to say at the time, did not, given my enthusiasm, enter my head. My wife had no inkling of such things either when we married in 1945. A settled piece of fate, though, kept me irrevocably from having to go "into oil" and landing far from the mountains.

I had the great good fortune to find in my geology teacher at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zurich, Professor **Rudolf Staub**, someone who had complete sympathy for my love for the mountains. He assigned to me a region in the Alps of the Valais—something out of a dream—for my master's thesis: the part of the range centred on Arolla. The region for the Ph.D. thesis that followed was extended to what fell between the valley centred on the well-known resort of Zermatt (with the Matterhorn) and the Grand Combin mountain range.

The field research, which I carried out in total isolation for months at a time in the Swiss Alps, was a valuable preparation for my later activities in the Himalaya. For weeks I lived in the highest situated Alpine huts, subsisting almost entirely on milk and bread—like the Alpine herdsmen. Habituation to an extremely bland diet served me well later during my expeditions in Nepal.

For my dissertation in the Valais, I used for the first time aerial photos and also made a land-based photogrammetrical survey with the aid of a phototheodolite.

Dr. h.c. **Rudolf Helbling** published during this period his pioneer work on photogeology. On his own initiative and that of the rector of the ETH-Zurich, Prof. Dr. h.c. **C. F. Baeschlin**, a post was created for a research assistant in the fields of photogeology and the interpretation of aerial photographs. By chance I had already done some preliminary work in these disciplines in the Valais; thus I was the person chosen. Prior to this, however, a few years of preparation and apprenticeship were generously granted to me at the Helbling Survey Company in Flums and at the North-East Swiss Power Corporation (NOK).

In order to lift the training beyond the purely theoretical, I took part in a geological prefeasibility study of the Linth-Limmern dam (NOK), in the canton of Glarus. It was conducted according to the new methods.

The periods of separation caused by my months of field work in the Valais and in the Limmern region served to give my unsuspecting wife a foretaste of things to come. Prof. W. Leupold, who also worked on the geological evaluation of the Linth-Limmern project, once waited three days in vain for me in the SAC Mutsee hut.

Renowned for his inimitable light verse, he wrote the following entry in the hut book:

*Leider ist der Toni Hagen
noch immer in den Honigtagen,
Es stinkt ihm bei den Lämmern wirken,
oben in den Limmernwerken.*

(Toni Hagen, sad to say,
Still 's celebrating marriage day;
To be with lambs—oh, him it irks—
High up there at the Limmern works.)

Only after these years of apprenticeship did I return as a research assistant to the ETH in Zurich, where I was placed in the Geodetic Institute under Prof. Baeschlin. I am very grateful to the latter for his generous support. He encouraged me in whatever way he could, provided me with contacts worldwide, and for the rest gave me free hand in carrying out my research and in developing methods for the integrated use of geology, surveying, aerial photographic interpretation, and photogrammetry. Extensive teaching material was compiled and put to use for lectures and practicals at the ETH.

I also enjoyed the full support and encouragement of Prof. Dr. h.c. Fritz Kobold, the successor of Prof. Baeschlin.

Later, in Nepal, I was only able to make limited use of the results and new methods of combined earth surveillance techniques and photogrammetric surveying, as no aerial photos were yet available there; I succeeded in making the first such in the course of my work.

In *Bolivia*, however, I had the extraordinary luck, in 1963, to be able to pick up exactly where I had left off as a research assistant at the ETH—this time involving practical applications, as a UN consultant to the national petroleum company.

My first publications came about from my activities at the ETH-Zurich, of which only the most important may be mentioned:

1. *Wissenschaftliche Luftbild-Interpretation* (The Scientific Interpretation of Aerial Photographs). - Mitteilungen aus dem Geodätischen Institut der ETH Zürich, 1951.
2. *Das Westliche Säntisgebirge photogeologisch gesehen und bearbeitet* (The Western Säntis Range Viewed and Analysed from a Photogeological Perspective). - Mitteilungen aus dem Geodätischen Institut der ETH Zürich, 1952.

During all this work at the ETH in Zurich, I never forgot my dream of the Himalaya. Even though sundry Himalayan expeditions were being organized from

Switzerland during these years, there was no money to accommodate geologists. The main business at hand was first-time ascents.

Already in the years 1949-50 I had published three articles in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* that were to be decisive for the later course of my life:

1. "Luftbild und Erdkunde, I Photogeologie" (Aerial Photos and Earth Science, I Photogeology), 16 Feb. 1949, no. 232 (8)
2. "Luftbild und Erdkunde, II Anwendungsgebiete" (Aerial Photos and Earth Science, II Fields of Application), 23 Feb. 1949, no. 382 (9)
3. "Photogeologie" (Photogeology), 18 May 1950, no. 1039 (29)

The first two articles of February 1949 coincided to the week with an inquiry from Nepal for a specialist in the fields of aerial photography and cartography.

The Germs of Freedom Enter Nepal

Up until October 1950, Nepal was a land completely shut off from the rest of the world, even more than the Tibet of the time. Gurkha officers and soldiers who had got around in the world under English service and had returned to their homeland in the Himalaya for vacation or retirement noticed how backward Nepal was in comparison to India. During my later expeditions, I ran across them constantly on the way to their villages or back from them to their British and Indian mercenary service. They were forever complaining that, having arrived at the Nepal border from the Indian railway terminuses, they could reach their villages only after weeks of strenuous walking, sometimes over intimidating paths and suspension bridges (which were often half or totally destroyed) and dangerous river crossings. Always they were heavily loaded down with the simplest of consumer goods, such as kerosene lamps, kerosene, candles, matches, pots and pans, yarn and thread, clothing material, agricultural implements and a host of other things, all of them obtainable in the Nepalese mountains only at the larger, sparsely located marketplaces, which, moreover, were only open on certain days.

The greater part of their treasured vacation was lost to travel on foot. Having reached home, they found no schools for their children, no health services, no post services, no shops for the commonest of consumer goods.

It was such Gurkha officers who in the end brought around the last **maharaja, Mohun Shamsheer Jang Bahadur Rana**, to the idea of doing something for the development of his country. By this means, something might also be done to stem the rising discontent in the country. The idea of freedom that had led to the liberation from the English colonial regime in India was introduced into Nepal by

these very same people and also, more importantly, by politicians in the Terai, the Nepalese plains along the Indian border.

Indeed, scattered incidents of unrest occurred at the end of the 1940s, stirred up by the Indian Congress Party. The notion that it was time for the Nepalese to free themselves was even broadcast in no uncertain terms over the Indian radio.

Unrest in Nepal was fed, in particular, by the sudden discharge of 200,000 Gurkha soldiers who had fought for Great Britain during the Second World War.

Maharaja Mohun Shamsheer Jang Bahadur Rana knew how to read these signs. He constituted a *Development Board* under the chairmanship of his son, **Major-General Bijaya Shamsheer**. The latter, during a tennis game in India, met a businessman named **K. U. Advani**, who offered his services to Nepal as a development consultant.

The First "Development" Contacts with Europe

In 1948 Mr. Advani travelled as an official representative of the maharaja to England to visit the aerial survey company Hunting. Afterwards he was also commissioned to seek out contacts in Switzerland. The government of Nepal had correctly sensed the need for aerial photos as a basis for any kind of development planning, as the quarter-inch maps (approx. 1:250 000) produced by the Survey of India 1925-1927 under English supervision, while a pioneering work, were hardly suitable for that purpose. More importantly, however, they were not made available to Nepal. Nepal was a forbidden land even for the English colonial power in its large neighbour to the south, India.

On 20 September 1948, the Swiss government was informed by its ambassador in New Delhi, Minister **Armin Däniker**, of the impending visit of Mr. Advani.

In Kathmandu, meanwhile, General Bijaya Shamsheer, managing director of the Development Board, appointed **Bhim Bahadur Pande, Sirdar**, a high official singled out by the maharaja for distinction, to become the **secretary-general of the Development Board**.

In 1949, as certain plans for Nepal began to crystallize, the Swiss ambassador in India described Nepal as follows:

There is only one railroad, which does not even reach Kathmandu, and it was only at the beginning of this year that an airplane landed for the first time in Kathmandu. With a literacy rate of 2%, practically no specialized labourers (90% work in the agricultural sector), a highly rudimentary communication system (post couriers), and almost no electricity, Nepal is an example case of what was at the time called a "backward area."

Mr. Advani held talks in Switzerland with various officials, members of the private sector, and individual citizens.

Just how difficult the beginnings of Swiss development aid were became truly clear to me only later when, in spite of the great success of the first mission to Nepal, Switzerland stopped the flow of money and officially discontinued activities there for some time.

The Methodical and Farsighted Planning of Walter Custer

Particularly important was Advani's contact with the architect **Walter Custer** on 6 November 1948. The latter, after a period in India working for the company Gruner, was one of the few Swiss to have grappled with the idea of development aid so early on.

It was immediately clear to Custer that Nepal needed a team of specialists who would plan the development process and set it in motion. He established contact with Prof. F. T. Wahlen, the deputy managing director of the FAO in Rome, who supported the idea at once.

Walter Custer composed a first *memorandum*, dated 4 December 1948: "*A Swiss Mission to Nepal for General Planning and Technical Development: Layout for the Formation of a Team and its Tasks.*"

Custer's remarks concerning the sense, purpose, and goals of the so-called development aid, as mentioned on pages 76 and 77 by Albert Matzinger in his dissertation

Die Anfänge der schweizerischen Entwicklungshilfe 1948-1961 (The Beginnings of Swiss Development Aid 1948-1961), Paul Haupt Verlag, 1991 should be read in this context. His ideas then have now become commonplace, and one can only marvel at his farsightedness 43 years ago.

Walter Custer's conception of development aid in general and our mission in Nepal in particular greatly impressed me:

1. *Object of the aid:* Geographical regions with unsatisfactory living conditions, such as
 - too low income (in relation to needs)
 - low productivity
 - too few resources
 - resources too little exploited
 - ignorance of ways to improve one's own lot
 - lack of investable savings
2. *Type of Aid:* "We see unexploited reserves and sources of aid in economically distressed regions. We know that other regions have been able to improve their lot under similar conditions. We learn newer methods that have been developed and applied in the Western world and that make it possible to change and improve living

conditions. We believe in the partial transferability of these experiences and this knowledge." These ideas are still fully applicable 43 years later.

By the end of 1948 the provisional team assembled by Walter Custer included as planners, besides himself, Emil Rauch (agricultural engineer), Werner Schuepp and Alf de Spindler (both engineers), and H. Vogel (with a doctorate in economics). Other interested parties were the Federal Office for Trades and Industry and the delegate for employment opportunities... They had already begun to get wind of possible contracts for Swiss businesses.

In the meantime, the Development Board of Nepal had sent its secretary-general, B. B. Pande, on a fact-finding mission to various countries in Europe (Scandinavia, Germany, and Switzerland). Pande found that Switzerland, also a mountainous country, was probably the best suited to advise Nepal on its development.

Since the goals set by Nepal were very vague, the proposal was made, in *Memorandum II of 12.04.49*, to send a small fact-finding body to Nepal for one or two months, and with that the *Swiss-Nepal Forward Team* was born. Provisions were made to provide salary payments to the Swiss specialists (assuming that they were not receiving a paid vacation from their employers—my own case at the ETH) as well as to finance the trip from Switzerland to the Nepalese border, whereas the stay in Nepal, including travel, was to be covered by the host government. The very important principle of *local contribution* had already been clearly recognized by Custer.

Advani acknowledged receipt of Custer's memorandum with letters of 1 and 15 February 1949, and at the same time requested an offer for a *photogrammetric survey of Nepal for cartographic purposes*.

The Swiss team of experts thus took me on as a new member, with Karl Weissmann, an academically qualified survey engineer of the company Wild A.G. in Heerbrugg, as an adviser.

Hopes of Fulfilling the Dream of My Youth

During my work as a research assistant at the ETH-Zurich at the end of the 1940s, I had no idea of the preparations being made by the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team, but still I continued to dream of Nepal. Since the period of my youth, however, my interests had, in tandem with the new direction my career had taken, largely shifted to the new methods of aerial surveys and had expanded in the process. With interest I followed the beginnings of the development aid offered by the United States and the newly created international organizations, and I hoped that I would be able to put my new experience to use in an "underdeveloped country" (in the terminology of the time) in the not too distant future.

At the end of February 1949 a youngish man of energetic bearing entered my office at the Geodetic Institute of the ETH-Zurich and all but pounced on me, declaring, "You're the man we're looking for for Nepal!" It was Walter Custer. Startled, I hastily asked what was up.

He told of the long preliminary talks begun in 1948 for sending a planning mission to Nepal and of the wish on the part of the Nepalese government, news of which had just arrived, for a specialist in the field of photogrammetric and cartographic recording techniques to be included on the team. Custer explained that I had come to his attention because of my two recently published articles in the supplement "Technik" to the NZZ of 16 and 23 February 1949. He found my training in the combined use of aerial photo interpretation and photogrammetry just what Nepal needed. Maps were the basis for any kind of planning and development, and it appeared that Nepal had no suitable topographical maps. It was, of course, unthinkable that the century that Switzerland had needed, and taken, to map its own territory should be repeated.

Walter Custer's plans appeared to me to be the ideal way to combine research in the Himalaya and development aid.

Silence—the First Intrigues

To finance the trip, Custer turned first to the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research. The latter was ready to finance the mission but set the condition that it would send its own people to Nepal, who would look after the interests of Swiss industry. But this was just a pretext, as the foundation had other goals in mind, namely the first ascent of Mt. Everest.

Custer rejected the demands of the foundation, feeling that the whole idea of technical aid would be put at risk. Sharing these thoughts, Prof. Guttersohn of the ETH-Zurich proposed that the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team be put under the *patronage of the ETH*.

In May and June 1949, responses came in from the Development Board in Nepal that for the first time raised hopes that the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team would be invited under the above-mentioned terms. The project seemed to be heading in the right direction, but then suddenly nothing more was heard from Nepal. The reason for this was that, following Custer's rejection, the *Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research*, far from abandoning their plans for Nepal, pursued them on their own with great determination.

It was at this time that the documents with the plans of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team were "misplaced" in my office at the Geodetic Institute of the ETH-Zurich. In all haste, Prof. Arnold Heim of the foundation, which was obviously in possession of the documents, was sent to Nepal in order to get the drop on the

Swiss-Nepal Forward Team. He was received in Kathmandu by the Development Board, which evidently had the impression that Prof. Heim had been sent on an official mission. Thus he had an easy time of convincing the Nepalese officials that the members of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team were young and inexperienced people unable to do much for the development of Nepal.

The maharaja and the whole Rana clan were primarily interested in mining and exploring for oil and had dreams of earning lots of money quickly.

Prof. Heim could say truthfully that he was the head of a very successful team of Swiss geologists in Iran with significant finds of oil to their credit—a background that was entirely foreign to our team, and to me in particular. General Bijaya, the managing director of the Development Board, naturally lapped up such promises.

The Swiss-Nepal Forward Team, which was waiting impatiently in Switzerland, heard no word from Nepal for over half a year.

Once the situation had become clear, Prof. Pallmann, the president of the ETH-Zurich, was able to force Prof. Heim to retract the statements he had made, given that we had entirely different goals.

Troublesome Beginnings of Swiss Development Aid

The Swiss ambassador in New Delhi, Armin Däniker, also took up our cause, and he succeeded in renewing contact with General Bijaya. On 22 April 1950 he received an official invitation for the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team. In Switzerland, **Prof. Hans Pallmann** called the opening session of the *Coordination Commission for Technical Aid*. There was now no turning back from creating an official body in Switzerland for maintaining contact with the government of Nepal, all the more so given that the latter was now expecting a definitive response from Switzerland to their invitation to the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team.

In Switzerland, as elsewhere, one had to get beyond the improvisational approach taken by the many representatives of official agencies who were interested but completely inexperienced in development aid. In a manner bespeaking the divergence of opinion about the unexplored territory of development aid, the delegate for employment opportunities, Dr. Zipfel, was included in the new commission along with bureaucrats of the federal government. He was a confirmed "slow goer."

Fortunately, however, *prominent representatives of the business community* who displayed a remarkable farsightedness for the times were also represented. Spokesmen for the federal government constantly wanted to see some "value for Switzerland" in the mission to Nepal. In the constituting session of the Coordination Commission on 20 July 1950, though, the two representatives of business cast the decisive votes.

Brown Boveri Company Director and **Member of Parliament Andreas Speiser** was for the mission to Nepal, not because Nepal was of interest to Swiss industry but because it represented an "opportune experimental project," in which a Swiss undertaking would be carried out "without underlying political motives."

Director Schmidheini (Wild A.G.) stated: "I am of the opinion that motives that are purely ideal must set the tone for the implementation of the project. There is not much that can be expected for the time being in economic terms."

Director Schmidheini even at that early date drew attention to one aspect of things that at the time was scarcely recognized, but that later would assume major importance for the whole idea of development cooperation. He, the representative of business, said: "For the members of the Nepal Team, who have grown up and been educated in a country whose population lives under entirely different conditions from those of Nepal, there is a danger that they will want to introduce into Nepal the Swiss milieu."

Apart from these farsighted votes, the Coordination Commission was marked in the beginning by sharp internal polarities, and in particular by petty wrangling over ridiculously small amounts of money—small compared with the large ladle used nowadays, practically without any outside control, to dish out development aid.

In the end, however, the steady leadership of the commission by Prof. Pallmann put the Nepal Team on a firm footing, and 50,000 francs was credited to it in accordance with the cost estimate drawn up by Walter Custer.

First Indian Interference

During the coordination session of 20 July 1950, an unexpected problem suddenly arose that was to plague the Swiss, and even more the Nepalese, over and over again: India's insistence on treating Nepal as if it was a child. Prime Minister Nehru of India had expressed to the Swiss ambassador in New Delhi the desire to include two Indian experts as members in the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team, as India was very interested in Nepal's development. This request was naturally opposed by all Swiss parties as being incompatible with the idea of a politically neutral mission. It remained the task of the Swiss ambassador to convince the government of India in this delicate matter.

At the end of October, the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team was finally able to fly from Zurich to Bombay, and on 29 October it arrived safely in Nepal.

Thus not only the dream of my youth—the Himalaya—appeared to me to be being fulfilled, but also the dreams I had for my professional life, and in a manner I could not have improved upon even in my wildest dreams.

Difficult Preparations for the Unknown Land

I had immediately begun an intense personal preparation for the mission to Nepal, which was planned for October 1950 at the earliest (after the monsoon). This was much easier said than done. Almost nothing existed in the way of geographical literature that might have been useful for what we had in mind. In particular, I had no success in locating any topographical maps that were more revealing than, say, a school atlas.

For cultural and historical matters, there were two standard works which, apart from imparting a general knowledge of Nepal, were of little use for our purposes:

1. Sylvain Levi, *Le Népal* (Paris 1905)
2. Perceval Landon, *Nepal* (London 1928)

A very valuable article by **Martin Hürlimann**, the dean of travel writers, appeared in *Atlantis*.

As for geological literature, there were only a few short reports of excursions around Kathmandu and several very brief trips starting from the Indian border made by the senior veteran of the Geological Survey of India, **I. B. Auden**. The only geological study of the Himalaya by persons with a comprehensive knowledge of the much more well-known Alps had been made by Arnold Heim and August Gansser in 1938, not in Nepal but in the neighbouring Indian Himalaya to the west.

I began to pore over the available maps of Nepal and drew a mental picture of how I would produce the first geological profile of the Himalaya from the Indian border in the lowlands of the Gangetic plain to the Tibetan border in the north.

In the midst of this information crisis, **Alf de Spindler** succeeded in discovering the address of the renowned Asian researcher **Wilhelm Filchner**, who was still living at the time. The latter had been engaged in his last field work in 1939, measuring magnetic fields in the eastern Terai. The Nepal Team presently met him in Zurich.

In the course of my preparations, I frequently met with Wilhelm Filchner, and we became good friends. In addition, I introduced him to the man I was serving under at the time at the ETH-Zurich, **Prof. F. C. Baeschlin**. These two, each strong and vibrant personalities, understood one another immediately, and a close friendship developed between them. Filchner was induced by reason of this to move to Zurich to end out his days. There his friend Prof. Baeschlin undertook the task of publishing in book form the past experiences of Wilhelm Filchner during his numerous expeditions in Inner Asia:

Erich Przybullok, Wilhelm Filchner, Toni Hagen
Route Mapping in Unexplored Regions
 Birkhäuser Verlag, Basel 1951

In 1951 Wilhelm Filchner published his last expedition book with Brockhaus Verlag, Wiesbaden: *In der Fieberhölle Nepals* (In Nepal's Hell of Fevers).

His information was of course especially useful to me, first of all because he was a researcher, and secondly because he had been summoned to Nepal to measure magnetic fields in hopes of discovering oil reserves.

The same thing had happened to him as later happened to me: he was widely regarded in Nepal as something of a modern goldminer who, manipulating his miraculous magnetic instruments, could tap oil wells with the flick of his wrist. As he was naturally unable to satisfy such wishful thinking, his relations with certain officials became very tense, so tense in fact that they wanted to prevent the seriously ill Filchner from leaving the country.

Nevertheless, Filchner warmly commended to me his counterpart at the time, a certain **Colonel Khadga Narsingh Rana**. Even though the latter was only a "C-class" Rana, he was, according to Filchner's description of him, a fine, highly educated, and staunchly upright person and thus enjoyed a certain independence. Filchner advised me to rely constantly and exclusively on Col. Rana, the only high official who had any appreciation for long-term development work, in contrast to other Ranas, who only wanted to make money quick.

My dealings with Col. Rana entirely confirmed Filchner's judgment of him. Col. Rana died, unfortunately, in 1962.

From the laboriously collected information about Nepal, it seemed clear to me that mining would not attain the degree of significance that the government hoped it would. Up to 1950 no workable mining discoveries were made anywhere in the neighbouring Indian Himalaya. As for oil, only the Terai seemed to offer certain prospects, but even these would probably not be very promising—something on the order of the ones for the Swiss molasse. Arnold Heim and August Gansser, in their expedition to the Garhwal Himalaya in 1938, discovered a clear nappe structure, a geological structure, that is, that does not favour the occurrence of large seams of ore or the presence of oil, as is the case in the Alps. I had no reason to doubt the conclusions of the two Swiss geologists.

Our planning in Nepal had necessarily, therefore, to proceed along the following lines:

1. A road linking the capital, Kathmandu, with the outside world
2. The exploitation of the huge potential of water power to produce electricity
3. Agriculture

But no thought could be given to such planning in my field (geological surveying, natural resources, road construction) without topographical maps.

I thus decided to take along as technical equipment a phototheodolite and a Zeiss Topogon wide-angle lens camera for aerial photographs.

On the way through India, I planned to go first to Calcutta, the seat of the Survey of India, in order to procure suitable topographical maps of Nepal, assuming that such existed in the first place. In the meantime I had found out that the standard Indian map for the Himalaya, the Quarter Inch Map (approx. 1:250 000) was in fact also available for Nepal.

After this I toyed with the idea of chartering a survey aircraft through the Survey of India for photographic flights from Kathmandu to areas for which projects proved to be the most urgent.

The entire "preparations" were naturally inadequate, as I had no experience of the Third World, and the idea of development aid was new. I was carried along by a blind faith in progress and believed, in accordance with the view of the times, in "closing the gap" through development aid.

It is only now that I realize how (necessarily) unprepared I went about my first task in the Third World. Present-day experts and development workers have it much easier; one has only to recall the flood of articles about the Third World and development problems and problem areas, and the many courses that are meant to prepare young people for their Third World ventures. (It's another question whether the development experts nowadays are actually that much better than the former ones; in the 1960s and 1970s, "training" consisted primarily in leftist "liberation" ideology.)

Still, the main handicap of our mission, namely the degree of ignorance about Nepal, was at the same time what was fascinating about my task. Thanks to the closed-door policy that was carried out by the government of Nepal up to 1950, it was virgin land in every respect—a mere white area on the maps of South Asia or the Indian subcontinent.

In order to understand how this isolation came about, and in order to better understand my experience of Nepal in the early 1950s, a brief historical sketch will now be offered.

How Nepal Remained a Forbidden Land

In its medieval period, Nepal consisted of a multitude of principalities and petty kingdoms. An unparalleled ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic multiformity prevailed. The Kathmandu Valley in particular, under the control of the Newars and their Malla kings, harboured a huge concentration of cultural creativity and attendant monuments.

The cultural flowering of the Kathmandu Valley was brought to an end when the Gurkhas (in the narrow ethnological sense) conquered the land. The campaign

was launched from the town of Gorkha in Central Nepal. A warrior clan of the Rajput Kshatriyas (military caste) that had been driven out of Chitor in India in 1303 had settled down there. Advancing in stages through the Midlands of Nepal, by way of Nuwakot, Kaski, and Lamjung, they overcame the local ruler of Gorkha, the Khadga raja.

In 1766, following a period of some 200 years in which—apart from minor sorties—the Gurkhas (as the former Rajputs henceforth were called) remained at peace in Gorkha, **King Prithvi Narayan Shah** set off on a campaign of conquest, which soon made him the ruler over the whole country. In further campaigns, he conquered parts of India, namely the Terai, Kumaon, Garhwal, Simla, and Sikkim, along with wide tracts of the Tibetan plateau. The conqueror Prithvi Narayan founded the *Shah dynasty*, to which the current king, Birendra, also belongs.

Towards the end of the 18th century, at the time of greatest expansion, the kingdom of Nepal was twice as large as it is today. The language of the Gurkhas, a modified form of Hindi belonging to the Indo-Aryan group of tongues and written with Sanskrit characters, was made the official national language.

The immediate successors of Prithvi Narayan, however, were incompetent rulers, and after his death in 1771 there followed almost a century of internecine power struggles.

It was unavoidable that King Prithvi Narayan and his expansionary politics should have come into conflict with another power equally keen to expand, the old *East India Company*.

In 1768, when Prithvi Narayan conquered the Malla kingdoms in the Kathmandu Valley, the English sent their first forces against him. The Gurkhas repulsed this first British detachment and were equally successful in further conflicts. The English realized that only an overwhelming superiority would be able to subdue this small mountain country. They invaded with 30,000 troops and 60 canons. Opposing them were only 12,000 Gurkha soldiers. For many days 600 Gurkha soldiers held one of the fortresses and inflicted many losses upon the English under General Gillespi. When the situation of the besieged had become hopeless, the 90 surviving Gurkhas still managed to cut their way through the encirclement.

Two further English expeditions were no more successful in gaining a lasting victory over the Gurkhas. It was only through the superior tactics of General Ochterlony that they eventually managed to fight their way through to the capital of Kathmandu. The Gurkhas immediately drew the necessary conclusion and prevented the occupation of Kathmandu by signing the *peace treaty of Sagauli* in the year 1816.

By this treaty, Nepal was forced to cede Sikkim and parts of the Terai, and also to tolerate a British resident in Kathmandu.

The English for their part recognized the competence of the Gurkha soldiers and were even clever enough, during the peace negotiations in Sagauli, to turn their former enemy into an ally. They began forthwith to recruit Gurkha mercenaries.

The direct successors of Prithvi Narayan were incompetent rulers. Almost a century of bloody agitations followed his death in 1771. In 1847, in the aftermath of a massacre, a young nobleman named **Jang Bahadur Rana** assumed unlimited power as prime minister and made a prisoner of King Rajendra, putting him in a "golden birdcage," where his successors were kept up to October 1950. They all remained the legitimate kings in name but had merely symbolic and titular functions.

Jang Bahadur was a good ruler. In 1856 he declared himself willing, at the behest of a delegation of high priests, to assume the title **maharaja**. In accepting this title, he at the same time fixed the line of succession: the next younger brother was to receive the sceptre. This was the **founding of the Rana dynasty** of Nepalese maharajas, which would last up to the autumn of 1950, a full 104 years. Its last representative was **Mohun Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana**, who was forced to step down in 1951.

All maharajas of the Rana dynasty were conscious of the advantages accruing from their friendship with British India but were always protective, nevertheless, of their own independence. They wanted to be able to determine who could enter Nepal, and this applied to Englishmen as well. Nepal became a closed country. This explains why, at the most, 100 foreigners were allowed to set foot in Nepal up to 1950, and even then their movements were restricted to the Kathmandu Valley.

In 1857 Jang Bahadur Rana supplied military assistance to the English in their suppression of the great revolt in India. In return, Nepal reacquired a sizeable piece of the land that it had forfeited 41 years before, at the peace of Sagauli. In order to prove his independence from the English, however, Jang Bahadur granted asylum to the refugee leaders of the revolt.

When the all-powerful **Lord Curzon**, *viceroi of India*, wished to visit Nepal to satisfy his passion for archaeology, **Maharaja Chandra Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana** politely but firmly let it be known that entry would have to be denied him as long as he was the viceroy. After he left office, however, he would warmly be received, in a non-official capacity, as guest.

Englishmen were frequently invited to take part in magnificent hunts in the Terai. When **King George V** sojourned in India on the occasion of being crowned emperor, he was Maharaja Chandra Shamsher's guest in the Terai for 10 days. Every comfort was offered in the field to the exalted guest: such things as running warm and cold water and electric lights. The English king's bag consisted of 21 tigers, 10 rhinoceroses, and 2 bears. King George honoured Maharaja Chandra Shamsher for

his part by conferring upon him the Grand Cross of the Order of Victoria and giving him 2,000 modern rifles and 5 million rounds of ammunition.

On 21 December 1923, as a reward for its assistance during the world war of 1914-1918, Nepal was offered a new friendship treaty with British India, which transformed the former British residency in Kathmandu into a legation. Further, the British colonial government committed itself unconditionally to pay Nepal one million rupees annually and accorded Nepal free transit through India and a customs-free depot in Calcutta for whatever goods it wanted. Just how generous these provisions were became clear to the Nepalese only in 1947, when the rights and duties of the British colonial administration in India passed into the hands of the young Indian state.

The friendship between Nepal and British India was by no means restricted to superficialities but was deeply anchored in people's minds. What particularly contributed to this was the approximately half million Gurkhas who had fought around the world for the English in both world wars, and who in the 1970s brought in some 16 million U.S. dollars for the Nepalese in remittance (1.1% of the gross national income).

On my wide-ranging treks in Nepal, I was struck by the emotion with which retired Gurkha soldiers recalled their time of service under British officers, the enthusiasm with which they recounted their experiences, and the pride with which they demonstrated their knowledge of English.

I witnessed such things even at the end of the 1980s, during my wanderings in untouched areas (untouched by development workers and experts and by tourists).

Up to the 1950s time had obviously ceased to flow for the Nepalese rural population. The hill dwellers still talked in the 1950s not of the Indian rupee versus the Nepalese rupee, but of the "company mohar," the currency of the old East Indian Company (a mohar is one-half rupee).

Nepal came out ahead quite significantly from its friendship with England and the multitude of services rendered under it; it only realized the true extent of this in 1947, when the Indian national government assumed all the duties and, more particularly, all the rights of the former English colonial power.

The "Underdevelopment" of Nepal in 1950

In 1950 Nepal was an "underdeveloped" country according to all the conventional standards of the time. Compared with the other countries of the Third World that had been former colonies, it was among the most underdeveloped countries, in the same category, for example, as Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and North Yemen. As in all medieval feudal regimes, there were good and bad rulers.

As early as the 1920s, however, Nepal could point to several appreciable *civilizing achievements*, though these had, to be sure, largely faded over the past decades. They were due to the merit of the last maharaja but four, **Chandra Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana**. With statesmanlike wisdom and with an iron hand, he restored peace, order, and security following a period of chaos and bloody power struggles. He did away with internal customs payments, a source of income for corrupt officials, and began to reward service to the state and noteworthy achievement with payments of money, no longer, that is, as had previously been the custom, by bestowing vacant land in the Terai, so-called *birta* land. The latter had led to the land being concentrated in the hands of wealthy proprietors and to a discriminatory system of sharecropping being imposed upon tenants. He also abolished slavery.

Already in the 1920s Chandra Shamsher had built two small power stations (Sundarijal and Pharping) to supply Kathmandu with electricity and had introduced the telephone to the city. He had the road from Raxaul on the Indian border to Bimphedi at the foot of the Mahabharat Range constructed. With apparent intention, he failed to have the road extended over the two high passes of the range to the Kathmandu Valley. Nevertheless, in order to facilitate the transport of goods, he had the electrically run ropeway over the Mahabharat passes from Darsing to Thankot built. This was in operation up to 1959, when a sturdier ropeway was built with U.S. aid over the same path but extended south to Hitaura, when the construction of the costly road failed to bring the desired economic relief. Maharaja Chandra Shamsher also founded Chandra College in Kathmandu, the first school for higher learning in Nepal. He abolished the socage service that big landowners could arbitrarily demand of their tenants. When such service was refused, the landowner was formerly entitled to requisition the entire property of the tenant, including his domestic animals.

The construction of the numerous bold suspension bridges, some of which can even be used by pack animals, goes back to Chandra Shamsher's time. In Those, near Jiri, he had small mining facilities set up. A small hydroelectric power station produced the energy required to drive an electromagnetic ore separator. The iron obtained from the latter was fashioned, among other things, into chains for the suspension bridges. After Chandra Shamsher, upkeep of the bridges was neglected or entirely abandoned. During the period from 1950 to 1958, half of the bridges were no longer usable, and the other half could be used only at the risk of one's life.

A multitude of agricultural tools, *khukuris* (Nepalese bush knives), household utensils, iron fittings and much more were produced in Those. The artisanship was passed on from father to son. Unfortunately, the modern teaching of crafts has completely neglected to take up from these old traditional skills. They have largely disappeared.

One great civilizing achievement of old Nepal was the laying of a dense network of paths, usually excellent stone-plate paths betraying extraordinary know-how. Many of these paths still exist. A part of the network consisted of the many rest stops, called *chautaras*. These are uncemented stone walls for resting loads upon. Along with the construction of such walls, sacred pipal trees were planted to provide shade, and they have grown into magnificent huge trees. Such rest stops were constructed at regular intervals along the formerly much trodden routes. Their sites were very well chosen, usually to provide cool breezes, and also frequently lovely panoramas. Not too distant water sources were likewise obviously a criterion.

It was into the new and strange world described above, then, that I was catapulted at the end of October 1950.

The Work of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team

October to December 1950

In a New World

On 24 October 1950 the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team flew to India with 500 kilograms of expedition luggage. It was a pleasant flight on an old Lockheed Constellation, with a stopover in Karachi, where we enjoyed several hours of sleep in the bungalows of KLM and could even take a shower.

Upon landing in Bombay, we found ourselves in a new world. First the inside of the airplane was treated by Indian health officials to a spraying with insecticide. The customs control of our load of luggage went smoothly and was conducted in a friendly atmosphere. The drive to the renowned luxury hotel Taj Mahal on the harbour front gave me an idea of the masses of people that filled every street and square. I noticed the many red stains on the streets and sidewalks. Since the Indian subcontinent had recently been plagued by horrible religious massacres following partition, the obvious conclusion that I, a newcomer, drew was that all these stains were traces of blood from such massacres. My supposition was naturally reinforced by the Swiss media, from whose reporting one might gain the impression that India consisted exclusively of massacres. Soon, however, the old hand Walter Custer had set me straight: the red stains were those of betel nuts chewed and spit out by Indians.

After a night in the Taj Mahal, which seemed like an oasis in the midst of the swarm of people, our ways parted. The three other members of the team proceeded on to New Delhi, while I flew to Calcutta. There being no single room available in the Great Eastern Hotel, a venerable institution rich in tradition, I had to share a room the first night with other guests. They were a Japanese, an Indian, and an Englishman. We were soon conversing, and there were indeed enough things to talk

about. India had been disburdened of the colonial regime only several years before, and it was now groping its way towards independence. There were still numerous English officials in the country to ensure an orderly transition; more particularly, however, there were the many foreign companies still around, including Volkart Bros., whose help would prove to be very valuable to me in the coming years in Nepal.

Friendly Receptions at Indian Institutions

During a visit to the venerable *Geological Survey of India*, I was warmly received by its directors, Dr. **Radhakrishnan** (later president of the republic) and Dr. D. N. West. At the time, the deans of Indian Himalayan geology, the Englishman **J. B. Auden** and the Indian **D. N. Wadia**, were also still on the board of directors.

From the Geological Survey of India I received everything available on Himalayan geology. There was little material dealing with Nepal, however. Auden envied me my task in Nepal. He would so much have liked himself to be at work there, but Nepal was a forbidden land for him as an Englishman in the British colonial administration. His status was just enough for two short excursions in and around Kathmandu. He had made a few other short trips into the country illegally, crossing the Indian border into the Terai.

Someone who particularly remained fixed in my memory was *Assistant Director Kohli*, with whom I later always maintained close contacts—towards the end, in 1968 in Dehra Dun, in an official capacity, in connection with an evaluation of the Indian National Petroleum Research Institute (whose chief geologist he was). Mr. Wadia I also met frequently later in New Delhi, where he had become the head of the Indian atomic agency. The last time I saw him was as the president of the International Union of Geologists, when he presided over the memorable International Congress of Geologists in 1968 in Prague, the congress that had to be adjourned early due to the Soviet invasion.

No less interesting were the talks I had at the *Survey of India*, which at the time had its headquarters in Calcutta. Its directors were still one and all English.

Apart from topical and sometimes explosive political information, I learned that the Survey of India did actually possess a Quarter Inch Map (approx. 1:250 000) of Nepal, along the same lines as the standard map records of India. Since the English were denied entry into Nepal, however, even to survey and make topographic photographs, they had to organize the whole cartographic undertaking from Indian soil. Only Indian topographers were allowed to conduct plane-table surveys in Nepal.

The English were generous enough to give me a full set of the Quarter Inch Map for the whole of Nepal. Later, when the Survey of India came under Indian

management, access to all topographic maps of Nepal was restricted, that is, no longer obtainable. This is true to a certain extent even today.

I also mentioned the idea of *hiring a survey aircraft*, wishing to get a rough estimate for a round-trip flight Calcutta-Kathmandu, the cost per hour of survey flying at 6,000 metres, the taking of photos with a wide-angle lens, and other pertinent expenses.

This information was promptly provided to me. Hints fell that political upheavals were expected in Nepal, that India viewed Nepal as falling within its sphere of influence, and that in future it would possibly be not so easy for foreigners to work there.

By Train from Calcutta to Raxaul on the Nepal Border

The next day at noon, following a further night in the Hotel Great Eastern, I boarded a train to Mokameghat on the Ganges. I had a whole compartment to myself in a comfortable first-class sleeping car, and I enjoyed the ride through the fascinating Indian countryside. The rice fields in the Gangetic plain were lushly green just before the harvest. Many fields were still flooded from the monsoon.

On this memorable trip, which I thoroughly enjoyed, I was familiarized with certain aspects of life in Indian railway stations. Waking up in my comfortable sleeping compartment during a halt early in the morning, I at first thought that we had stopped in the middle of a large herd of sheep. There was "bleating" from every direction. When I looked out the window, I saw that we were in a station filled with a multitude of people. Vendors hawked their products: *chagaram* (hot tea) and *mampali* (groundnuts). In doing so, they drew out the end syllable with a falling tone ("chagaraaam, mampalii"), and in the large majority of cases this sounded like the bleating of a large herd of sheep.

A further striking feature of all Indian railway stations was the conspicuous sign: "The complaints book is lying with the Station Master." This was obviously the secret of the extraordinarily good and reliable functioning of the Indian train service. The passengers were insistently urged to report anything amiss.

The next morning I reached Mokameghat on the Ganges. The huge river with its surging brownish yellow flood waters had to be crossed by ferry. Even though this ferry had been making the crossing daily for decades, every departure was a new adventure: the crowding in of the last passengers, the last lorries, the last ox carts—to the accompaniment of loud cries—the fastidious loosening and retying of the hawser, finally the casting off; and on the other side, a full half hour later, the very same spectacle, as if the ferry and its crew were making the crossing for the first time, as if it was their maiden voyage. It's probably the same way today.

The goings-on along the Ganges—its colourful crowds of people, the magnificent dawn of morning over the broad sweep of the river, the typical Oriental smell of spices and open wood and charcoal fires—were fascinating.

From the northern side of the Ganges I continued my journey on a track of narrower gauge through a countryside of abundant rice fields, it having since become late afternoon. The numerous mosques in the cities were striking. We were obviously crossing a Muslim region. As I later learned in Bangladesh, the Muslim Biharis who opted for Muslim East Pakistan during the partition come from there. I witnessed myself the continuation of their tragedy in Bangladesh 22 years later. The Biharis, as they are called, were and still are aliens among the Bengalis—in spite of their religion. They thus collaborated out of necessity with the Pakistani army in the Bangladeshi war of independence. Following their defeat at the hands of India, they had to pay dearly for having chosen the wrong side.

Early in the morning of 24 October 1950 I drowsily shuffled out of the first-class compartment of my sleeping car, which had carried me from Mokameghat on the Ganges to the terminal of Raxaul on the Indian-Nepal border. An early-morning autumnal fog lay in the air, carrying a typical pungent smell that mixed hearth fires and curry and other Oriental spices. At the time it was still strange to me, but in later years it formed an inextricable part of the India and Nepal experience.

The other three members of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team had obviously still not arrived from New Delhi. There was much activity in and around the station: people wherever you looked—nothing but people. I had the feeling of being lost and helpless in this loud and lively scene, amidst which I understood no word; it was my first such experience.

Difficult Border Crossing

Thus I attempted to get with my luggage to the other side of the Nepal border, where it was somewhat more peaceful. A Gurkha soldier kept me from crossing, though. I didn't have the copy of the maharaja's invitation on me, it being with Walter Custer. It would have been useless anyway, since the soldier didn't understand a word of English in the first place. Following a lively "discussion" in sign language, however, he deigned to lead me to the office of the border guards. There I became acquainted with the officer on duty, who didn't understand English either. I tried to make him understand that I had an invitation of the maharaja and that three other Swiss with the written invitation itself would be joining me shortly. This had no effect at first. He inspected me and my luggage suspiciously and simply left me to stand. I pointed to his outdated telephone, which hung on the wall, and indicated with a rotating motion of my hand that he should phone to Kathmandu.

When I showed signs of leaving his office, he finally came round to the idea of telephoning to his superiors in the capital to find out what he should do with the strange foreigner. And wonder of wonders, the connection was made after several minutes of cranking the antiquated device. I had to write my name on a piece of paper, and he tried to convey it to Kathmandu. The word "haggimsahb" kept on turning up in the telephone conversation, and finally I latched on to the fact that this was meant for my name. (From then on I was generally called "haggimsahb" in Nepal; evidently this pronunciation best appeals to simple Nepalese.)

Whereas the duty officer had acted "official" and unapproachably cool at the beginning of the phone conversation, he now became gradually friendlier. During the course of his call to Kathmandu, his superior there obviously succeeded in contacting government personnel at the highest level. The duty officer became increasingly tractable. Finally he ordered a soldier to bring me a chair, and shortly before the end of his conversation with Kathmandu he fell into a state of wholesale excitement. He began to bawl out his soldiers for not having treated the stranger in a friendly manner and for having made him wait so long for tea and breakfast. It was evidently gradually sinking into him just how "important" a guest he had in front of him.

In the meantime the other three members of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team had arrived in Raxaul. The district head, as the official representative of the maharaja, was punctual for the arrival of the train from New Delhi. As guests of the maharaja, we were officially escorted to the Pullman car that was reserved for dignitaries. The carriage, lined with mahogany and adorned with red plush curtains, stood ready to receive us. The district official accompanied us on the 30-kilometre route through the Terai, the Nepalese part of the Gangetic plain, up to the terminus at Amlekhganj at the foot of the southernmost chain of hills of the Himalaya. During the trip I was constantly looking out the window northwards in order to get a view of this chain, called the Churia Range, and perhaps even the snow mountains. Soon after Raxaul the first hills indeed appeared.

The trip over the 30 kilometres took two hours but was anything but boring. The fertile Terai plain with its lush yellow-green fields of soon-to-be-harvested rice was very impressive. After some 15 kilometres the agricultural land gave way increasingly to wooded tracts, which thickened towards the north into dense virgin forests of the famed *sal* tree.

Just how easygoing the train trip was could be seen when we reached the mild ascent of the last few kilometres before the terminal of Amlekhganj at the foot of the hills. Two railway workers with buckets of sand to scatter over the tracks had taken seats on the buffers of the puffing 1910 Sulzer locomotive. When their buckets were empty, they jumped off and filled them up again from the sandpits along the way, ran back to the train, and jumped on the buffers of the locomotive.

During this pleasant journey the district official recounted amusing stories of wild animals, with which the forests were overrun. One wild elephant had once set its sights on the telegraph line that went along the train tracks. From time to time it emerged from the forest and tore out the poles one by one.

An auto of the maharaja's was waiting for us in Amlekhganj to take us on a dirt road up into the Churia Range and through a hundred-metre-long tunnel to the northern side of the broad *dun* valley. It was not difficult to see from the rock formations that this zone corresponded to the molasse in the Swiss Alpine foreland.

The Churia Tunnel would later cause various problems for the transport of cheese-making equipment and other material that the Swiss cheese experts had to fetch from Calcutta with their Mercedes. Once a particular item had so little clearance that they could make it through the tunnel only by letting the air out of all four tires and driving on the rims.

The *dun* valley of Hitaura was then practically uninhabited; only the small market area of Hitaura existed on the main route from India to Kathmandu.

It was at the time a truly wild region, even if not covered with dense virgin forest. The lovely straight trunks of the *sal* trees caught my eye. Their extremely hard wood (heavier than water) furnished the ties for the railway network of the Subcontinent.

The auto trip continued on past Hitaura to the narrow valley of Bimphedi, where the road suddenly ended at a riverbed (1,173m above sea level) at the foot of a high chain of mountains (Mahabharat Range).

Riding over Passes and Walking to the Capital, Kathmandu

Five ponies were waiting for us on the other side of the riverbed for the ascent to the fortress of Chisapani (1,800m), which guarded the access to the two passes to Kathmandu. It was in vain that we had been keeping our eyes peeled the whole trip for a view of the snow mountains of the Himalaya; the high foothills of the Mahabharat Range (up to 3,000m) stood in between.

At the *mountain fortress of Chisapani Garhi*, the friendly commander, a Nepalese colonel, was expecting us. How we enjoyed the freshness of the mountains and the tea that was served us after the hot day in the Indian and Nepalese lowlands! After a splendid night, we climbed early the next morning up to Sisagarhi Pass (2,000m), the first pass on the route to Kathmandu. To our complete surprise we found another valley, the Kulikani valley, on the north side of it, though it was situated several hundred metres higher than the valley of Bimphedi. Instinctively the idea came to me of a hydroelectric plant in the Kulikani valley, with a tunnel through the Sisagarhi chain and delivery pipes to Bimphedi, which was situated probably 800 metres lower. Geologically, the construction would offer no major problems, as the

outcropping rock was granite and quartzite. (The hydroelectric dam was built in 1980 with Japanese development aid.)

In the Kulikani valley we came across for the first time an obviously genuine Nepalese population, of small stature and with Mongolian eyes. Their picturesque settlements are more colourful, and the houses better constructed, than those in the lowlands and in India. All slopes are terraced, and from all the slopes and their opposing slopes there rose the back-and-forth singing of the various groups, for the most part women cultivating their fields together. I heard these lovely songs (which are woven into a dialogue by male and—more often—female singers) during my hill walks up to around the end of the 1950s. They are no more heard except in remote regions. The present young generation is seemingly scarcely familiar with them any longer, having been overly "developed."

The people were extremely friendly. Words of greeting seemed to be unknown to the Nepalese. Their greeting consisted simply of a seesaw motion of the head from side to side and an engaging, even infectious smile.

This custom, too, has fallen off with the coming of development aid, making way for the non-native salutation "namaste." This was introduced in 1951, particularly by the Americans. I recall how, in order to affirm their friendship with Nepal, they began to fold their hands and call out loudly "nāmāsteey" (namaste) to Nepalese across the way. This alien form of greeting has unfortunately become everywhere nowadays habitual, and all the tourist guidebooks instruct their readers in this "Nepalese" etiquette.

On our way through the picturesque Kulikani valley, we encountered numerous palanquins, in which city folk (particularly women) unused to walking were carried, in their journeys to India, from Kathmandu to the motor road at Bimphedi.

On the steep ascent to Chandragiri Pass (2,500m), we passed an automobile that had been left to stand along the way. The transport of autos from Bimphedi to Kathmandu normally lasted two to three weeks and required up to 40 porters. The latter carried the vehicle on poles that had been bound together. The transport of the vehicle in question had occurred during the period of the Divali festival, which continues for a week. The porters had simply set it down where they happened to be at the beginning of the festival and returned to their villages to celebrate. After the week was over, they would come back and resume the transport, as if nothing had transpired.

The First View of Shangri-la

Arriving at *Chandragiri Pass*, we found opened up before us a direct view onto the broad, green Kathmandu Valley with its ancient cities, and behind it the chain of the Himalaya, of which, having consulted the map, I could make out Ganesh

Himal, Langtang Himal, and Shisha Pangma (8,013m). A true Shangri-la stretched out before our eyes—an absolutely overwhelming sight!

The descent to Thankot (1,600m) was laborious and steep, but I had to admire the very lovely and elegant artisanship of the stone path. We were generously paid for our pains, too, by the superb panoramas in the soft evening light.

In Thankot, from where a dirt road led to Kathmandu, a black Packard limousine of the maharaja's, lined with mahogany and containing red plush seats, was waiting for us. After a drive of about 10 kilometres we finally reached the Tripuresvar Guest House in Kathmandu. There, in the name of the maharaja, we were officially received by the person in charge of the guesthouse, Mr. Bhandari. He was to be for the time being our contact man with all official positions and would organize our visits, excursions, trips, and transport.

Tripuresvar Guest House was at the time very attractively situated in a small park; it was comfortably if not luxuriously furnished. Its location directly next to Tundikhel, the so-called Parade Ground between the old city and the younger garden quarter east of it with its numerous Rana palaces—everything more or less free of autos—was an incentive to take delightful evening walks. This is all built over today, and thick, chaotic auto traffic pollutes the air.

We could not be talked out of sauntering across Tundikhel the very first day, over the large common land surrounded by splendid old trees. The whole population from the nearby city was out and about there in the evening—including cows, water buffaloes, and goats. Large flocks of ducks were daily driven by their owners to the Parade Ground to feed, and in the evening led back to their stalls in the city.

The next day we set out to view the city. Apart from New Road, it had completely retained its medieval character. We couldn't get over all the magnificent temples and Newar houses with their consummate wood carvings, the countless sculptures at every corner, and among it all the colourful, gay, and serene behaviour of the people.

The walk through the city in the evening was especially fascinating. Oil lamps burned on all the window sills, and everybody was out on the street, engaged above all in dicing. We learned that such activity was permitted only during the Divali festival and was otherwise strictly prohibited throughout the year. During the Divali festival, too, the curfew that kept people from being abroad from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. was lifted. Every day a new password was communicated to the Ranas and other noble families so that they could get through the curfew checkpoints, which were situated at all the important intersections.

Late in the evening, fully wonderstruck by these new impressions, we returned individually to our guesthouse. We listened to the Indian propaganda against the Rana regime on the radio there but didn't attach much importance to it.

The First Audience with the Maharaja

On 30 October 1950 we had the first audience with Maharaja Mohun Shamsheer. We were largely surprised to find not the callous, inhuman dictator that we had come to expect from listening to the Indian propaganda and having read Indian newspapers en route. We had the impression, rather, of a mild ruler out of bygone days who had not adjusted to modern times.

The maharaja introduced to us his youngest son, **General Bijaya, the foreign secretary and managing director of the Development Board**. He was the one who had been arranging since 1949 for our whole mission. General Bijaya presented us to **Bhim Bahadur Pande, Sirdar, the secretary-general of the Development Board**. The latter was henceforth our "business partner," the man who actually transacted with us. General Bijaya was primarily responsible for official contacts.

B. B. Pande turned out to be a very important and above all very reliable man for our team—very competent, very correct, and not a member of the Rana clan. Held in general esteem (as I later found out for myself), he enjoyed a certain degree of independence. Through all the many changes of government, he continued to enjoy universal respect up to his death. For a time he was the secretary of planning and later was appointed the ambassador in New Delhi, a truly taxing post. He was the first Nepalese ambassador in the Federal Republic of Germany (1965). Still later, during delicate political situations, he was called back out of retirement to assume important duties, the last time as auditor general, after three ministers had been dismissed by King Birendra for misdealings and corrupt practices. B. B. Pande died in October 1992.

B. B. Pande was one of my best friends in Nepal—for more than 42 years. He was one of the few government functionaries who was not looking for a modern gold digger in me, someone who would be quick to retrieve gold and precious stones from his explorations and to discover petroleum too; his concern, rather, was the solid, integrated development of Nepal.

From the first talks onwards it was clear the *road link from Kathmandu to India* was the most urgent concern. After we had traversed the lovely but tiring route from Bimphedi over the two passes and witnessed the steady flow of people on foot for ourselves, we needed no convincing. Government plans evidently already existed to build a road through the valley of the Bagmati River, whence it would lead via an only somewhat higher pass of approximately 900 metres directly to Hitaura.

"Revolution in Nepal"

On the evening of the day of our talk with the maharaja and the Development Board, we set off again into the city for the festival of lights. When we returned late in the evening to our guesthouse, we heard over the radio the *All India Radio news*.

Revolution in Nepal - the whole country in a highly explosive state... the insurgents converging from three sides on Kathmandu.

The next day we found the city to be completely normal, going about its business as usual. During the talks with General Bijaya on the same day, the latter was of course slightly nervous. After a few meaningless words back and forth of a general nature, he finally put the question to us that was on the lips of all of us: If, given the new precarious developments, the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team desired to leave Nepal, he would view this with complete understanding. We thereupon explained to him that we had come as a neutral team to work for the development of Nepal. The single criterion of our stay was the ability to go about our work with the least amount of disturbance as possible.

In Switzerland, of course, people were naturally troubled by the news of political unrest in Nepal. Walter Custer wrote in this regard, with utter accuracy (as it turned out later):

On the basis of our observations and activities, however, our team is of the opinion that it is precisely in the present unstable situation that the foundation can be laid for the coming development and for subsequent multifaceted fruitful relations.... If, over a period of several years, individual experts or groups of experts succeed in studying and assessing the basic economic problems of the country, undeterred by the events of the day, then they will be able to create credible assets that any particular government will respect. [As we shall see later, this prediction of Custer's applied to me personally in its full force.]

Thus the programme was drawn up and carried out smoothly.

The next day Mr. Bhandari brought us an invitation of the Indian ambassador, **C. P. N. Singh**, for tea on the following day. We entered his palatial quarters, our nerves on edge. The conversation had in fact grotesque features: the business at hand was to inquire about our aims and about our contacts with the government, but this was constantly interrupted by the ambassador's invariable assertion, "Nepal having revolution now."

Our answer was no less invariable: we constantly demanded that he show us the revolution. We had been in the city every day and every evening and couldn't for the life of us find any trace of a revolution. It was clear that we four Swiss were highly undesirable witnesses to India's massive political interference in Nepal.

On 6 November 1950, only several days later, King Tribhuvan took refuge in the Indian embassy. Everything had been orchestrated behind the scenes by the Indian ambassador. The Indian interference was blatant, and we feared for our freedom of movement.

In the meantime the maharaja continued unabated to look after us and our work, even though his own position was in danger and he had other things than our team to worry about. He was gratified upon realizing that the Swiss Team, in spite of the unstable situation, had no intention of abandoning the scene. Our work thus went on as scheduled. Delays were caused primarily by the Oriental way of going about things and hardly at all by the political events.

Arduous First Expedition

I was itching, of course, to conduct the first expedition into the field. When, on the way up, I had seen the possibility of constructing a hydroelectric power station in the Kulikani valley and the absolute priority that needed to be given to the road link between Kathmandu and India, that was the region I wanted to visit.

Preparations naturally took much longer than I had expected, as I was supposed to be travelling in grand old colonial style. The maharaja did everything to make my trip pleasant. A team of 200 porters, almost a whole company of Gurkha soldiers under the command of a Gurkha captain, was placed at my disposal. Huge, cumbersome army tents served as shelters. The entire equipment was luxurious, but it was impractical for my work. Costly porcelain was carried along. An extra mess tent was available. One tent covered over the latrine, and another the shower.

The maharaja left nothing undone to make the trip enjoyable for me and to encourage me in my "search for gold."

The walking had every day to be halted soon after midday, as the entire afternoon was required to set up camp. When towards evening everything was in place, the whole team had to assemble, the Nepalese flag was hoisted, and the commander, standing at attention, reported to me that the camp was in shape.

Frequently it was difficult, during a period when the rice had yet to be harvested, to find a suitable camping place for this large expedition.

Woe if it rained during the night, for then the military tents were so heavy that we had to schedule an extra day of rest to let them dry, in order that they could be packed up and transported on.

The next morning the complicated ritual was repeated in reverse. We had to count ourselves lucky if we could set off around 10:00.

For the local population, the team of 200 people, whose provisions had to be bought locally, was like a swarm of locusts. It was no wonder, then, that we needed a good three weeks to go only 30 kilometres. I pictured how much time I would need for a complete geological cross section 200 kilometres in length from the Indian border in the Terai to the Tibetan border in the Himalaya, which I had actually set as my goal.

Anyone can do the calculation for himself: 21 weeks, whereas the entire period planned—and approved—for the Swiss Team to remain in Nepal was a maximum of 3 months. I pictured to myself how much time would be required at this rate to extend the geological survey to cover the whole of Nepal (which was a secret dream of mine) with some 60 cross sections of 200 kilometres each: over 1,200 weeks or about 24 years!

It was clear to me that the next large expedition through the entire Himalaya would have to be organized along completely different lines in order to achieve our aims within a tolerable period. It was also clear, from the first expedition, that the "tolerable period" of 3 months planned for the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team would in no way be enough to fulfil the tasks assigned to it.

The first excursion, in spite of its cumbersomeness, provided the certainty that it would in fact be possible to build a small hydroelectric station in the Kulikani valley. The need for electricity was not so keenly felt in 1950, as at the time only the Rana palaces were hooked up to the electric network. In the following years, however, the number of people linked to it—legally and, by tapping power lines through windows along the streets, illegally—rose to such a degree that the periods of power failure came to overshadow by far those of normal supply, assuming that electricity was supplied in the first place. But even in the best of times the electric bulbs themselves shone only in pallid red.

In the meantime *Alf de Spindler* took a trip to Kulikani by way of Pharping and evidently found this route the shortest one linking Kathmandu with the road ending at Bimphedi. The idea of building a hydroelectric station was further enhanced by this discovery; a worthwhile combination of road construction and power plant began to take shape.

Team Trip to Trisuli River

From the 19th to the 23th of November the entire Swiss Team made an *excursion to Nawakot* in the Trisuli valley northwest of Kathmandu. Even though our itinerary followed the main India-Kathmandu-Tibet transit route, we were confronted with

significant problems of passage. We had to cross the Betrawati River up to our stomachs in water, when the water level was low.

The maharaja owned an orchard and guesthouse along the Betrawati River (600m). We spent several delightful and interesting days in this mild valley.

Arriving at the *Trisuli River*, one of the great river systems draining the Nepal Himalaya, we were impressed by the huge quantities of water that rolled through the valley southwards and by the corresponding enormous potential for water power in Nepal. Opportunities for run-of-river power plants could be spied left and right.

We were astonished too, though, by the half-collapsed suspension bridge for porters who crossed the Trisuli River at Trisuli Bazar, as this was on the main Kathmandu-Gorkha-Pokhara route, the most important east-west trail in the Nepal's hilly region.

From a geological point of view, the trips within the Kathmandu Valley, to Kulikani, and to the Trisuli river valley had made me almost certain of the existence of a huge nappe structure in the Nepal Himalaya. The prospects of finding rich mineral deposits thus appeared poorer than what the ruling Ranas would have wished.

The Prompt Approval of a Charter Survey Flight

In talks that the Swiss Team had with the Development Board, the feeling gradually solidified that there was a need to make aerial photos of certain areas around the Kathmandu Valley and other regions where the first planning work had been conducted. This included parts of the Kathmandu Valley, the stretch of land Kathmandu-Pharping-Kulikani-Bimphedi, and several areas in Morang District in the southeastern Terai. Wilhelm Filchner had registered strong magnetic anomalies in the latter region, and I was interested whether this might have to do with any particular geological structures possibly visible above ground. On the basis of Filchner's results, the Rana rulers had already decided that petroleum fields existed there. (Cf. Wilhelm Filchner: *In der Fieberhölle Nepals* [In Nepal's Hell of Fevers], Brockhaus Verlag, Wiesbaden 1951).

I therefore suggested to the Development Board that they charter a survey aircraft from the Air Survey Company of India Ltd. in Dum Dum, Calcutta at a cost of 30,000 Indian rupees, in line with the estimate I had brought with me from the Survey of India.

I received the go-ahead from the Development Board within a few days. The Nepalese consul general in Calcutta, **General Daman Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana**, was informed telegraphically of my mission to Calcutta and told to make the necessary payments to the Air Survey Company in Dum Dum in accordance with my instructions.

Unexpected troubles turned up when it came time to obtain the visa from the Indian embassy in Kathmandu. Since 1939 and Wilhelm Filchner, the Indian embassy in Kathmandu had had no occasion to issue a visa for India to a European.

On 26 November 1950 I travelled to Calcutta. This meant a three-day trek over the two passes to Bimphedi at the head of the roadway, from there by car to Amlekhganj, and then by train to Calcutta—in all, a journey of 7 days (nowadays the flight lasts barely 2 hours).

Negotiations with the Air Survey Company (a completely English establishment) went without hitch. The director, a typical Englishman of the old school, had mastered the art of wearing a monocle to perfection. At each of my questions for which he had no immediate answer, he caused his monocle to fall from his eye with a raise of his eyebrows, letting it dangle from its golden chain. The delicate operation of putting the monocle back into place provided him the time necessary to prepare an answer.

After three days the survey aircraft was ready for its flight to Kathmandu. Happily, the Air Survey Company, following my first trip at the end of October on the way through to Nepal, had seen to it well enough in advance that there would be enough aviation fuel for the survey flights and for the return flight to Calcutta. This was a major operation: the petrol had to be transported by lorry from Patna to Bhainse Dobani for shipment by ropeway from there to Kathmandu. As a precautionary measure, aviation fuel was put on stand-by at the Patna airport, at 300 kilometres the nearest commercial airport to Kathmandu.

For the *Nepalese consul general in Calcutta, General Daman Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana*, however, my appearance must have had the effect of a revolution. The whole consulate general seemed to have fallen into a hundred years' sleep. The Gurkha soldier on guard looked like the only one who was awake. After a brief talk with his superior, he finally freed me from the oppressive heat outside into a waiting room, in which it was less hot but almost pitch-dark. Slumberous servants appeared, offered me finally tea with a friendly air, and disappeared again. All the curtains were drawn; not a sound could be heard in the house. After a while someone who was evidently the secretary of the consulate general came and explained to me hospitably that His Excellency was "not feeling so well nowadays."

Later I was often to hear this authentic Nepalese way of begging off, when government functionaries had no desire for a talk.

As long as the English ruled in India, Consul General General Daman Shamsher had had absolutely nothing to do in Calcutta. The transit treaty between Nepal and the British colonial government providing for a duty-free port in Calcutta functioned routinely, without any problems.

For the first time in his life, General Daman Shamsher realized that he, too, had to work.

He was, by the way, a very nice and exceptionally friendly man but was simply out of touch with the world and its upheavals.

Transfer of the Survey Aircraft from Calcutta to Kathmandu

Several days later we boarded the survey airplane in Dum Dum, full of anticipation. It was a two-motor de Havilland biplane, looking a bit old-fashioned with its many wire struts between the wings, and naturally lacking a pressurized cabin. For all that, though, the cabin windows could be opened (for photos taken at an angle). The fuel capacity was said to be just enough for the non-stop flight Calcutta-Kathmandu. Due to many last-minute preparations our take-off had been postponed to the afternoon. The cruising altitude was about 4,000 metres. The Himalaya appeared on the northern horizon shortly after the Ganges was crossed east of Patna, at first looking like a delicate seam of white clouds where the sky and earth seemed to touch.

But the sun was already sinking towards the horizon and dusk coming on when we approached the Terai. The entire Himalayan chain from Kangchenjunga in the east to Annapurna in the west was dipped in the red of the setting sun. The pilot descended from the cruising altitude to low flying, and we flew just metres above the treetops of the virgin Terai forest, along small streams and rivers, in the hope of getting glimpses of such wild animals as tigers, elephants, and rhinoceroses. In vain, though. Reascending, we flew up the Bagmati gorge and were relieved when the capital city of Kathmandu, half covered in darkness, rose up before us along with the large common land to the east that served as a landing strip. It came as a shock, though, to see that the landing strip was already closed, having been barricaded by rolls of barbed wire entanglement, inside which cows and water buffaloes peacefully grazed, evidently as a precaution against the possible landing of Indian troops. There was of course no radio tower at the time. Obviously no one had expected us to arrive so late in the evening. We made a low circuit over Kathmandu to announce our arrival, hoping that the people responsible for the landing strip would not be "not feeling so well nowadays." With the last bit of light we saw that, in fact, the runway was being cleared of the barriers and the water buffaloes were being chased off. When we finally landed safely, in almost total darkness, a cold sweat had broken out on all of our foreheads. To cap things off, the pilot revealed that we had landed on our last drop of petrol.

Our hopes of laying up a store of petrol in Kathmandu for the survey flights remained unfulfilled. The tanker that had been sent from Patna to Bimphedi at the other end of the ropeway to Kathmandu had disappeared for the time being. Thus we were forced to organize our survey flights using Patna in India as a base. This meant over 500 kilometres more for the flights back and forth, with a corresponding

reduction in range for the surveying missions. In addition, the problem arose of obtaining approval to fly over the Indian-Nepalese border daily more than once—an unprecedented situation.

In the end, however, all these problems were solved, and we finally commenced our first flight from the university city of Patna on the Ganges.

The Good Old Leica I, Vintage 1935

On the survey flights I took along my old 1935 Leica I with me in order, along with the photogrammetric vertical photos, to be able to take photos at an angle from the side windows. I developed the films myself in Kathmandu after each flight. To my great dismay, I saw that a large black spot several millimetres in diameter showed up on each negative of a portion of my films. At first I was unable to explain it, but in examining the rubber shutter on the Leica I discovered a hole in it. The cause was not difficult to ascertain: while interrupting my shooting, I had placed the camera on the floor of the aircraft. Since survey flights must be flown with a steady bearing, there was enough time for the sun, which shone through the window onto the camera (lying on the floor without its lens cover), to burn a hole in the shutter, using the lens as a burning glass.

I thereupon patched up the hole with a normal sticking plaster, and with that the Leica functioned smoothly for the remaining three months up to my return trip. Even though the Leica was already 15 years old and the guarantee had naturally long since expired, the repair was carried out by the Ernst Leitz Company in Wetzlar free of charge.

The First Geographical Analysis of the Country

My first expeditions, and more particularly the flights, allowed a first geographical analysis of the hitherto fully unknown country of Nepal to be carried out.

The majority of Nepal, as stated, lies on the southern declivity of the Himalaya. In the eastern part of the country, the main chain, including Mt. Everest, Makalu, and Kangchenjunga forms the border with Tibet. West of the meridian that passes through Kathmandu, on the other hand, the Nepal border runs along a mountain chain fronting on the Himalaya to the north, the *Tibetan Border Range*. What is very peculiar—and characteristic of Nepal—is the following: The watershed between the area drained by the Tsangpo system in the north and the Ganges system in the south is not the main chain of the Himalaya but this lower Tibetan Border Range to the north. It is unprecedented that rivers that arise from the main watershed should later

break through a much higher range, as is the case with most of the large rivers in Nepal.

The relief features and the various climatic zones of Nepal occasioned by the differences in elevation conduce towards a general division of the country into seven clearly distinct natural landscape units. The elevations above 7,000 metres constitute an insignificant surface in comparison with the entire region of the Himalaya. The highest Himalayan chains are *not* massive rises in the earth's surface but narrow crests.

East of the Kali Gandaki River, that is, along the southern flanks of Annapurna and Manaslu, are found the greatest differences in elevation within the shortest horizontal distances in the world. South of the Nepalese Midlands is another mountain chain: the Mahabharat Lekh (up to 3,000m), a natural rampart protecting the Midlands, where the majority of the population lived at the time. The Siwalik chain (up to 1,400m) borders on the northern edge of the Gangetic plain (200m). Whoever treks across Nepal from south to north passes through the seven above-mentioned zones, which nature has divided the country into, in the following sequence: 1. the Terai, 2. the Siwalik chain, 3. the Mahabharat Range, 4. the Nepalese Midlands, 5. the Himalaya, 6. the Inner Himalaya, 7. the Tibetan Border Range.

Concluding Talks and Proposals of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team

The official end of our mission was approaching, quickly and inexorably. The concluding negotiations with the Development Board took place from the end of November to 15 December. In spite of the uncertain political future of the country, one could talk matter-of-factly.

Emil Rauch had written a preliminary agricultural report that took note of all the most important problems and is still fully applicable today. Upon his return to Switzerland, he obtained supplementary funds to write up a more detailed report for the FAO. This later formed the basis for the FAO programme in Nepal.

Alf de Spindler had been able to advance his studies of the road connection from Kathmandu via Pharping and Kulikani to Bimphedi in combination with a hydroelectric station in the Kulikani valley, to a point where a very rough preliminary estimate of standard costs could be drawn up.

The *country's main problems* and proposals for their possible solution were analysed. The *country's chief assets appeared to lie in the huge potential of water power and in agriculture*. We were impressed indeed by the know-how of the Nepalese farmers, by their precision work in the terracing of highly steep slopes, and by the remarkable diversification in agricultural production. The intricate irrigation systems of the Newars with their well-disciplined distribution of water also caused us to

marvel. We saw countless possibilities for irrigation projects, both large and small. The already beginning deforestation with the perils this brought for the soil did not escape us, however. We saw the potential for animal husbandry and dairy production on the high mountain pastures.

Along with agriculture, there was no doubt in our minds that the chief economic potential of the country would lie in its large rivers with their sharp falls. We saw possibilities for both small and large run-of-river power plants practically every couple of kilometres along every larger watercourse, which would obviate the need to build gigantic dams and form large backup lakes, with all the negative effects and risks that go along with them.

We found configurations particularly suitable for run-of-river power plants with relatively large falls even on the Eight Inch to a Mile Map (approx. 1:500 000) of the Survey of India, in the numerous river loops that could be cut off by means of tunnels. Alf de Spindler investigated in particular the loop of the Kali Gandaki-Narayani river system. During our survey flights, we made a point to visit the Karnali loop in West Nepal. For me it was beyond dispute that the water power was immediately exploitable, whereas minerals, ores, and petroleum had first to be found, and if and when they were could only be got at and exploited with great difficulty and cost, if at all, given the inhospitable topography.

Walter Custer summarized these observations and experiences in a general report, one already looking towards the future, however: what structures would be required to push planning forward expeditiously in real terms; what professional assistance the inexperienced government would need in order to plan competently and later to carry out the individual projects or to solicit bids and exercise control over them wisely.

The Development Board in Nepal, which had not much experience in applying for and holding membership in international organizations, was actively supported by Walter Custer in dealing with such diplomatic affairs.

Custer was already thinking in very concrete terms about the future and about the further course of technical cooperation between Switzerland and Nepal. The team proposed to create a *Swiss Technical Advisory Board for Technical Assistance to Nepal*, which would be subordinated to the Swiss Coordination Commission under President Pallmann and be expected to see the projects in Nepal through to completion. The projects would essentially be financed by Nepal, which had already earmarked 200,000 rupees for this purpose. Switzerland would be expected to add on another 10% of this sum (amounting to 20,000 to 30,000 Swiss francs).

Other financial possibilities would come about multilaterally, since Nepal hoped to become a member of the international organizations quickly.

We had the impression that the political importance attached to our first mission had been revalued upward as a result of the political events. Nepal sought contacts

with the outside world in order to emerge from its isolation and its one-sided relation with its large neighbour to the south. Switzerland, small and neutral, seemed to be particularly welcome in this regard.

Thanks from the Government

The Nepalese government was very satisfied with the work of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team, as a note of thanks to Prof. Pallmann shows.

Their evaluation was expressed in their choice of terms: since only Englishmen had been allowed to enter the "forbidden" land up to 1950, all light-skinned foreigners were called "Englishmen." When the Americans arrived, they were called "very rich Englishmen," whereas the Swiss were known as "very hard-working Englishmen."

Extension of My Mission to April 1951

The Work Has Just Begun

The Swiss-Nepal Forward Team was officially dissolved on 15 December 1950.

It was clear to me that our job had just begun and that an extension of my stay in Nepal would be unavoidable in order to come to more concrete conclusions.

The aerial photos from the survey flights had come in before the termination of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team, and a foundation had thus been laid for carrying out targeted agricultural studies and for making preliminary projections for the road construction and hydroelectric plants.

Having become, after the first brief field trips, almost certain of the existence of an excellent nappe structure in the Nepal Himalaya, I wanted to record a cross section of the whole of the Himalaya from the Terai to the Tibetan border. The question of whether there was a nappe structure or not was of utmost importance for the possible potential for mining in the country.

Happily the ETH-Zurich approved the extension of my mission in Nepal for three months, up to April 1951.

Colonel Khadga Narsingh Rana, who had a degree in chemistry, became my immediate partner from the government's side for the remaining three months of my activities in Nepal. He had already been warmly recommended to me by Wilhelm Filchner and turned out indeed to be the best partner one could wish for. He spoke and read German, which he had learned on his own on the grounds that German scientific literature in the field of chemistry was so important that one simply had to know it. Officially, Mr. Rana was the director of Nepal's Bureau of Mines, which made me somewhat uneasy. The mines, in spite of much wishful thinking, were nowhere to be seen. But Col. Rana was a true scientist at heart, and he had recently burnt his fingers on an enterprise, the Dang Mining Company, foisted on him by

Indian advisers. He thus had a genuine sympathy for geological investigations whose goal was not exclusively quick gold and gems.

The First Geological Cross Section of the Himalaya

Given my experience with the cumbersomeness of the first expedition, I tried to reduce the second one, which was supposed to cover a far greater distance from Kathmandu, to a maximum of 30 members. I also selected the lighter tents from the ones that were available, rejecting the shower tents and the latrine tents with their commodes. Moreover, I made do with less lavish and less costly tableware.

My team was nevertheless still very unwieldy, a heterogeneous group of servants and porters. The overall leader was a Gurkha non-commissioned officer. An employee in the maharaja's guesthouse in Kathmandu served as cook. The porters were hired from public coolie agents (porters were then called coolies), the porter service being monopolized by the state. The daily wages of the porters amounted to 2 Nepalese rupees, equivalent to 1.30 Swiss francs at the former exchange rate, and the porters had to pay for their own food and lodging. The value of 2 rupees at that time, however, was higher; one kilogram of rice cost 1/4 rupee.

In spite of its motley composition, the team had one thing in common: they were all very conscious of their duty and wanted to give of their best for their "sahib," regardless of caste differences. These latter were still consequential in the Nepal of those days. The cook from the guesthouse was not accustomed to doing the dish washing. In the guesthouse, he had a sufficient number of helpers to perform that low-caste job for him. During the expedition, he engaged one of the coolies to do such work, probably paying him from my own supply of cigarettes (I myself didn't smoke on expeditions and had the cigarettes along as a much appreciated present and as a stimulus to extra effort—something I'd hardly do nowadays).

The porter in question who washed my dishes evidently experienced an increase in self-esteem from being "promoted" to do this "privileged" work. He made it a custom, performed with zeal and devotion, to clean my dinner service and cooking utensils with cow dung until they reached a sparkle. Making the pots clean was conceivably not uppermost in his mind when he chose this "cleaning agent." Perhaps he was also thinking of my overall health, given that the dung, from holy cows, is used as a tried and true elixir.

The trek led first over Kokani Pass to Trisuli Bazar, the same path taken earlier by the whole Swiss Team. From that point I walked up the Trisuli valley along a nice path, which rose steeply where the gorge began and continued on as a superb elevated trail along the eastern side of the valley. A number of fine-looking Tamang villages lie along the way. In the village of Dhunche, I saw for the first time women

weavers at work. The proud glaciated Langtang Himal soon came into view from the trail, and a desire arose in me to pay a visit on the way back to that alpine valley, which was obviously of great scenic beauty.

For the first time, too, I saw one of the large transverse gorges of the Himalaya that had come about under the exceptional topographic configuration mentioned previously.

Unfortunately, the geological results did not meet my nervous expectations: the Tibetan border is situated near Rasua Garhi, at the very low elevation of only 2,000 metres, still completely within the crystalline roots of the Himalaya. My geological cross section was forced to a premature end, and I was unable to venture further north to the northern sediment cover.

I began to feel *pains in my appendix*, incidentally, on the way to Rasua Garhi—an alarm signal. Happily this didn't result in an acute inflammation, which would have meant sure death. In any case, I realized that my appendix would have to be removed as a precautionary measure before any future continuation of my work in Nepal.

"Pebbles" and Alpine Economy—The Beginnings of the Cheese Business in Nepal

On the way back from Rasua Garhi I paid a visit to *Langtang valley* and was surprised by the lovely alpine pastures at elevations between 3,500 and 4,500 metres. I got a notion of the potential for alpine products, particularly after becoming acquainted for the first time with yaks, the splendid high mountain cattle of the Himalaya, and sampling their wonderfully rich milk—and comparing it with a wretched traditional by-product of it, something there called "cheese." This "cheese" consists of pure, very hard casein (from which, before the invention of plastics, buttons used to be made) and has the consistency of pebbles. In the absence of something better to do, I nevertheless consumed them, as this was a very expedient way to pass the time during long treks. I began to measure my walking speed per mouthful of casein stones. It took over one hour, corresponding to a 1-to-3-kilometre trek (depending upon the terrain), for one filling of pebbles to dissolve in the mouth.

A Post-revolutionary "Truce"

"Truce" may have been the wrong term for what Maharaja Mohun Shamsheer and India's Prime Minister Nehru worked out with one another. There had hardly been any fighting during this time to begin with, apart from some unrest in the cities of the Terai, where the Nepali Congress Party was particularly strong. Rather, an agreement was reached in New Delhi to create an interim coalition government

composed of the Rana rulers and the opposition in the Nepali Congress Party. On 18 February 1951, following the conclusion of this agreement, King Tribhuvan returned triumphantly to Kathmandu and was re-enthroned as the rightful sovereign (he had been deposed by the maharaja during his flight to India and replaced by a grandson, a minor called the "baby king").

Thus the *Nepali Congress Party* made its first public appearance in Kathmandu, in the beginning primarily in the form of approved demonstrations and chanting—a complete novelty in Kathmandu's urban context. **M. P. Koirala**, the chairman of the Nepali Congress Party, and a number of his colleagues were made official members of the transitional government.

To my way of thinking, the fate of the Rana regime thereby appeared to have been sealed: it would only be a matter of time before the Ranas were completely kicked out and the Nepali Congress Party, with the backing of the all-powerful neighbour India, would take the sceptre fully in hand. Still fresh in my memory was the fate of the "coalition governments" in Prague, Warsaw, and other East European capitals after the war, in which one of the coalition partners had the backing of the mighty Soviet Union. The signs pointing to India's intentions were all too clear: the degradation of proud Nepal into an Indian satellite.

Reforms for Nepal were long overdue, and the quicker the better, in order to avoid the imposition of reforms from outside. For me, an occasional personal contact with the leaders of the Nepali Congress Party seemed the expedient thing to do.

First Contacts with the Nepali Congress Party

Towards the end of February I had my first talk with M. P. Koirala. What a difference from the audiences with the Rana rulers. These latter had been subdued, hushed, well-organized affairs, ruled by the clock, as in a modern foreign office. In the case of the Nepali Congress Party, by contrast, it was at first commonplace to see throngs of people pressing in front of the building, in its corridors, and in its offices. Everything appeared to be improvised, a matter of chance; everyone raucously edged their way towards the big boss.

The talk with Mr. Koirala, however, was conducted in a peaceful, matter-of-fact, and friendly atmosphere. He inquired about the tasks and goals of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team. Of greatest importance for me were his views on the continuation of our work: whether a continuation was desired or the future government would rely entirely on Indian advisers. Mr. Koirala expressly stated that he would look favourably upon the Swiss remaining in Nepal. In later talks, he showed great interest in our work and our proposals. What particularly drew his attention was our project to build a road from Kathmandu via Pharping and Kulikani to Bimphedi.

I spent the remainder of my time in Kathmandu, up to the end of March 1951, conducting numerous talks with old and in some cases new functionaries. Luckily, when the new regime came, officials were not replaced on the basis of their party membership; a goodly number remained in their posts. This applied, in particular, to Bhim Bahadur Pande, the secretary of the Development Board and Col. Khadga Narsingh Rana, the director of the Nepal Bureau of Mines. The necessary continuity was assured.

Later on possible new government officials from the Nepali Congress Party came on the scene, whose competence and integrity I likewise learned to respect greatly, and who were to become some of my most trusted friends in Nepal.

Two high-level Indian advisers came with **King Tribhuvan** to Kathmandu; in actuality, they carried on the business of governing in the name of the king, as very soon became apparent.

The United States and Nepal

The United States reacted swiftly to the new political development in Nepal. It was not long before **Chester Bowles**, the U.S. ambassador to India and a well-known friend of that country, sent an emissary to Nepal to establish preliminary contacts. That emissary was **Andrew Corry**, who was a mining engineer by training but who had early on entered upon a diplomatic career. I immediately struck up an acquaintance with him, and a close friendship developed between us, one that was to last till his death in the 1970s.

The Americans were not oblivious to the increasing Indian influence in Nepal, and they wanted to forestall the worst possible outcome, namely the decline of the proud country to satellite status, by officially recognizing it and by establishing an embassy in Kathmandu. Accordingly, on 21 January 1951 a Point Four agreement was reached with Nepal that provided for an initial investment of \$50,000. (American aid was called Point Four at the time because President Truman had introduced development assistance as "point four" in his programme, as outlined in his inaugural address of 1949.)

In Andrew Corry, who visited Kathmandu at regular intervals, I had a knowledgeable specialist close at hand who looked upon me not merely as a gold digger but offered me moral support in dealing with the government in my quest for systematization. For political reasons, he highly welcomed the presence of Switzerland in Nepal. He and the American ambassador in India, Chester Bowles, later interceded often on behalf of my being engaged as an expert in the UN Expanded Technical Assistance Programme (EPTA), and this ensued on 1 April 1953.

The Incomprehensible Withdrawal of Switzerland from the Nepal Project

In all of these talks it was clear that the Nepali Congress Party desired the continuation of my work in Nepal. Inquiries in Switzerland (made from Nepal) were not promising. I had no idea either of what was actually going on in my native country. It was only later, after my return in April 1951, that I learned from Walter Custer the sorrowful state of affairs. Matzinger's 1991 monograph, drawing on rich sources, has clarified sundry details.

The members of the Coordination Commission expressed reservations about the plans for continuing work in Nepal, on the grounds that such work had first to be "examined in depth." **Dr. Zipfel**, the delegate for job creation, from whose budget the previous credit of some 50,000 Swiss francs had come, refused any further financial support for the Nepal project, stating that it would strain Swiss capacity and was "out of proportion to any possible gain."

Walter Custer's plan to set up a Swiss Advisory Board in Nepal had to be abandoned. Prof. Pallmann's initial proposal of a bilateral agreement on the sending of specialists to guarantee the continuation of my activities in Nepal also died "an unsung death" (Matzinger). Nor did Nepal's early expressed desire to have a Swiss mission in Kathmandu fall on receptive ears. This *complete withdrawal by Switzerland from the Nepal project*, which had begun so promisingly, was a great disappointment to Nepal.

All of this took place in Switzerland while I was desperately waiting in Nepal for a positive sign from my homeland. Would all the relationships and projects that had been initiated with so much hope go for naught? Would Nepal be left alone in its struggle for a certain degree of independence? Would the field of development aid be ceded to the major powers of the time that had a stake in the matter, India and the United States?

Taking Matters into My Own Hands, Riskily

Two weeks before the end of my visit to Nepal, in the middle of March 1951, I informed my faithful friends **Col. K. N. Rana** and **B. B. Pande** of the sad situation. Both thereupon declared spontaneously that in that case the government of Nepal would hire me directly.

There was no time left to consult my family (my wife with two small children, and a third child on the way): the last possible return flight before the expiry of the plane ticket was 10 April 1951, and I had to count on at least one week for the trip from Kathmandu to Bombay (including two days on foot over the two passes). An agreement was worked out between the government of Nepal and me. By Nepalese

standards it was very generous, providing the salary of a chief official, free housing, and paid travel costs.

Col. **Khadga Narsingh Rana** brought the agreement to the guesthouse for signature on my last possible departure day. My employment as a government geologist was to begin on 1 January 1952, as I still had some work to complete from April to the end of 1951 as a research assistant at the ETH-Zurich. The money for the plane tickets for my entire family would be transferred from Kathmandu to Switzerland in a timely fashion.

Having signed the agreement, I set off with mixed feelings for the trek over the Chandragiri and Sisagarhi passes. The Kathmandu Valley glistened under a mild spring sun. The winter crops were beginning to show their green, and the Himalaya shone in the background. On the one hand, I counted myself lucky that this was not to be my final leave-taking from this country with its grand natural setting and a people whom I had learned to esteem highly.

On the other hand, I was conscious of the risk I was undergoing by signing. To work as a foreigner in a developing country where medieval conditions prevailed and to be fully dependent on it for one's livelihood was necessarily bound up with risks. In Nepal, a country in the midst of an upheaval of historic proportions and on the verge of an uncertain political future, that risk was naturally heightened.

How would my wife react to my rash decision? Would she joyfully consent, resign herself to her fate, or would she flatly refuse to follow me into the unknown future?

A certain sense of confidence attached to the network of friends I had made, not only in Nepal but also in Patna, New Delhi, Calcutta, and Bombay (Volkart Bros. and others). They would later prove to be indeed very helpful.

Thus I finally made it to Switzerland and surprised my wife Gertrud with news of the planned resettlement in Nepal, or rather, I confronted her with a *fait accompli*. Her reaction was mixed but surprisingly composed. Fear and joyful expectation gave way to one another. She yielded to irrevocable fate, however, and in time the joyful expectations gained the upper hand.

"We Swiss Are Bad Off!"

Soon after my arrival in Switzerland I had an interview with **Lorenz Stucki**, the unforgettable managing editor of *Weltwoche*. He asked me my impressions now that I was back in Switzerland from my several months' stay in the desperately poor mountainous country of Nepal.

I told him of the cheerfulness of the people there in spite of their poverty and, in contrast to it, the dismal sullenness of the Swiss with their high standard of living, which had struck me during the train trip to Rapperswil.

Three weeks later a leading article titled "We Swiss Are Bad Off" promptly appeared in the *Weltwoche*.

Left in the Lurch by Switzerland

What I learned in Switzerland about the refusal of any further support for me was not encouraging either. Thanks to the work by Matzinger (1991) I have since learned the details. For example, on page 86 of his book he writes:

The request for financial support submitted to the Coordination Commission met in the first instance with refusal. Prof. Pallmann denied Toni Hagen any aid from funds of the bilateral credit, on the grounds that his salary corresponded to that of a university professor in Nepal or India (!). Even a multilateral payment, i.e. within the framework of the FAO, was impossible, since Hagen was a geologist and not an agronomist.

According to the record, Pallmann's reasons were as follows:

I for my part do not think that the activities of Mr. Hagen in his capacity as an official geologist of Nepal are of a nature to favour in any appreciable degree the exportation of precision products of Swiss industry to that country.

Matzinger continues:

These facts and the additional one that Hagen wanted to cooperate with U.S. experts and was seeking a financial contribution from the United States, made it impossible for him to support Hagen by means of "job creation credit" or through the industrial sector.

The Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit (the Federal Office for Industry, Trade, and Labour, BIGA) also stated: "Mr. Hagen can work in Nepal without Swiss support."

Ambassador Däniker, who had given his full backing to the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team, was disappointed at this attitude of the Swiss. The Swiss ambassador in New Delhi wrote about me in an internal document: "He has truly been a good ambassador' for us" (Matzinger/BAR, p. 250).

Switzerland's Ignoble Stance

I found this attitude of affluent Switzerland, which had just come out of the Second World War unscathed, shameful, particularly in light of the fact that, at the

same time as the government had reached its agreement with me, another arrangement had been concluded with Nepal whereby an engineer from Switzerland would conduct the triangulation work necessary for mapping the area of the planned road from Kathmandu to India. Impoverished Nepal had agreed to assume the total costs, including the flight from Switzerland to India and back as well as the engineer's salary and field expenses—altogether 30,000 Indian rupees.

Happily, **Prof. Fritz Kobold**, my boss at the Geodetic Institute of the ETH-Zurich, was more forthcoming: he guaranteed the plotting of the aerial photographs free of charge in his institute and also put me into contact with the survey engineer Eugen Hauser of the Swiss Federal Topographical Survey.

I myself worked at the ETH putting the finishing touches on my most important recent publication:

Das westliche Säntisgebirge photogeologisch gesehen und bearbeitet (The Western Säntis Range Viewed and Analysed Photogeologically), report no. 6, Geodätisches Institut ETH, Zurich 1952.

Preparations were made to allow Eugen Hauser to leave with me for Nepal at the beginning of January 1952 and to stay in Nepal up to the end of May of the same year.

Matzinger writes (page 87):

Even though Hagen and Hauser went about their work outside the framework of bilateral technical assistance, their work must be mentioned here, since they kept alive the ties with this country and laid the foundation for the later engagement of private relief organizations [and government aid through the *Direktion für Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und humanitäre Hilfe* (DEH), as it later turned out].

The Political Struggle for Mount Everest

In the meantime the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research was again making waves. During his visit to Nepal in the spring of 1950, Prof. Arnold Heim had managed to get permission to conduct an expedition to Mt. Everest. Mindful of previous bad experiences, Prof. Pallmann sought to have the foundation coordinate its activities with the Swiss working in Nepal in order to avoid giving the impression that Swiss activities were unsystematic. The foundation felt encouraged by this to engage in "cooperation" in the widest sense of the term. As the foundation still needed 50,000 francs for its expedition, it applied for funds from the Coordination Commission. This was rejected.

Right from the opening up of Nepal in 1950, the maharaja had given the British his promise that they would be the first ones allowed to climb Mt. Everest. The political struggle for Mt. Everest has thus begun. The foundation for its part commissioned First Secretary Campiche of the Swiss embassy in India to "postpone" the British expedition until 1953.

The Nepalese government which, in view of the technical assistance provided by the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team, did not dare to muddy relations with Switzerland, submitted to the idea and gave the British their consent only for 1953.

At that point in time the government of Nepal did not yet know that Switzerland would act so ignobly and would one day no longer want to finance the continuation of the work of the Swiss, and that Nepal itself would have to pay all the costs, both for me and for the survey engineer, Eugen Hauser.

In spite of Prof. Pallmann's request to the Foundation for Alpine Research, the latter took its time in complying. Matzinger writes in this regard: "The foundation sought out contact with Toni Hagen, who returned to Nepal in 1952, only when they needed his help there."

Now, though, I was not yet back in Nepal but rather using the remainder of 1951 to prepare for my departure. I still had a summer and autumn in Rapperswil before me, in our small but beautiful house with its large garden. Our final child, Monica, had in the meantime been born.

Even though I greatly looked forward to my work in Nepal at the beginning of January 1952, doubts still gnawed in my mind whether it was right to wrench my young family, including three small children (the youngest would hardly be one year old), from the security of their idyllic, "intact" world.

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PART II

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Activities and Experiences in Nepal

1952-1960

Hard Times

I Become an Expatriate Swiss

Leaving Switzerland was naturally a watershed event in the life of our family and its three small children. We assumed that the other family members would arrive in Nepal two or three months after me, during which period I hoped to be able to find a suitable house.

The closer the day of departure drew, however, the more uncertain our future appeared to me. When, in spite of the contractual agreement with the government of Nepal, my plane ticket from Zurich to Kathmandu had not arrived by the end of November, a bit more than a month before my departure, I began to get the jitters. Finally **Prof. Pallmann**, the president of the ETH-Zurich, advanced me a sum for the flight through the ETH. Through his good offices, too, a research stipend of 5,000 francs was arranged for me through the Janggen-Pöhn Foundation of St. Gallen.

I shall never forget the moment when, on the cold evening of 22 January 1952, I left our small house in Rapperswil. The windows were bright, and I knew that behind them my wife and our three small children were enjoying the cosy warmth, safe and sound. I was not yet headed for the airport, only to the Wädenswil hospital. Still, it was my act of leave-taking from a settled life.

Having experienced inflammation of my appendix during my first visit to Nepal, I decided to have my appendix removed as a precautionary measure before my renewed departure for Nepal. This occurred immediately before my flight at the beginning of January 1952. I remember with gratitude the visit **Wilhelm Filchner** paid to the Wädenswil hospital, at which time he handed over a check to cover the operation and hospital costs.

The nighttime departure flight from Geneva, in contrast to my flight somewhat more than a year before, was dominated not only by joyful expectations. Then I had been a member of a team; now, by contrast, I was completely alone, left to my own resources. On the previous occasion I knew that I would be returning to Switzerland's security after a few months; this time the future of my family was uncertain.

Decisive Political Changes in Nepal

A number of things had taken place in Nepal in the meantime that did not seem to portend calm political development in the future. The so-called transitional cabinet (half Rana, half Nepali Congress with M. P. Koirala) was short-lived. By January 1951 Maharaja Mohun Shamsher had already realized the hopelessness of his remaining any longer as a member of the government. He resigned and went into exile in India. In a farewell speech before leaving Nepal, he called upon the Nepalese population to engage peacefully in the democratic process. He confessed that his former regime had no longer any place in the newly emerging modern world.

The changes in Nepal that had occurred since I had left the country in April 1951 manifested themselves during the flight itself. There was now an air link with Kathmandu. The flight in the old DC3 was strenuous, however, as the cruising altitude was only 3,000 metres, and the turbulence encountered over the hot Gangetic plain correspondingly heavy. Moreover, there was no direct flight; one had to change in Patna to another DC3 which came from Calcutta. On the flight from New Delhi, furthermore, stops were made at Lucknow, Benares, and sometimes Agra. In Patna there was a great risk of being stranded because the plane from Calcutta was already full. Often, too, people missed their connecting flight to Kathmandu when the flight from New Delhi arrived too late. In such cases, one had to spend the night in Patna without any guarantee of obtaining a seat the next day. Luckily there was a hospitable bishop's house in Patna—a centre of American and German Jesuits that had made a name for itself nationally by establishing a host of educational institutions. Since 1950 these Jesuits had been on their way towards constructing the first modern secondary school in Kathmandu. Its founder, Father M. D. Moran, became a legend in Nepal. He and his fellow priests were later among my best friends there. Patna and its bishop's house proved to be an important base and transit point for my future field work.

The landing during my memorable arrival at Kathmandu "Airport" in January 1952 was made on the same grassy runway as had been used for the survey flights in 1950. The terminal consisted of several bamboo huts.

The Indian Influence—Little Feeling for Tact

Two Indian advisers had by now moved into the royal palace in Kathmandu. They exerted a decisive influence on the course of political events. Concomitantly the Indian ambassador, **C. P. N. Singh**, kept up his intrigues, obviously hardly bothering to coordinate things with the Indian advisers, who were on the whole correct in their dealings. In February 1952 **B. P. Koirala**, the step-brother of the prime minister, openly accused Mr. Singh of scheming, and specifically of trying to play off the leaders of the Nepali Congress Party one against the other. He made it publicly clear to India that the diplomat had to be replaced if India and Nepal wished to remain friends.

Prime Minister **Nehru** took cognizance of this and appointed **B. K. Gokhale** to be the new ambassador. The latter acted very correctly and tried to iron out the difficulties that had arisen. I was soon to be closely acquainted with him.

Indian influence in Nepal rapidly developed a momentum of its own, however, over which the Indian foreign office obviously lost control. The feeling among the Nepalese people, whose progressive parts, particularly in the cities (the mountain farmers tended to be indifferent), at first celebrated their large neighbour to the south as a friend and helper during the liberation from the Rana regime, made a drastic turnabout within only a few months. One of the reasons was the numerous advisers from New Delhi.

These advisers unwittingly aroused much bad feeling for having assumed executive prerogatives within the government of Nepal. Thus Nepal's first chief public prosecutor following the change of government was a high Indian official. The Nepalese police force likewise obtained an Indian "adviser," who in fact assumed the role of a superintendent.

In February 1952 an Indian military mission was established in Kathmandu to train, educate, and reorganize the Nepalese army. This occasioned particularly bad feelings among the proud Gurkhas, primarily those who as elite troops under British command had won international fame in the Second World War.

The Indian military mission had all border posts on the Nepal-Tibet border manned by detachments of the Indian army. These all had radio facilities linking them with Kathmandu, not—and this was particularly aggravating—with the government in Singha Durbar or with the headquarters of the Nepalese army but with the Indian embassy. I later experienced some of the consequences of this personally, during my expedition in 1954 to Mugu and Dolpo.

When the British colonial government, which had maintained particularly friendly relations with Nepal, pulled out of India in 1947, the new government of independent India inherited its control of foreign policy. This was visible in purely physical terms: the British embassy had to vacate the very beautiful and

representative palace Sital Nivas to the new Indian rulers and make do with a much more modest building.

The relationship with Nepal took on a new complexion. For example, the British embassy in Kathmandu had earlier looked after the entire *international postal service*. This had functioned smoothly. Nepal had had no reason to join the Universal Postal Union.

This all changed when the Indian embassy in Kathmandu assumed control of the international postal service for Nepal in 1947. All mail from abroad had to be addressed "c/o Indian Embassy Post Office, Kathmandu." The latter applied a total censorship. I saw this from the carelessly resealed envelopes. There was one particularly amusing instance: In one of the envelopes addressed to me from Switzerland there was a letter to an American of the Point Four Mission (American development aid) whom I knew well. The American letter had been mistakenly put in my envelope by the Indian censors. I took the letter over to the American but was no less astounded when he grinningly turned over my own letter to me, which he had found in the envelope addressed to him.

Foreign telegrams had to be addressed "c/o Stationmaster, Railway Station Raxaul, India." The stationmaster handed such telegrams over to the postmaster of the Nepalese post office on the other side of the border. From there the telegram was sent by train to Amlekhganj, and then on by car to Bimphedi. From there they went by dispatch runner over the Sisagarhi and Chandragiri passes to Kathmandu. This lasted up to 1956.

Under the Rana regime, no high-ranking British diplomat and also no high-ranking member of the British colonial government was allowed to enter Nepal without permission. The governor and art lover Lord Curzon could not obtain a visa even for a private trip to Kathmandu as long as he was occupying an official post. Maharaja Chandra Shamsher let it politely be known that he would be welcome as a guest in Nepal when he was no longer in office.

Following the revolution in 1950, which India had set in motion by its abduction of King Tribhuvan to New Delhi, these rules no longer applied. Indian politicians, functionaries, diplomats, and soldiers, and also Marwaris (traders, not particularly welcomed in any of India's neighbours), entered Nepal at will. In India's eyes, Nepal was no longer a completely sovereign and independent state...

One day in 1952 the foreign secretary, **Narendra Mani Dikshit**, at the time already a good friend, called me to the Foreign Office and showed me a letter from the Nepalese ambassador in London. The latter had received curt notice from the Indian foreign ministry that, with immediate effect, the Indian embassy in London would simultaneously be representing Nepalese interests in Great Britain.

The British foreign office cannot be spared the reproach that questions relating to the relations between India and Nepal had not been sufficiently clarified and

settled prior to India's release from its colonial status. The maharaja was unversed in world politics, and the British should have foreseen, on the basis of their rich experience, the possible appetite the new state of India might acquire to exercise influence over its small and defenceless neighbour.

The Other First Swiss

In the meantime the other first Swiss had arrived in Kathmandu. The survey engineer **Eugen Hauser**, accompanied by his enterprising wife, tackled the job of triangulating the region from Kulikani to Bimphedi for the later photogrammetric plotting of the aerial photos taken by me in 1950. His work progressed well, thanks to the fine support of his competent Nepalese partners, **Engineer Malla and Major Karki**. His work was done by the beginning of the monsoon.

Emil Rauch, the agricultural expert of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team, likewise turned up in the spring of 1952 under instructions from the FAO. His job was to carry out fundamental planning for the future FAO activities in Nepal. The proposals he made at the time are still fully applicable. In line with these proposals, the Swiss milk and cheese specialist **Werner Schulthess** arrived in 1952 as the first new FAO expert. This was the first step in the very successful cheese-making project, which today, 40 years later, provides a supplementary income to approximately 10,000 mountain people. Unfortunately, not all of Emil Rauch's suggestions were later carried out. Development aid funds quickly multiplied, and the interest of the government as well as of the suppliers of big money shifted to larger projects.

Emil Rauch returned to Switzerland at the beginning of 1953.

Arduous House Hunting in Kathmandu

Having arrived back in Nepal in January 1952, I hoped to be able to find a suitable house for my family within a few weeks so that they could join me. This was being too optimistic. I had been misled in this regard because in 1951 there had been numerous empty palaces, both large and small, in Kathmandu. In my search for accommodations, however, most of the palaces turned out to be, in the first place, too big and, secondly, unsuitable for my family. Narayan Bhavan in the Jawalakhel section of Patan had been offered to Emil Rauch and me. It was a palace of over one hundred rooms, but there was no one separate part of it where one could feel a sense of comfortable privacy. At night it was eerily quiet and dark. Frequently the electricity was cut off, and when it wasn't, the light bulbs glowed a mere dark red. Every conversation was echoed and multiplied tenfold in the long corridors. In the winter, nights in the palace were intensely cold, many windows were broken or missing, and the icy Himalayan wind whistled through unchecked.

The monstrous kitchen was equipped only with open hearths. Water was available only intermittently. Instead of bathrooms it had semi-dilapidated latrines.

Of the dozens of houses I viewed (all abandoned Rana palaces), there was not one which was not in nearly the same condition. Over and over I was forced to tell my family in Switzerland to postpone their departure. Finally April rolled around, and the hot time of year with all its tropical diseases was approaching. During the monsoon, these risks would be that much greater. With a heavy heart I wrote to my wife to put off the trip to Nepal till autumn, the best and loveliest time of year in Nepal. The problems that thereby arose for her (our house in Rapperswil had been cleared of furniture in January 1952 and rented out) will be described by my wife herself in Chapter 10.

For me in Nepal, this meant a still longer separation than the previous year. Now it was imperative to use the time up to the monsoon as wisely as possible for field work. I was supposed to be in Kathmandu at the beginning of May 1952, however, when the first Swiss Mount Everest expedition was expected. They had kindly agreed to transport my family's luggage and my camping equipment along with their expedition equipment. I expected this to spare me a host of bureaucratic difficulties, and more importantly, it seemed to be a means of ensuring that the luggage would actually be in Kathmandu when my family arrived in autumn.

First Expedition to Mustang
April 1952

During my survey flights, it had already become apparent to me that the geological cross section from Pokhara to Mustang on the Tibetan border ought to be one of the most interesting in the whole of Nepal. Mustang with its granite rocks (visible from over 100 kilometres away) must, I figured, lie far to the north of the sedimentary zone of the Inner Himalaya. And in that sedimentary zone one could expect there to be rich finds of fossils.

As the Swiss Everest expedition, contrary to my expectations, had not brought my luggage to Nepal, I was forced to manage my own expedition with less than suitable camping equipment. Still, by cutting necessities down to the bare minimum, I succeeded in reducing the number of porters to around 20.

The route to our destination, going through the central Midlands from Kathmandu via Gorkha to Pokhara (200 km)—through the heart of Nepal, so to speak—, was of great interest in itself. I had to go the entire way on foot (10 days), after the horse that the government had placed at my disposal failed to make the difficult crossing of the Trisuli River and was lost, and I myself narrowly escaped. A report was never asked for concerning the loss of the horse; the government simply wrote it off.

Nowadays tourists can make the trip by a flight of forty minutes following the Himalayan crest—a flight that is certainly one of the loveliest in the world.

"Wireless" Telephoning 1952

During my ten-day trek from Kathmandu to Pokhara in 1952, I observed that large parts of the 200-kilometre telephone line between the two cities were missing. I didn't attach much significance to this, however; there were more exciting things to observe. My arrival in Pokhara was such a thrill for the governor (I was one of

the first foreigners to go there) that he wanted to report the event by telephone to Kathmandu. He despairingly cranked the handle of his antiquated telephone, and when after an hour he still had no connection, he apologized by saying that the telephone was obviously "out of order just now." (This turn of phrase is widely used in Nepal for problems that have existed for months or years and whose rectification is still uncertain.) I still don't know whether the governor was honestly disappointed over the "temporary" breakdown of the telephone or whether he was simply a good actor.

The Bugbear of Thorung La

During the continuation of our trek from Pokhara through the huge transverse gorge of the Kali Gandaki between Annapurna and Dhaulagiri and on into Thakkhola, the porters evidently learned of the planned route from my Sherpa Aila. They anxiously looked forward to seeing Mustang; it was unknown territory for them. On the way back I wanted to go via the shrine of Muktinath and over Thorung La to Manang, that is, to do the trek around Annapurna. Thorung La, at 5,416 metres, was the first high pass I had wanted to cross during my expeditions. A good path leads up over the pass, which is nowadays negotiated by many trekkers in their circumambulation of Annapurna—an absolutely first-class trek. Thorung La appeared to be an object of excessive dread, though, for my porters. They gave vent to their first apprehensions about the pass around the evening campfires during the approach to it over the Ulleri Pass and the Kali Gandaki valley: it snowed a lot, they said, and making it across would be difficult. One day further on, at Dana, the porters warned me of the severe cold in which people could freeze to death. At Lete they said that the pass was unnegotiable, and the continuous storm so strong that people were tossed through the air.

On the way from Kagbeni to Mustang, the porters' fears subsided, since we were moving for the time being away from Thorung La.

Fascinating Approach to Thakkhola

The horror stories my porters told did not distract me from enjoying the magnificent route leading to Thakkhola, which is still one of the most beautiful in Nepal. I experienced one wonder after another and could not get over marvelling. The first thing I was treated to was the majestic elevated trail through Kaski, dotted with a rich assortment of Gurung villages and offering a continuous view of the imposing southern flank of the nearby Annapurna. On the crest of Naudanda, one of the loveliest panoramas on earth presented itself to view, which is now disfigured by a road recklessly built with Chinese development aid. The Ulleri "wall" followed:

the climb along a single seemingly endless slope from the Modi River (1,000m) to the approximately 2,900-metre Ulleri Pass (today called Ghorepani Pass). I was richly compensated for my pains by the blossoming rhododendron forests at the upper end and by the splendid view of Dhaulagiri, which comes into full and direct view at the top of the pass.

Following the descent via Sika, I reached the enormous gorge of the Kali Gandaki, probably the deepest in the world. It was there that I first became acquainted with the famed half-destroyed suspension bridge of Tatopani, which became the trademark of my later picture book about Nepal. A bath in the hot springs that bubble up into the Kali Gandaki put resiliency back into my legs after the long descent from Ulleri Pass.

The path, boldly hewn out of the rock, in those days still ran intact along the sometimes vertical walls of the gorge. Later, due to rock-slides, it was no longer passable; travellers had to take detours over makeshift paths and bridges.

Near Lete, where the valley again opens out, I got a close-up view of the steep eastern slope of Dhaulagiri, and near Larjung I wandered through the wondrously scented larch forests. It was as if one had been transported to the upper Engadine in the Swiss Alps.

Thanks to the salt caravans, business was brisk in the large and prosperous caravansaries of Tukuche, Marpha, Jomosom, Kagbeni, and others. Further to the north there followed the purely Tibetan settlements, protected by town walls. The heavy caravan traffic occasionally found its route going through the fortified villages and right through houses.

Near Chukh I left the valley floor for higher elevations westward, and a new fascinating view out over the desert landscape of northern Thakkhola with its canyonlike valleys presented itself. The route continued on as a ridge path, along which the steady traffic of the salt caravans plied. The Tibetan yak herders added their songs, which were highly reminiscent of the idiosyncratic Appenzeller yodels. Most of the pack animals wore bells, so that the sound was like that of herds being driven up the Alps.

Finally, after the last pass, the large town of Mustang suddenly came into view. It is laid out rectangularly and surrounded by a high wall. In front of the town, large fields are enclosed within stone walls: campsites for the large yak herds of the salt caravans. Far away, just such herds were moving like ants along the barren slopes leading to Kore Pass, the border pass to Tibet.

Today I am fully aware of what a one-time privilege this unrepeatable experience was: the Tibet-Nepal border is now closed to the salt trade; the salt trade with yak caravans no longer exists. In its stead, a continuous stream of tourists pours through Thakkhola and over Thorung La—with all the negative side effects that this entails.

Unknown, Forbidden Mustang

The semi-autonomous kingdom of Mustang, situated some seven days on foot north of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna, was wrapped in myth even during my days; up till then no foreigner had seen the town. In 1952 I was the first white man who had the chance to. The town enters the field of vision of those approaching it only at the last moment, at a point where, from the final stretch of hills, it presents a very imposing view of itself as a square-shaped fortification. When we reached the town wall shortly after six in the evening, the gates to the town were already closed, in a manner similar to our cities during the Middle Ages. Thus I pitched my tent outside the wall, where many yak caravans from Tibet were already camped down.

Unceremonious Maharaja

The next morning I made my presence known again. I was mistaken to think, however, that the arrival of the first foreigner would awaken the usual Nepalese sense of curiosity or their proverbial hospitality. Through servants I was offered a stable for accommodations (in contrast to the *gompas* in Sherpa territory, where I was consistently given a place of honour under the altar). In the meantime Aila had entered into conversation with messengers of the maharaja of Mustang. As was customary, he introduced me as a "colonel sahib" sent by the king and had the messengers convey my wish to see the maharaja. This had no effect whatsoever, for the maharaja let it be known that he had no time to receive me. Aila thereupon promoted me (as usual, when "colonel sahib" had not made enough of an impression) to "general sahib." This evidently had just as little effect. Then Aila boasted that I was a "very big Swiss lama." This too led to nothing. Finally, pointing to my geological notes and maps, Aila drew attention to the important papers that I was carrying under instructions of the king of Nepal. All of this was obviously counterproductive, since the maharaja informed—always through his messenger—that he was "not feeling so well nowadays." Thus I bided my time by working on my field books in the sun (inside it was very cold), sitting at my field table in front of my assigned stable.

Female Curiosity: A Help in Times of Trouble

Finally good old female curiosity came to my rescue. The maharani sent someone to ask me whether I had any facial cream for sunburn along with me. This happened to be one of the articles that my two medicine boxes did not contain, since my experience has been that dispensing with soap, or at higher elevations with washing in the first place, and relying on the natural oil of the skin is the best

protection against sunburn. During my eight years of field work, therefore, I never used lotion at all—except for the lips. I considered what I might offer the maharani instead. Nupercainal, a pain-killing salve for the skin, was the only thing I had of which it could be said, "It may not be any good, but it won't do any harm." Moreover, the cream had a pleasant smell. Thus I had a tube delivered to the maharani. Word was promptly received that the maharaja would receive me the next day (an invitation for the same day would probably have meant too much loss of face). It was full of expectancy, then, that I entered his living quarters, which were furnished in true Tibetan style, with a house altar and a picture of the Dalai Lama. When the maharaja learned during the course of our conversation (Aila acted as interpreter) that I had nothing to do with the government in Kathmandu but was only interested in rocks, he became notably friendlier. The mistrust was well based, since almost the only people representing the government in Kathmandu that the people and the local potentates came face to face with were the tax collectors (*tsamindari*). Even in the most undeveloped countries, the tax collection system is nowadays still the only part of the administration that functions in every city, village, and nook. Tibetan tea, spiced with salt and rancid butter, was served. Finally, as a present and a token of friendship, the maharaja gave me a yak tail.

After 1959 Mustang became a restricted area. Trekking permits for Thakkhola were good only up to Muktinath. Finally Mustang, too, was opened up for trekking in 1992. The government may wish to prevent mass tourism by imposing horrendous fees, but whether this is the way to promote quality in the tourist sector is another question.

An Unfair but Useful Sharpshooting Contest

On the way back from Mustang we kept to the eastern flank of the valley, making separate trips into the side valleys on the east. A superb ridge trail with numerous magnificent views led south. Along the way I met a goodly number of Tibetan pilgrims and salt traders who, with their two-metre-long muzzle-loaded rifles supported by forward props, presented an image of days long gone. I was naturally curious to know how such monstrous weapons could be fired. To find out I organized a sharpshooting contest. The Tibetan needed about ten minutes to make his muzzle-loader ready to discharge. A stone slab the size of a human was set up as the target some six metres off, and the rifle was ceremoniously steadied on the props. The Tibetan ignited the gunpowder with a flint and tinder, whereupon an explosion occurred, producing a large cloud of smoke and dust that completely enveloped us. When the cloud had dissipated, we found the target in a pristine state. It was with a true sense of shame that I then unloaded a whole magazine of cartridges from my

army pistol against the rock, each shot a hit. From that moment on, my standing in the eyes of my porters rose dramatically.

Bandits with Firearms?

Having arrived in Muktinath at the foot of Thorung La, the porters resumed their warnings about crossing the dangerous pass. Although the warnings made no impression on me, the situation was becoming more serious: I was cautioned that there were bandits who carried firearms in that land of mystery Manang. This seemed to me to be improbable; up to then I had felt absolutely safe in Nepal. Still, things might not always be this way. The decision was not easy. Finally I played the man of courage. In the evening I assembled all my porters around my work table and asked how many bandits there were in Manang with firearms. The porters finally settled on eight. I thereupon pulled out my pistol with feigned presence of mind and, with everyone looking on, counted out my supply of ammunition onto the small table in front of my tent. I still had nine cartridges—a genuine piece of good luck! "Great," I said bluffingly, and went on to explain to the porters, "Once I kill all eight bandits, there's still one shot left over, just in case." (What would I have said if I had had only five or six cartridges?) "We'll set off tomorrow morning," I declared, even though I was somewhat ill at ease in doing so. The porters, in any case, appeared to be satisfied that their haggimsahb would find a way out of all untoward situations. I myself was not, but nevertheless we set off. The sharpshooting contest had paid off, then, at least for the time being.

Early the next morning we got under way. There was much snow, but it was frozen hard, so that we reached Thorung Pass after four hours. On the Manang side there was even more snow, and it was turning soft. The sun beat down mercilessly from the cloudless sky. No tracks were visible, and for part of the time we had to wade through the snow up to our bellies. It thus took a long time to make the descent. On entering the snow zone on the Muktinath side, I had distributed snow goggles to all the porters. They wore them up to the top of the pass. When the descent in waist-deep snow proved troublesome, however, they found the "snow glasses no good" and removed them. When we finally emerged from the snow zone, all the porters were more or less snow-blind, their eyes swollen and inflamed to a deep red. There was no thought of going further; we immediately set up camp. Far and wide not a man was in sight. I felt at ease as far as the "bandits" were concerned.

The Mysterious Town of Manang behind Annapurna

The next day we reached the valley floor of Manang. My snow-blind porters were happy that they only had to do a half day's trek. For the time being we set up our tents approximately one kilometre outside the strikingly large settlement. Unusual in light of my previous experiences in Nepal was the fact that there was no sign of anyone in the village. From what I could make out through my binoculars, our activities were being observed by only a few people from their rooftops. No one came to my tent, which otherwise on such occasions was immediately surrounded by the curious. This astonished me greatly, since the village didn't lie along a trade or even a transit route to Tibet that might have provided it its prosperity.

The next day a few children came. I handed out sweets to them. Towards evening the first grown-up man visited me. He invited me to stay in his house. Even though I knew that hospitality, once offered in the Orient, is sacrosanct, I was slightly nervous. The following day the first inquisitive visitors came to the house of my host, and on the one after that almost the entire village was milling in and around my house. When I set about taking some photographs, one Manangi whipped out his own camera and photographed me. When they showed me their golden Rolex wristwatches, my astonishment increased. By this time they had become quite talkative, and they showed me their passports with stamps from Calcutta, Bombay, Bangkok, Singapore, and Hongkong. I asked them what they did there. "Liddill bisiniss," one of them said. Namely in watches and, more importantly, in cheap beads imported from Czechoslovakia, which they, in their Tibetan attire, sold to tourists and other foreigners in Nepal, India, and the whole of South-East Asia as "precious stones from the Himalayas." (In Nepal and Tibet, coloured beads are standard adornment for women and girls.)

I returned the next year to Manang, and photographs were exchanged with my hosts. In later years I visited Manang again on a number of occasions, having come across rich fossil finds in the region. Each time my hosts received me kindly.

Even Smugglers Modernize

The Manangis have worked their way up to the big-time ranks of South-East Asian smugglers. They now travel by airplane, though they still wear their Tibetan dress in order to make the buyers of their cheap smuggled goods believe that they are bringing their "precious stones" directly from the throne of the gods in the Himalaya. They have in the meantime obviously become very rich: whole modern quarters and business concerns near the royal palace in Kathmandu belong to them. As was the case previously, they do not trade only in cheap beads.

In 1983 I flew with Thai Airways from Bangkok to Kathmandu. During the check-in at Bangkok I was struck by the very numerous would-be Tibetans; they looked like Tibetans, in any case, from their clothing. They filled practically the entire Airbus. Led on by curiosity, I asked some of the strange-looking passengers why such a large group of Tibetans was flying from Bangkok to Kathmandu. The answer was, "We are not Tibetans, we are Manangis."

I was hardly unprepared, then, for things to go less than smoothly at the Kathmandu airport. One part of the luggage had in fact "disappeared." An hour of supposed investigating by airport personnel bore no fruit. My suitcase was among the missing items. Many passengers were becoming nervous. One of them introduced himself as a representative of the World Bank who had to take part in an "important" meeting in Kathmandu. Now all of his "very important documents" for the meeting had disappeared, he moaned. How this World Bank official failed to follow the fundamental rule of carrying one's most important things, such as documents and essential medicine, in one's valise, I don't know. I was amused by the excited passengers, who behaved like a flock of chickens. Approximately one hour later a whole container of luggage suddenly turned up, out of the void so to speak, and from afar I saw my whitely gleaming aluminium suitcase among it all.

It was par for the course: the customs officials had got wind of the large group of Manangis and set the "rate" accordingly. When the Manangis at first refused, the container simply "disappeared" until they were ready to cough up.

6

Life in Kathmandu

1952-53

The First Swiss Mt. Everest Expedition, Spring 1952

The strange background history of the Swiss Mt. Everest expedition and the methods employed by the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research have been described in Chapter 2. The foundation finally succeeded in obtaining permission for 1952, even though there had been an unwritten agreement that the English would enjoy the right of first ascent, this on the basis of the very close and friendly relations between Great Britain and Nepal dating to the treaty of Sagauli, when the recruiting of Gurkhas for the British army commenced, and also because, since 1900, the English had been performing the survey work for the Everest region both on the Tibetan and Nepalese sides, and because the Survey of India, under British guidance, had discovered Everest to be the world's highest mountain and had produced the first useful map of Nepal, the renowned Quarter Inch Map (approx. 1:250 000).

In May 1952 the first Swiss Mt. Everest expedition arrived in Kathmandu under the leadership of **Wyss-Dunant**. Most of the Sherpas, including Tensing Norke, had taken up quarters in my residence, as many were relatives or friends of my Sherpa Aila. I don't know their exact number; there was a constant coming and going. All the Sherpas took meals at my place. This occurred so naturally and as a matter of course that I assumed that this was a tradition among the Sherpas dictated by their Oriental sense of hospitality.

In spite of the disagreeable prelude to the expedition concocted by the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research, my relations with the mountain climbers and scientists were very friendly.

I was naturally disappointed to learn that my luggage had been left behind in Bombay due to a host of bureaucratic problems and the loss of time that solving

them would have involved for the expedition. It was a source of worry to me how this luggage, consisting of a half dozen tried and proven saddle trunks I had obtained from leftover stock of the Swiss army for five francs apiece, would reach Nepal unaccompanied. Being transit goods, my luggage was first sent to Calcutta, since this was the only official point of transit for Nepal. The Swiss embassy in New Delhi did everything to make the transit function smoothly. The luggage contained, most importantly, winter clothing for my family and also my new camping equipment, including lightweight tents made by Spatz. For the time being I was not greatly worried, since more than half a year would pass before my family arrived.

The First Night Club in Nepal

One of the first boosts to social life after the opening of the country was the establishment of a night club in Narayan Bhavan in Kathmandu. This was the tumble-down palace with over one hundred rooms that had been offered to me for occupancy by me and my family. The most striking feature of this night club was its darkness. To achieve that state it had no need of any particular facilities, since the electric bulbs of the time, due to the lack of electricity, glowed only dark red, if at all. The principal guests were the rich sons of the Ranas and members of the royal family. King Tribhuvan himself was a frequently observed guest. They all enjoyed the newly won freedoms, and the whiskey flowed freely too. Representatives of the Nepali Congress Party and the government were not seen there, any more than were the Indian advisers and functionaries who resided in Nepal in an official capacity. Indian businessmen, on the other hand, took advantage of the occasion to strike up acquaintances with rich Ranas and Shahs and to establish other business ties.

It was not an uplifting atmosphere. Nevertheless, Werner Schulthess and I visited the night club from time to time. In the first place, it was an entertaining and utter change from the field work we carried out in solitude; secondly, we learned all sorts of things about political developments thanks to the usual flood of comradely feelings that whiskey gives rise to.

There was an unforeseen upswing in partying during this period. New embassies were opened, and countless representatives of foreign missions in New Delhi made use of the opportunity to pay a visit to the formerly forbidden country—be it in an official capacity, out of a need to make personal contacts, or whatever the pretext—in order to vacation in the magnificent Kathmandu Valley with its excellent cool climate.

Boris and His Legendary Royal Hotel

General Mahabir Shamsher, a prominent member of the Nepali Congress Party, was a member of the renowned and exclusive Maharaja Club in Calcutta, the "Club of the 300," whose manager was the **Russian exile Boris Lissanevich**. Returning to Nepal in January 1951 from his own exile, Mahabir Shamsher brought Boris and his beautiful blond Danish wife **Inge** along with him. I met them for the first time at a large party given by Maharaja Mohan Shamsher in the famed hall of mirrors in Singha Durbar. Inge was the first woman to turn up for an official party and to be able to move about freely. Previously Nepalese women, even upper-class ones, had been allowed to view official parties only from latticed balconies (a common practice in the Orient).

Boris impressed me from the very beginning. He was destined to become a legendary personality in Kathmandu. The famous writer **Han Suyin** later described him masterfully in her book *The Mountain is Young*, leaving behind a monument in his tribute. The travel writer M. Peissel has likewise written an exciting book about him (*Tiger for Breakfast*).

By then **Boris** had established his *Royal Hotel* in an old Rana palace surrounded by a beautiful park. It became an irresistible gathering point due to his personal charm, his first-class fare, and to the fact that it was practically the only hotel in Kathmandu. All the foreign diplomats lived there. Representatives of foreign parliaments, representatives of famed noble families and princely houses, extravagant millionaires, and highly renowned actors and actresses patronized it. Boris's openheartedness created an incomparably relaxed mood, and the effect was heightened by his boundless hospitality. No sooner had he met a group of interesting people than he was inviting them spontaneously "to a little party." It was a miracle if dinner was served before midnight at such parties. In this way the whiskey had enough time to do its fraternizing work among the guests. The climax was always when Boris began to sing Russian folk songs in his deep voice or even to perform Russian dances.

I recall one such party particularly. Boris had invited some one hundred guests. For the banquet he seated me next to an attractive young woman with South-East Asian features. Although he introduced her to me, I did not catch her foreign name. We were soon engaged in a very lively conversation; I was struck particularly by the well-framed and intelligent questions she asked about the country and people of Nepal. When most of the guests had already left, I asked Boris who this charming and perceptive woman had been. He replied utterly taken aback, "That was **Han Suyin**."

I would later meet her often, after her famous book *The Mountain is Young* had appeared. She was always visiting the Tibetan centre in Jawalakhel with her friend

Unni and was a fervent admirer of the Tibetans and their carpet-knitting. When she handed over a copy of her book to me, she provided it with a dedication: "To Toni Hagen, in great admiration for what you are doing for the poor Tibetan refugees."

In 1975 Han Suyin published a new book titled *China's Sun over Tibet*. In it she praised the Chinese for liberating the Tibetans from the theocratic serfdom of the Dalai Lama and for bringing about the development of a backward people. This book created a stir at the time, and her about-face was incomprehensible to me. The irony of it was that, for the cover of the German edition, her publisher used a photograph I took.

I'll have something to say later about another change of opinion that Soviet ambassadors underwent, in the opposite direction, in connection with the Tibetan integration programme.

The *curfew from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.* was still in force in 1952—a remnant of the old regime. Every evening prominent citizens and guests were given a new password in order to be able to get through the many checkpoints at road intersections. Werner Schulthess and I often failed, of course, to ask about the password on time, and this led to endless discussions with the guards. Later we employed a very crude "shortcut": riding by, we'd yell out something in Schwyzerdütsch from our car, which had an immediate effect.

The Chini Lama—Recycling of Art Objects

Another legendary figure of the time was the **Chini Lama**, who resided as high priest in the Buddhist shrine and pilgrimage site of *Bodnath* near Kathmandu. Officially he called himself the representative of the Dalai Lama. Since he spoke good English, we had good contact with him from the beginning. He was also extremely hospitable and obviously had business acumen, keeping up a thriving trade in magnificent old Tibetan art objects. One other particular attraction was his comely and far from coy daughter, who likewise had a good command of the English language. With the opening of Nepal to tourists, embassies, and development experts, Bodnath was increasingly becoming a pilgrimage site for just such categories of people, whether they were seekers of Tibetan art, friends of Buddhism who felt honoured to be received by the representative of the Dalai Lama, those who, in their search for knowledge, sought instruction from the wise monk, or people who had heard about his attractive and engaging daughter. In the later 1950s, the Chini Lama expanded his art trade into an elaborate big-time venture. He provided professional advice to rich tourists and other interested persons in choosing and buying. And, in fact, he did have unique old art objects to offer. During that period, though, the Nepalese government was already prohibiting the export of such things. The Chini Lama left his clients somewhat or totally in the dark about this

prohibition and instead let fall remarks concerning "special concessions" thanks to his good connections.

For many buyers, then, there was a rude awakening awaiting them at customs control in the airport: with unerring instinct (that is to say, fully in the know), the customs agents combed out the Chini Lama's clients and seized their purchases of art. These latter found their way, by a kind of recycling, back to the Chini Lama, who sold the same treasures to other unsuspecting people and at the same time, obviously, again reported the transaction to authorities.

The buyers' gullibility knew no bounds. In spite of warnings from people who were aware of what was going on, they continued to fall into the same trap. In my first meeting with the Dalai Lama in 1960, I asked him about his strange representative in Nepal. The Dalai Lama said that the Chini Lama had no official function whatsoever and therefore he could not intervene.

The First Experience of a Monsoon in Kathmandu

I pictured the monsoon to myself as a dreary period of low grey clouds and endless rain. This was the impression that I got through conventional sources of information. I was pleasantly surprised to find things quite otherwise. It was a welcome time of rest for me, during which I could digest a bit the welter of impressions I had hitherto collected in this excitingly interesting country.

The monsoon period in Nepal is not one of steady and uninterrupted downpours. Almost every day the sun breaks through the clouds, at least for a short while, and the rain falls mainly during the night. The Himalaya is not visible, but nature compensates for this in sundry ways: before the monsoon (May-June) almost the entire vegetation has withered, a dreary greyish brown colour pervades the countryside, and a thick brown dusty haze makes the sun appear, even at noon, as a mere red disc in the sky, one casting practically no shadows; once the rains start, though, the fields begin to turn green, and flowers bloom profusely, in the grass and on bushes and trees. Rice farmers set to work in the reawakened fields, and their songs can be heard from afar. Clouds sweep over this motley germinant life, creating ever new, impressive scenes.

In Nepal, the monsoon signifies the beginning of agricultural work; on the other hand, in those days, it put an abrupt end to any travel into the interior of the country, and this is still true of remote regions today. Streams swelled, and the rising waters could be crossed only over a few bridges. Dugouts, with which Nepalese make crossings where there are no bridges, became useless, the currents being too dangerous. During this time the dugouts were often sunk in the river and covered with heavy stones. This seemed safer to their users than drawing them up on land, since one never knew whether the river might rise so much during the monsoon that

the entire valley would be flooded. It is a fact that the volume of water in large rivers can increase sixtyfold from the low-level mark. These huge amounts of water are caused not only by the monsoon rains, however, but also, and to a large extent, by the melting of snow in the high mountains.

Setting Up House for My Family

In the meantime I had found a suitable house in *Jawalakhel* (in the southern part of Patan). Its name was *Ekanta Kuna*, which means "lonely corner." It was only a small palace by Nepalese standards and belonged to **Maheshwar Rana**, a professional soldier and the commander of the engineering troops. His family, including one son and two charming young daughters, resided in the back part of the very sweeping compound. My family later developed close ties with them.

The site was very beautiful: from the terraces one could look out in all directions, to the green rice fields in the south and east and to the Himalaya in the north and west. Ganesh Himal was particularly impressive, and on clear days the outline of Annapurna II appeared 200 kilometres away in the west over Thankot Pass.

As romantic as the house was, there was much to be repaired and renovated in order to make it tolerably inhabitable for my family with its three small children. Pipes were installed in two bathrooms, but the water flowed only sporadically. One of the bathrooms was fitted out with a toilet, a sink, and a huge stone bathtub. The latter was practically unusable, the warm water having to be carried up in vats from the kitchen.

The first thing I did was to instal a hand-pump in the garden, where there was a well of ground water, and two empty petrol containers on the roof. The water supplied through the public mains was at the time of very good quality, originating in Godavari, the Phulchoki section of hills south of Kathmandu known for its numerous holy springs. Phulchoki consists predominantly of calcitic rock with no traces of granite and mica. By contrast, Sheopuri Lekh north of Kathmandu, from which the capital is supplied with drinking water, is built up of highly weathered mica-rich granite. The very fine mica cannot be completely removed by any filter. It causes the well-known "Kathmandu disease," namely stomach and intestinal complaints.

Since I didn't trust the ground water in the well (the toilets drained into the ground water), I later had the hand-pump connected to the pipes supplying the Godavari water, and it was used only when the water flowed, usually early in the morning.

The kitchen was dark but of immense proportions, with a number of stone hearths. It had no ventilator. My invaluable Sherpa Aila looked after everything and

hired the domestic personnel. The caste rules, still very strict at the time, required numerous additions to the staff, since each activity could be performed only by the appropriate caste. Aila also served as my go-between with the manual labourers, interpreting for me with his "Sherpa English." He did the shopping and was also my cook. Thus by autumn Ekanta Kuna was ready for occupancy by my family, at least in my own estimation. My personal requirements were naturally greatly influenced by my primitive style of life during the months of field work and did not meet the criteria that even an unassuming, fairly normal Swiss family would have set. (My wife Gertrud reports on this later.)

Murky Political Developments in 1952

The monsoon period in Kathmandu gave me the opportunity to deepen my contacts with the government and with earlier friends, and to follow and experience firsthand the many murky political developments.

Returning to Nepal with the Nepali Congress Party were high-ranking Ranas who were opposed to the Rana regime but who, for one reason or another, had gone into exile in India and joined the Congress Party. **General Mahabir Shamsher**, a successful businessman in India, was one of them. Among other things, he was the owner and managing director of Himalayan Aviation. At the end of October 1950 he had, in this capacity, smuggled a planeload of weapons for the Nepali Congress Party from Burma to a secret abandoned Indian military airport near the Nepalese border. This had been organized by the Socialist Party of India without Nehru's knowledge. There, interest in the removal of the maharaja regime in Nepal was running along different tracks: on the one hand, Nehru's power politics and security interests, and on the other, the concerns of the Socialists. From the Nepalese perspective, too, there were various motives for fighting the Ranas. The Congress Party was an idealistic freedom movement. The majority of its leaders had known years of prison life in Kathmandu: **Bishbeshwar Prasad Koirala**, his step-brother **Matrika Prasad Koirala**, and such fellow stalwarts as **Ganesh Man Singh** and the later home minister **Surya Prasad Upadhyaya**.

General Mahabir had his sights in Nepal set primarily on business. He rented a large old Rana palace and soon opened the doors of the legendary Royal Hotel, which attained worldwide fame. Boris became the manager of the hotel. Mahabir, though, was gunning for higher things.

Under Prime Minister M. P. Koirala, General Mahabir Shamsher was for a short period the minister for planning. When, following my return from the expedition to Mustang (May 1952), I met him at a large party in Singha Durbar (at such parties alcohol was now being served), he asked me about my "findings." He was acutely excited when I told him of the lovely ammonites (fossils) from the region of

Muktinath. These *saligrams*, as they are called, were familiar to him; they were sold at high prices in Calcutta. Retrieved from the sacred site of Muktinath, the destination of myriads of pilgrims yearly from the whole of the Buddhist and Hindu world, they are said to possess miraculous healing properties. Further, the inside of them is supposed to contain gold. Evidently my failure to mention gold finds aroused mistrust in the general. He took me aside and whispered confidentially, "Didn't you find gold and precious stones? Please tell me. I shall give you half share."

There were other high Ranas in the Congress Party, however, who genuinely desired to see Nepal freed of its medieval feudal regime. One of them was **General Subarna Shamsheer**, who later, in 1959, became the finance minister under Prime Minister B. P. Koirala. He was an extraordinarily sound and competent man.

Indian Development Aid

By now Indian development aid had started to flow. What the Nepalese population criticized about it was its focus on communications and transport. The radio connections with the border posts in the north, which were staffed by Indians, have already been mentioned. The construction of the airport at Kathmandu followed. Indian Airlines had the monopoly on flights originating from abroad. There was less understanding for the requirement that Nepalese passengers pay for their plane ticket in Kathmandu in Indian rupees. Indian Airlines also flew strictly internal flights at the time, such as Kathmandu-Pokhara. Given the absence of a Nepalese airline, this could be looked upon as aid from a friendly state, but that Nepalese passengers had to pay in Indian rupees for domestic flights was viewed as less than a friendly gesture.

The road project connecting Kathmandu with India was also criticized on the grounds that it served to tighten Indian control over Nepal. This belief seemed to be confirmed by the fact that the Indian army was supposed to build the road. The Nepalese did not consider this road, 110 kilometres in length and passing over the 2,500-metre Daman Pass, to be the optimal solution. In Kathmandu it was known that the Swiss experts were working on a far shorter connection (only 40 km) via Pharphing. In later publications (Leo E. Rose, *NEPAL: Strategy for Survival*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1973) the assertion was made that India had only hesitantly become involved in the road project, while the Nepalese government had pressed hard for it. This is not true: at the end of 1952 the map of the Kulikani region compiled according to the photographic analysis undertaken in Switzerland and combining the hydroelectric and road projects was turned over to the government. The latter gave preference to this much shorter road (40 km vs. 110 km). At the end of 1952 Prime Minister M. P. Koirala laid the foundation stone in Pharphing for the

Swiss road project in the hope that bilateral aid and international organizations such as the World Bank would step forward with funds. A few weeks later the foundation stone had to be removed at the behest of the Indian ambassador, on the grounds that the construction of a tunnel under the Sisagarhi Pass would consume too much time and would cost too much to begin with. As we now know today, this was a fatal mistake.

Indeed the problem of the road link between Kathmandu and India has still not been solved. The road built in 1956 by India, the Tribhuvan Raj Path, is virtually no longer usable, in spite of enormous amounts being spent to improve and maintain it. The detour via Mugling and Chitawan is about 100 kilometres longer and has so overburdened that road, built by the Chinese, that to all practical purposes it has had to be reconstructed within recent years.

It seemed indeed that the Indian government viewed Nepal as an Indian province. All Indian development aid programmes were formulated not by the two foreign ministries, as is common between independent, sovereign, and friendly states, but by the Indian planning ministry, as if Nepal's development were a matter of internal concern to India.

Towards the end of this interesting summer the *second Swiss Everest expedition* made its appearance. I had helped in preparing for their arrival, and autumn was approaching after they set off to Khumbu. The Ekanta Kuna house was ready to receive my family. In order to make use of the time, I made preparations to carry out one more expedition before their arrival. My destination was the Langtang region with Shisha Pangma, which I had visited in 1950, on which occasion, due to time and equipment constraints, I had reached only Rasua Garhi on the Tibetan border. Shisha Pangma, the final 8000-metre-tall mountain to be determined as such, seemed to lie much farther north—and perhaps the Langtang valley, too, would stretch much farther northwards—than was indicated on the topographical map.

By the end of summer the only thing I had to show for my camping equipment and the winter clothing for my family, which should have been brought by the first Swiss Everest expedition in the spring of 1952, was a protracted bureaucratic skirmish with the customs officials in Calcutta. The luggage was still piled up there in transit. By happy chance, the expedition mountain climbers, who returned home in June, had left much of their valuable material behind, including lightweight tents, team tents, down sleeping bags, camping furniture, windproof jackets for high elevations, down clothing, light cooking and eating utensils, and the like. I was very thankful for this, as otherwise I would scarcely have been able to carry out my second expedition to Shisha Pangma.

Discord Over the Second Mt. Everest Expedition Spring 1952

Breach of Promise and Irate Englishmen

As may be recalled, the first Swiss expedition nearly reached the summit of Everest in the spring of 1952 under the leadership of Raymond Lambert. Though proud of their achievement, the mountain climbers were nevertheless disappointed, since Mt. Everest had been promised to the English in 1953.

For this reason, the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research immediately requested that a new attempt to climb the mountain be approved for the autumn of 1952, still, in other words, before the English. The Nepalese government sought out the opinion of the latter. The English consented, on condition that the autumn expedition not be termed a new one but the continuation of the spring expedition, which basically required that the participants be the same. The British ambassador pointed out to the Nepalese government that the English people would have little understanding for a country being given twice, in breach of a gentlemen's agreement, the chance to climb Mt. Everest first. The English offer could, in fact, only be called generous. It was a true expression of the English sense of fair play in sporting matters, which existed above and beyond the particularly warm relationship between Great Britain and Nepal over the preceding 150 years and the pioneering work of the English in researching, surveying, and mapping the Everest region.

One day at the beginning of 1952, when I was busy in my working room in Ekanta Kuna in Patan, I had a sudden visit from the British ambassador, Sir John Summerhayze, who was obviously very wrought up. He pressed a clipping from the *Times of India* into my hand. In it the arrival of the new Swiss Everest expedition in Bombay was reported with a full list of the participants. Sir Summerhayze pointed out to me that only three members of the spring expedition were back and that the

other five were new. This was a clear breach of promise on the part of the foundation. He had already made representations with the Nepalese government, but it had referred him to me. His words to me were, "Please do everything to stop this expedition." I had to explain to him that I was not empowered to decide the issue, not being part of an official Swiss mission to Nepal, having no consular authority, nor even being employed by the Swiss. In any case, the matter was extremely embarrassing for me, and I apologized for the Swiss act of bad faith.

The incident was all the more distressing for my enjoying cordial relations with the English ambassador and his wife. Later, together with my wife, we undertook trips in common. What I particularly remember, though, was our listening together during the Christmas of 1952 to the Mass in B-flat minor by Bach as a kind of substitute for the midnight mass in Europe.

Coming to Terms with the Mountaineers

This incident did not in any way sully my relations with the Swiss Everest expedition climbers. They were all very congenial persons who had no share of the blame in the matter. When necessary, I offered my help. Towards the end of the monsoon a Sherpa with the 1952 Mt. Everest expedition appeared at my house in Jawalakhel near Kathmandu. He had been commissioned to obtain 12,000 Nepal rupees (at the time equivalent to about 8,000 Swiss francs) and to take the money to the base camp at the Khumbu glacier. I did not know this Sherpa; he showed me a letter from the expedition leader, however, and thus I was able to entrust to him what for Nepal was an immense sum. He was unable to write and so signed with a thumbprint, and then he left with his heavy burden, delivering the money to its destination in a 14-day walk across valleys and over solitary passes. During expeditions, and more generally throughout my twelve years in Nepal, I never had anything go astray. Neither money nor valuables were ever locked up in our house in Kathmandu. Nothing was ever stolen (the situation may be different, though, nowadays).

The Pioneer Work of the English in the Everest Group

In 1852 the highest mountain of the world was "discovered." Whether it was the head of the computing office of the Survey of India, the Indian Radhanath Sikhdar, or the Anglo-Indian Hennessey, or one of the younger assistants who made the sensational calculation is now, in spite of all attempts, no longer ascertainable. In any case, it was reported to the surveyor general, Sir Andrew Waugh, that Peak XV was higher than any other hitherto known one. In 1856 this mountain received the name, soon to become world famous, of Mount Everest, in honour of Sir George

Everest, the distinguished leader of the countrywide Indian survey from 1823 to 1843. The old Tibetan name Chomolungma, or more accurately Chomolongma ("mother goddess of the land"), became known of only much later. The official elevation was for one hundred years 8,840 metres, then revised upward to 8,848 metres, and finally, in 1992, on the basis of a high-precision measurement carried out by the Swiss, reduced to 8,846 metres.

The highest mountain on earth was and continues to be the dream of mountain climbers worldwide, as cannot otherwise be expected. No one can say who was the first person to think of climbing Everest. We only know that in 1893 Ch. G. Bruce put forward the proposal with all seriousness and that he, T. G. Longstaff, and A. L. Mumm made preparations to conduct an Everest expedition, even though nothing came of it. The political difficulties were great, Tibet and Nepal being closed to foreigners. Only after the First World War did conditions become suitable.

In 1921 a large survey of the Tibetan side of the Everest region was undertaken, including the mapping of some 40,000 square kilometres (the area of Switzerland). Within a year of the survey, in 1922, the first assault of the peak was attempted by the English. They set a record by reaching 8,393 metres.

A new attempt followed in 1924. **Norton** set a new record at 8,572 metres, which would be bettered only in 1953, with the use of oxygen equipment. During the 1924 expedition the rope team of Mallory and Irvine disappeared without trace at 8,400 metres. The English undertook further expeditions in 1933, 1935, and 1936. On the last of these, stereophotogrammetric films were taken of the Everest region with two phototheodolites. The results were published as a topographic map 1:20 000 by the Royal Geographic Society and the British Alpine Club. Further attempts were made in 1938, all from the Tibetan side.

In 1950, after the opening of Nepal, the Himalayan pioneer **Eric Shipton** for the first time reconnoitred the south flank of Everest, opening the now classical route through the Khumbu glacier. The English made further similar surveys on the Nepalese side in the autumn of 1951, in which **Edmond Hillary** and **Sherpa Tenzing**, the first men to reach the top, took part.

Only later, after 1950, did researchers and mountain climbers of other nations join in the race to explore and conquer the Nepal Himalaya. Once they did, however, the conquest of the summits proceeded by leaps and bounds. Who doesn't remember the dramatic mastering of Annapurna, the first 8000-metre peak, by the French in 1950 (during which my Sherpa Aila took part in the evacuation of the frostbitten Hertzog)?

Given that the English, prior to 1950, had accomplished all the preliminary research and ascent trials of Mt. Everest on their own, it only seemed a matter of international fair play to allow them the first go; and this also in view of their more

than a century of comradeship in arms with Nepal. But the pioneering achievements of the English in the Himalaya are far from being exhausted with these few facts.

The Cartographic Pioneering Achievement of the Survey of India

The success of the Survey of India in performing the triangulation and, on the basis of it, the production of the Quarter Inch Map (1:253 440) represents an achievement in surveying technique that is unparalleled anywhere. The English themselves were not allowed to enter Nepalese territory; Indian surveyors had to be exclusively relied upon. Plane-table mapping was naturally a very difficult task in a country with so many mountains offering so many obstructions to the line of sight; the brilliant organization from afar, then, deserves all the more admiration.

Mountaineers accustomed to "alpine" standards in their topographic maps may have occasionally made slighting remarks about the English maps. On the basis of my experience, however, I can say that they are 90% correct; it is only in the case of particular high mountain regions north of the main chain, which were inaccessible to the Indian surveyors, that they exhibit minor errors. In the spelling of names, too, the Survey of India has been extremely circumspect. For example, they have not hesitated to make use of ö, unknown in English, in order to adhere as far as possible to the local orthography and pronunciation (Kangchendzönga).

Nowadays total chaos prevails as far as the orthography of geographical names in Nepal is concerned. The large emporium that today is the southern terminus of the freight ropeway to Kathmandu was in 1950 called Hitaura, and also so spelled. Today one can find the following spellings: Hitaura, Hittaura, Hetaura, Hettaura, Hitauda, Hetauda.

Poor Recognition for Earlier Achievements

In connection with the above, reference must be made to one other cartographic pioneering achievement in Nepal, and for the Everest group in particular: the *terrestrial-photogrammetric compiling of the map 1:50 000 of the entire Everest group* by the Austrian **Erwin Schneider**. In 1957, after extremely strenuous labour at high elevations, the first map of the Everest group was produced and published in what to all purposes is the traditionally exacting "alpine" style, including the delineation of rock formations and glaciers. A total of six large maps 1:50 000 of East Nepal were made and brought out within the framework of the former Research Scheme Nepal Himalaya, which was financed largely by the *Fritz Thyssen Foundation*.

Further pioneering achievements by Erwin Schneider followed in the 1970s—this time with the aid of aerial photogrammetry—and were crowned by the publication of 16 maps 1:10 000 of the *Kathmandu Valley* together with a general

map 1:50 000, again financed by the *Fritz Thyssen Foundation* and brought out by the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für vergleichende Hochgebirgsforschung* (Working Group for Comparative High Mountain Research) in Munich.

*Shisha Pangma,
The Last 8,000-Metre Mountain to be Determined*

(Article of the Author That Appeared
in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*
No. 583, 14 March 1953, Weekend Edition)

G. O. Dyhrenfurth has written in his book *Der dritte Pol* [The Third Pole] (1969): "It was until 1952 the most obscure of the 8,000-metre mountains: no attempt had been made to climb it or even to explore it. The most that could be said was that the first Everest expedition of 1921 came to within 25 kilometres of it. There were no photographs of it from close up."

This mighty group of solitary mountains is called Gosainthan (*gosain* = god, *than* = place, site) on the Quarter Inch Map (1:253 440) of the Survey of India. Preference should be given, however, to the Tibetan name Shisha Pangma because, in the first place, the mountain lies in Tibet and, secondly, because the name Gosainthan is used to designate a famous pilgrimage site in the Gosainkund mountains 35 kilometres north of Kathmandu. The name Shisha Pangma derives from the term for pasture lands (*pang* = pasture, *ma* = feminine form). *Shisha* (or *chisa*) means "crest"; it is a term that is frequently found in the Himalaya. Shisha Pangma thus obviously means: "the crest towering over large tracts of pasture."

Shisha Pangma was able to keep its secret so well (up to 1952) because three chains of high mountains are located to the south of it, namely the Gosainkund range together with its eastern extension, the Langtang Himalaya (7,250m), and the hitherto unknown chain consisting of P. 224110 (6,835m) and Lömbo Kang (7,088m). I first got close to Shisha Pangma in the winter of 1950, while advancing along the valley route to the Tibetan border at Rasua Garhi, but at the time I couldn't get a view of it. I returned disappointed, since a geological cross section

through the Himalaya is incomplete if it doesn't extend into (in geological terms) the Tibetan zone. This autumn, then, I hoped to be able to push farther north into that region. The famed Himalaya researcher Tilman had been there in 1950, in search of the mysterious Shisha Pangma. Due to poor weather, however, the results of his explorations were meagre. Still, he made the significant discovery that the valley of Langtang takes a sharp turn northward in its upper portion and that a long glacier flows down the valley from the far north. He termed this glacier "such a desert of moraines as only the Himalaya can produce; a horrid prospect of rotten, shattered rock." This, according to my own experience, was indeed no exaggeration.

Thus, in the middle of September 1952, I set off on foot along the well-known pilgrimage route over the Gosainkund range, suffering greatly in the beginning from leeches and other monsoon-related phenomena. It is a magnificent crest trail, which leads in five days, via a pass of 4,500 metres, to the holy lakes of Gosainkund. Large religious festivals take place at these mysterious dark-blue lakes every year in July. From Gosainkund Pass one can enjoy a splendid view to the west and north, to the mountains of Kyirong Dzong, which were entirely unknown until the 1950s, when they were quietly explored by the "Austrian Tibetan" **Peter Aufschnaiter**. Aufschnaiter had been a member of the Nanga-Parbat expedition of 1939. He was interned in India at the outbreak of the war, made an adventurous escape together with **Heinrich Harrer** to Tibet, where he worked as an engineer for the Dalai Lama, and fled to Nepal during the Chinese incursion. He can be described as one of the most knowledgeable people in the world when it comes to Tibet and the Himalaya. Thus, among other things, he was the first person to explore the northern and eastern slopes of Shisha Pangma.

The upper part of the Langtang valley, above Langchisa, is a typical U-shaped valley with a fairly broad valley floor. It opens out like a paradise once the deep gorge filled with virgin forest is left behind. Large pastures cover the wide valley floor. Between the village of Langtang and Khyangjin Gyang, one wanders along good paths through alpine meadows containing countless edelweisses and gentians and a multitude of other flowers; here and there a Tibetan prayer wall can be seen standing in the middle of the pasture land. Villages containing picturesque wooden houses (they even have flowers on the brownly singed window sills!) are located on somewhat elevated tracts of rock debris. And above them, unimaginably steep and tall, looms Langtang Himal (7,250m), while the white pyramid of P. 20986 (6,401m), called Kangchumbu (*kang* = snow; *chumbu* = big mountain), forms the backdrop to the valley, astonishingly similar to our Valais Weisshorn. What a magnificent alpine spring in October! However, there was no sign of Shisha Pangma in the Langtang valley. Nor did the people know anything about it. The name must derive, then, from pastures on the Tibetan side. I thus climbed a peak of 5,200 metres called Tserkoma in order to obtain a topographical overview. A magnificent

panorama opened out: dozens of six- and seven-thousand-metre-high mountains. Still no sign, however, of the great Shisha Pangma. There was nothing left to do, then, but try to advance up along the main valley northwards. We moved our camp up to Langchisa Karkha (4,000m), where the immense moraine of a lateral glacier flowing down from the Langtang group formed a barrier to passage through the valley. The coolies, not fitted out for alpine conditions, had to be left behind there. Only two of the best men accompanied us, for one day, in order to help us carry the load. The route took us far up the valley, first in an easterly and then in a northerly direction. There is a good path in the beginning, leading over large tracts of pasture land. Huge lateral glaciers come in from the left and right, and behind each of them stately mountain ranges capture and give off light, their identities then unknown. The tongue of the main valley glacier, the Tunga Pu glacier, was by now far to our rear, but still we walked through flowering alpine meadows and along crystal-clear moraine lakes wedged between the lateral moraine and the side of the valley. I realized that, in considering the needs of the coolies, we had set up base camp at too low an elevation. I would have to pay for this later by an increase in load!

The moraine valley ended where the moraine joins the side of the valley; we were forced onto the glacier. This was far from appealing. The two coolies returned to the base camp, and now I was alone in the high mountain solitude of the Himalaya with my Sherpa Aila. (Aila is one of the most renowned of Sherpas: he helped rescue the French at Annapurna and was on Everest with Shipton and also with the first Swiss expedition.) The next day we toiled our way up the glacier under the heavy loads: a steady up and down over loose moraine debris and—the higher we got—over ice and newly fallen snow on the shaded slopes. We left this hellish moraine where the western side of the valley becomes somewhat flatter, hoping to advance more easily along the slope. Things went well at first, but then the eastern exposition of the slope gradually shifted to a northerly one, in consequence of which the snow depth rapidly increased. In addition, we were constantly being forced to higher elevations by an outcropping of rock that the glacier had undercut along the valley slope. As the final rays of the sun shone onto the peaks, we were standing on the slope 300 metres above the glacier, up to our bellies in snow, and were having great trouble finding a way back down to it. The second day we wandered into a glacier circus. Four large glaciers unite to form the Tunga Pu glacier. Unfortunately the weather worsened as we made our way up a small break in the eastern lateral glacier. Still, the evening was almost cosy in the tent on the ice (6,000m), with candlelight and the hum of the kerosene stove; outside, though, it was snowing! I lay in my sleeping bag (the only comfortable location for a European in a tent) and envied my Sherpa, who was seated Buddha fashion in the limited space he had and was preparing my daily fare of roasted meat and *mulas* (long radishes). I looked into the candlelight and thought of my family, of cherished friends in my homeland, and

of my fellow countrymen labouring under similar conditions 100 kilometres to the east of my camp, at Everest. The excitement rose when in the night it continued to snow, since we had only one more day to explore Shisha Pangma; in fourteen days I had to be back in Kathmandu in order to meet my family after a lapse of three-quarters of a year. If the weather remained poor the next day, Shisha Pangma would continue to be an "obscure 8,000-metre mountain." In spite of sleeping tablets, I could hardly sleep; the tension was too much.

I felt drunk when I crawled out of the tent the next morning. The sky was covered over, all the mountains were concealed, with one single exception: a strikingly tall peak shone in the sunshine through a hole in the clouds to the east. There was no doubting that this lone peak was Shisha Pangma. I stormed up a nearby mound of ice (to the extent that one could storm at all at that elevation) in order to get a full view. Yes indeed, Shisha Pangma was in front of me, but not, according to my expectations, directly. Behind the glaciated crest, apparently at the foot of Shisha Pangma, there was another valley with a large glacier, which flowed south-east towards Nyanang. Our valley of the Tunga Pu glacier was cut off to the north by a further glacier circus. It thus did not originate from Shisha Pangma.

I had to decide how this last day could best be spent. We could continue to climb in the direction of Shisha Pangma, up to the pass leading to the Nyanang glacier. This pass was later named Hagen's Col by Peter Aufschnaiter, whom I asked to find out the Tibetan place-name. I was quite uncertain whether, in a trek of at least two hours, I could reach the pass before the clouds massed. The preferable course of action seemed to be to climb down the slope and then as far up the other side of the valley as possible. I looked hurriedly for an easy peak from which one might get a complete view. A race against the hole in the clouds began. The clouds appeared to become more dominant the farther we got from the western slope of Shisha Pangma. Once we reached our peak (approximately 6,000m), however, the sky cleared up completely, and a world of stunning glaciers spread out before me round about. I now leisurely went about my topographical and geological work, and when it was finished the tension that had weighed so heavily upon me dissolved, and I sank into a deep sleep in my sunny nook.

The trip back passed like a dream. The first living creature I came across at 5,300 metres on the glacier was a grasshopper. Then our two faithful coolies met us on the glacier, much farther up than planned, as I realized with great joy. Without the heavy burden, the final stretch of the Tunga Pu glacier seemed like a Sunday stroll. Once I reached the base camp, I threw myself down onto the flowered pasture ground and rejoiced to be back to life-filled nature.

Towards evening, as we climbed towards Gangja La (5,122m) in order to reach Kathmandu by the shortest way, the weather deteriorated. It began to snow, so that we had to pitch camp at a far too low elevation. The next morning it was again

clear, but clouds appeared from the south before noon, while we were still climbing on the northern side. The pass is not entirely without its dangers. We had to climb over rocks at the very top, and it began to snow. Reaching the other side, we quickly proceeded through a narrow defile of rocks to a basin of firn and hastened on downhill in order to get out of the snow. However, a thick fog and snow flurries closed in on us, and we lost all orientation, so that I unfortunately had to have the camp pitched in heavy flurries on the field of firn. It was simply too dangerous to walk in this stretch of mountains without any path in the dense fog. It was one of our least comfortable nights, with no meal and no cup of tea, since we lacked firewood. I was concerned about my porters, but they were in good spirits, squeezed together in the team tent.

The next morning the sky was again cloudless. Within a mere half hour we reached the end of the glacier, and after some minutes more we were lying in flowering alpine meadows. During the further descent, we passed through the famed Sherpa villages of Malemchigaon, Tarke Gyang, and Nurpu Gang, which are known for their beautiful Sherpanis. "*Ekk tom ramro tsori*," said my Sherpas, which translates as "a host of beautiful girls." Indeed this was the region—Hellambu by name—that for generations had been a reservoir of surplus young women for the ruling families. In Nepal this was obviously quite legal—a matter to be settled by purse.

In this context, my wife and I fondly recall our old friend the cultured and highly educated **Field Marshal Keshar Shamsheer**, the number two man in the last maharaja regime. We never ceased to be impressed by his lovely young wife from Hellambu.

Back in Kathmandu, I immediately reported my discovery and the error in the map to the government. The border with Tibet is drawn on the Quarter Inch Map to Nepal's disadvantage. As long as the Nepal-Tibet border runs along the main crest, as it normally does, the Nepalese territory with the Langtang valley extends much farther northwards than is indicated on the map. Later, during border talks with China, this correction was shown by the Nepalese government to the Chinese, who accepted it without further discussion.

From a Government Geologist to a UN Expert

The Trials of a Government Geologist

My salary as a government geologist corresponded to that of a ministerial secretary, that is, the post immediately under a minister. For Nepalese conditions, it was a generous arrangement. The local purchasing power of my salary was likewise considerable in terms of a Nepalese middle-class household of the time. One must realize, however, that the Nepalese middle class in Kathmandu lived very modestly. The chief source of food was almost exclusively rice. The consumer goods of Western society were hardly known in Nepal, except among the ruling upper classes of the Ranas and Shahs. The latter imported virtually everything they could from abroad and lived life in colonial style. In not a few of the palaces of the upper crust one might find imported polished lacquer furniture and even occasionally a grand piano. Members of the ruling class took off on trips like the European and American jet set. For medical treatment, they went to the most renowned hospitals of Europe and America.

The Nepalese middle class led a very simple life, by contrast. My family too, in essence, made do with a very simple standard of living. None the less, we had expenses that the Nepalese class corresponding to us did not have. Eating utensils or a phonograph may be mentioned as examples. Then again, we were often invited out by the British and American embassies and by the representatives of the American developmental aid mission (USAID). We had to reciprocate, even if in a consciously and emphatically simple and, when possible, Nepalese style, serving, that is, predominantly local products, which at the time were still very scanty. In addition, we wanted to see as much of the beautiful country of Nepal and of its cultural treasures in the Kathmandu Valley as possible. The Nepalese middle class hardly felt (yet) such needs. Nepalese were not accustomed to travelling about in their country.

Up to 1950 every Nepalese official needed special permission to leave the Kathmandu Valley. Nepal meant in fact, for most Nepalese, the Kathmandu Valley. This was mirrored in language usage: if porters who were heading for Kathmandu along the network of trails in Nepal were asked what their destination was, they always said "*Nepal dzane*," meaning Kathmandu.

Even in the Kathmandu Valley there was no public bus service at the time. For my work in town, however, I needed a car, as did my family, in order not to be completely tied down to the house. We needed a car, too, for our trips.

Even though ministerial secretaries of the time had to make do with bicycles, the government after some time generously put a car at my disposal, at least intermittently. In the beginning, however, we had to share it with the FAO expert Emil Rauch and later with Werner Schulthess. It was always unpleasant when we were invited to foreign embassies and had to ask to be picked up because we didn't have a car.

I also had to think about our future: insurance policies, medical protection, and the like. In view of the uncertain future, I needed to be able to build up some savings, and all of these things were expenses that the Nepalese middle class did not face. Insurance for the latter meant, at the time, being tied into the family kin group.

The payment of the monthly salary was characteristically very erratic. At times there were delays of many weeks. This had no direct consequences for the kin groups. Even if no money came in for a long time, they did not have to go hungry: each kin group, even in the city, owned fertile land somewhere, which they either cultivated themselves or had a tenant cultivate.

When my salary was paid out weeks behind schedule, I had to take a loan from Father Moran.

My wife Gertrud describes family life in Kathmandu in the early 1950s in the following chapter.

The First UN Expert, from 1 April 1953

In 1951, when Switzerland refused to finance my further activities in Nepal, I began making efforts to be taken on as an expert in the *Expanded Technical Assistance Programme of the UN*. However, Nepal would become a UN member only in 1956.

The Nepalese government made efforts on its own to have my activities financed by the UN through employment as a UN expert.

The United States, in the person of my friend **Andrew Corry** of the U.S. embassy in New Delhi, supported these attempts energetically. A very fruitful cooperation between me and the U.S. mission grew up after my new start in Nepal in the spring of 1952. Among other things, I carried out several geological surveys

in the central Midlands region of Nepal in common with an American mining specialist (**John Sanford**). I had excellent relations, too, with the other American experts, especially with their chief, **Paul Rose**, and his wife **Mary**. Whenever my family or I was in need, or we needed something in particular, we could count on the friendly support and help of the U.S. mission.

As of 1 April 1953 I became the *first UN expert* in Nepal. Those who followed did so only years later. Switzerland had nothing to do with my hiring, not even in the form of a letter of recommendation. Nowadays all recruiting for the UN and the organizations under it occurs by way of bilateral bureaucratic agreements.

My financial problems were for the time being resolved with my acceptance into the Expanded Technical Assistance Programme of the United Nations.

The Life of a Geologist's Family

by
Gertrud Hagen

When in 1945 I married Toni Hagen, a research assistant at the ETH-Zurich, I imagined that he would be striking out into an academic career and that we would lead a normal, middle-class life in our small house on Lake Zurich. During the first seven years this is in fact what happened. Three children, one son and two daughters, were born and passed their first years peacefully and out of harm's way. But then things completely changed when my husband returned in the spring of 1951 from his first half-year stay in Nepal, bringing with him, to my great astonishment and shock, an agreement with the Nepalese government that was to go into effect in 1952.

It was *the* big chance for him, and there was nothing else the rest of the family could do but renounce the security of our homeland and set off, the three small children in tow, into an (in financial terms also) uncertain future.

The small house in Rapperswil was vacated at the end of 1951 and rented out, and the furniture given to all our relatives for safekeeping. At first we took up quarters in my mother's house in St. Gallen, and this included our faithful helper Klara, who would accompany us to Nepal (to our great good fortune, as it later turned out). My husband Toni flew in January 1952 to Nepal, and we thought we would be following him within one or two months. It was not to be, however. For a long time Toni was unable to find a suitable house, and then the children got whooping cough and would not have been able to receive the various necessary vaccinations; then early summer with its heat and host of diseases arrived in Nepal, which we would experience the following year. Thus it was only in November 1952 that the move became feasible.

The suitcases were packed seven times in those ten months before departure, a result of having to shift residency from my mother's not terribly large quarters to various holiday flats in the country. These shifts occurred about every four weeks in trains and post buses (we had no auto), with much luggage to boot (toys, high chair, skates, skis, etc.). With the unerring help of Klara, we survived everything well. The children even found the frequent moving to be highly interesting. The baby, Monica, was in a constant good mood and did not cause a bit of problem, and there was also one other cause for happiness: in the process we found our chalet, still not yet quite finished, in Lenzerheide; it would later become our new home, a true paradise for all. The nearby lake was made for swimming in the summer. The many small streams round about were ideal for playing. In winter, the loveliest cross-country ski trails nowadays pass close to the house, and for those interested in alpine skiing, the next ski lift is only five minutes away.

For 15 years, now that the children have flown the coop, Heidhüsli, the little house on the heath, has been our permanent residence. The house and land prices were unbelievably favourable at the time, so that we could afford the purchase. Had an immediate departure been possible in the winter of 1952, we would never have found the chalet that we all have fallen in love with. Thus things that on the surface seem unpromising may turn out to be a genuine piece of fortune.

In the spring of 1951 several large pieces of luggage with toys, winter gear, and such were sent on ahead with the first Everest expedition, so that at the beginning of November we embarked at Zurich's airport not too overburdened with suitcases. The airport was still being built at the time and consisted of wooden huts. The BOAC flight that was to take us to Delhi arrived hours behind schedule. Happily, the children caused no fuss, and we were finally able to enter the plane at around 11 o'clock in the evening and settle down comfortably in a four-seat compartment. Katrin, four years old at the time, immediately fell asleep on the floor. Christoph (six years old), Monica (one and a half), Klara, and I prepared to curl up on the seats. In the middle of the night we were forced to disembark in Rome after a two-to-three-hour flight. The children found this jolly, and little Monica smiled her friendliest smile at the Italian waiter, who was utterly taken by our blond lass. The flight soon resumed to Cairo in the same plane. There, however, we were stuck until late in the evening, since the aircraft needed repairing. Everyone sprawled wearily in armchairs, but during this time we experienced our first sunset in the desert—a wonderful spectacle even for the children. Finally we got going again. The children slept well during this second night in the airplane; Klara and I less so. There were stops in Bahrein and Karachi, and the destination, Delhi, was finally drawing near. But then, to my horror, my renal colic returned after a dormancy of 15 years. Fortunately, though, a Swiss doctor was on the plane and he helped to still the writhing pain by giving me an injection.

My husband met us in Delhi with a radiant smile after ten months of separation. A car conveyed us all to the Hotel Cecil, a very cosy establishment from the colonial period. How marvelous it was, after two days and nights, to be able to stretch out on a bed! Following two days to recuperate, we continued the voyage by plane to Patna (for many years still there would be no direct flights to Nepal). Nowadays one can fly from New Delhi directly to Nepal in two hours. In Patna I was taken to an American mission hospital, while the rest of the family flew to Kathmandu with Dr. Vogel. I was attended in the hospital by a radiantly beautiful nun, who was like an angel to me. The room had no doors, only curtains, and a brown face regularly peered in to check up on things. Much noise emanated from the courtyard, from all the Indian family members who were caring for their own sick by themselves—a new, utterly different world. The kidney stone settled down or came out unnoticed, and thus after ten days I could fly on to rejoin my family. The children had in the meantime been taken good care of by our faithful Klara.

The large, palatial quarters housed not only our family but also two other Swiss—an agronomist who has since died and the cheese-dairy specialist Werner Schulthess, with whom we still have ties of friendship—along with all our domestics. The house was located on the outskirts of the city of Patan and boasted a large garden and inner courtyard, various drawing rooms with European polished lacquer furniture, silk upholstered armchairs and sofas, a large dining room, many bedrooms, several simple bathrooms, terraces and small balconies, and an array of corridors and stairs—an El Dorado for the children, who up till then, in Switzerland, had known only small houses.

One could enjoy a splendid view of the countryside from the large windows, but unfortunately they could not be closed tightly, so that it was genuinely cold in the big rooms in winter. There was no heating, and thus I had to lie in the warmth of my bed for two weeks (without fever) just to prevent the colic from returning. Invited guests were offered sleeping bags that had been left behind by the first Swiss Everest expedition. Our sleeping bag parties became famous. This practice was not necessary for Nepalese guests, however, who were accustomed to the cold. It was only the Americans in their Rabi Bhavan (another large Rana palace) who enjoyed every sort of comfort—overheated rooms and bathing facilities—with which ours could not compare. Our house, Ekanta Kuna, was later taken over, renovated, and expanded by the Swiss development aid agency, and no one needs to freeze there any longer.

Our domestics consisted of two Sherpas and their wives. However, one of them, Aila, was often away with Toni on the—at the time still small—expeditions. His wife and small daughter Lakpa Doma, though, were always at home along with the other Sherpa woman. Then there were two old hands and a couple from the lowest caste engaged in cleaning, but they always came in the morning and afterwards mercifully

disappeared. They were very kind people, of fine stature and handsome facial features, but were untouchables and wore unbelievably dirty clothes that gave off a corresponding stench, so that all the rooms had to be aired after they left. Frequently they brought along their small baby; it crawled everywhere, naturally without diapers, and left traces of itself behind, which its mother wiped up with the same rag which she was supposed to clean the floor with. I was not then, nor am I now, a super Swiss housewife, but this was such a horror for me that I was often reduced to tears. There was no way out, though, since the other hands refused to do the cleaning reserved for the lowest caste. Once, when the small baby fell down the stairs during its crawling spree, our two Sherpa women (otherwise very friendly and helpful persons) just stood by and did nothing. Our Klara was the one who dashed up and saved the child from falling further and from possibly being injured. The Sherpa women couldn't understand how such a child could be touched by anyone other than its mother and those of its caste. I here came into direct contact with what I had formerly only read about untouchability.

Another dark chapter was the kitchen. Toni advised me not to go into it, since it was not only full of smoke but also full of flies and probably other pests too. He had once accidentally seen our Sherpa Aila striking a large forehammer against the wooden board normally used for preparing vegetables and had asked him what he was doing. Aila's curt reply: "Killing flies, sir." The fare was rather monotonous: usually rice with curry and a few vegetables. In contrast to more recent times, there was not much more to buy on the market than onions and fly-infested meat. Toni advised me not to inspect the marketplace lest I lose my appetite. A person had to eat, though.

When Katrin and I were once paging longingly through the recipes and colour pictures (from Switzerland), Christoph, by then seven years old, came up and said quite incensed, "You'd do better to read in the Holy Book." He meant the children's Bible, full of colour pictures, which I read to the children three times throughout the years at their request.

Christoph had another book which he dashed about all day with: a bird book. There were such different birds from those back home, and he was often beside himself with joy, particularly at the various campsites, about which I'll write later. We got used to the new life, not least because of the kind help of Father Moran, the head of the high school for Nepalese boys from all classes of society. Upper-class boys, such as those from the many-branched Shah and Rana families, sat and slept next to ones from the middle and lower classes. No such strict separation was practised as in India, but there was nevertheless some, as I described earlier in the context of the sweeper family. The school, which included many secondary buildings, was situated in the idyllic surroundings of Godavari outside Kathmandu, in a former summer residence of the maharaja. We went out there often—rode, that

is—whenever my husband did not happen to be off somewhere else, which was unfortunately far too often the case. Father Moran, for his part, often came into the city and would make a point to drop in; he brought good cheer and, when needed, medicines, and also often sweets for the children, which he had obtained from his fellow Americans, who were well stocked up. Sometimes he came on Sunday and celebrated mass in our large living room, which was a grand experience. Little Christoph learned how to officiate, even if silently, and we occasionally had guests who were quite pleased to do the same thing: for example, the French ambassador to India Count Ostrorog or, during our second stay in Nepal eight years later, the Swiss ambassador in Delhi.

The two Christmases that we celebrated in Nepal were very impressive. Father Moran held the midnight mass. The Sherpas had somewhere got hold of a large pine to serve as the Christmas tree. It was trimmed with candles and small mandarin oranges, and a small crèche was set up with figures we had brought from home. In this way it turned into a very festive occasion, and all the domestics celebrated with us, full of awe. Thus our life in those days was hardly thinkable without Father Moran.

Our family in the meantime received an addition: a small, lively dachshund, which we called Fritzli. It was the delight of the children's lives, a very energetic and spirited creature, as will presently be seen.

One day Katrin ran excitedly into our room and cried out, "Daddy (who just happened to be at home at the time), a big animal is coming up the stairs!" And in fact a thick three-metre-long snake was slithering up, but on hearing the children's shrieks it quickly turned around and disappeared into a closet under the staircase, where the householder's many dogs had probably once been kept. We called the house owner next-door, and he came over with his big dogs, but they acted as if nothing was amiss. Then Fritzli was fetched. He barked so angrily that the snake finally decided to disappear over the two-metre-tall garden wall. My husband had wanted to drive it off with a pole but was prevented from doing so by some Nepalese who came running up. They said that an agreement had been made with the snake deity many years ago, according to which men were not allowed to kill snakes, and in exchange for this nothing would happen to them. Indeed there were scarcely any reports of snake bites in the Kathmandu Valley; most of the snakes there were probably non-poisonous, like the one we saw, and thus not dangerous.

Several days later the snake turned up again, and Katrin came running up into the house with joyful glee: "Our snake is back!" But with all the noise it disappeared, never to be seen again.

There was one other experience with snakes in our house: Next to my bedroom there was a bathroom, and in it there was a water pipe (leading to a basin, but no shower or tub). Sometimes this pipe was clogged so that water didn't flow. Aila,

having been summoned to help, opined laconically, "A snake." How it was extracted I don't know, but in any case the water returned—up to the next incident. This was particularly unpleasant, given that the door to the bedroom could not be tightly shut, and thus it often happened (particularly when Toni was away) that I woke up in the night to some sound and thought that a snake might be crawling into my warm bed. I had, needless to say, a queasy feeling, especially when thinking back on the large snake that wound its way up the stairs, and I longingly recalled my small, but serpent-free bathroom in the Heidhüsli.

There was one other adventure involving Fritzli: We visited the nearby small zoo and imprudently took Fritzli along. When he saw the cage with the leopard, he ran angrily up to the fairly widely spaced grating, so that the leopard was able to catch hold of him and drag him half way in. Toni coolly snatched an umbrella from under the arm of a nearby Nepalese and thrust it into the leopard's mouth, and it immediately loosened its bite, so that Fritzli could be pulled out. Bleeding and with a hole in his throat, he nevertheless wanted to jump back against the cage, and seeing this we immediately went home. There, in one of the drawing rooms, lay a tiger skin with a stuffed head (probably shot in the Terai by the house owner or his father), and what did Fritzli do but attack it (he had never taken notice of it before), and we were able to save the costly article only by quickly leaving the room and seeing to it that Fritzli never again entered it.

There were other experiences with animals for the children. One day a servant of Colonel K. N. Rana, my husband's professional counterpart, brought two ducks that were intended to appear roasted on the guest table in two days' time. The children carried these ducks around the house and garden in their arms like dolls, fed them, and said that they were now their play pals. The ducks, to the great delight of the children, tolerated everything. My husband sadly forgot to tell the Sherpas that they should find other sources of meat for the roast, and thus in the early dawn hours of the appointed day the ducks were slaughtered, while the children still slept. When they awoke and looked about in vain for their cherished ducks, and found them dead in the kitchen, they let out a wail. For a long time they could not forgive their parents for having failed to prevent this. I had known nothing of it all. When we had guests—which was increasingly becoming the case—the Sherpas were simply told that so and so many people were expected, and it was left up to them to prepare the menu. As time went by, they served a greater variety of food.

The gardner, who at first only had flowers and verdure growing in the large garden, started planting a few vegetables, particularly lettuce, and thus our meals became somewhat more diversified. One evening, when several high government officials were invited for dinner and we, as usual, trusted to the cooks for the menu, Aila served up boiled potatoes (called *Gschweltri* in Switzerland) with chocolate

pudding on top (chocolate could now be bought in Kathmandu). My husband, who was able to think quickly (I was still occupied with reading a bedtime story to the children), told Aila to bring some cheese, which was now available thanks to the cheese expert Schulthess. The chocolate pudding was served as a desert. The highlight of the story, though, is that one of the Nepalese guests told me with unsurpassable Asiatic aplomb that such potatoes had been prescribed daily by his doctor, so that he was exquisitely delighted. We dull Europeans could learn something from Asiatic social niceties. I for my part was relieved when I turned up at the table somewhat behind schedule.

As time went by I had ever more guests (but unfortunately did not keep a guest book), including such researchers as Tucci (the famed Tibetan scholar), von Führer-Heimendorf and his wife (he wrote the first book about the Sherpas in Khumbu, and the children and I would travel back on the same ship with them in January 1954), Herbert Tychi (an Austrian researcher and author of several books about Nepal and the Himalaya, who stayed for some time in our house), and H. Kruparz (a young German). For a long time the two guest rooms were called the Tychi room and the Kruparz room. Thus there was always interesting table talk, particularly with ambassadors who visited Nepal with their wives. At the time there were only British diplomats in Nepal, and we often met them.

Then the first Himalayan expeditions arrived, including those of the Swiss, who took up quarters temporarily in the downstairs rooms of our large house. After their unsuccessful attempt to climb Everest in 1952 they again stayed at our place, and there was a large farewell party, to which two princes from the royal family came. That was some event for the children, who scurried around among the large group of guests and then came to me downcast; there were no princes present, it seemed, who would certainly have been wearing golden crowns, of which there were none to see. They were thereupon introduced to the princes who weren't real princes in their eyes. The princes laughed heartily at that. The children remained disappointed. In the world of fairy tales everything is golden and beautiful, but humdrum reality is not like that at all.

Toni was often away (until the rainy season started), but happily not for long periods of time, since his geological investigations were undertaken not too far from Kathmandu. There were eventful things to do in the nearby camps and even in the more remote town of Pokhara. My husband's porters took some tents up the hills surrounding the Kathmandu Valley, from which points there were superb views onto the still nearly untouched valley, with the still small city of Kathmandu in the background, and also the old royal cities of Badgaon (Bhaktapur) and Patan (Lalitpur), each of which we visited. We viewed all of the imposing temples and statues of the gods, every one a source of great wonder and, naturally, the occasion for a multitude of questions on the part of the children. Everything took on a

different appearance, though, from the hilltops: the chain of 8000-metre-tall mountains in the background, from Kangchenjunga and Everest in the east to Dhaulagiri in the west, provided an indescribably lovely panorama, particularly early in the morning, when they shone rosy red from the rising sun. The children were wakened at break of day, the mattresses and sleeping bags were taken outside, and we started waiting for the sunrise, our gaze directed eastwards across countless chains of hills. The children enjoyed this impressive spectacle as much as their elders; little Monica was the only one to remain at home with her nanny Klara. Later she came along too, and there are wonderful photographs of the children being carried around in dossers by the porters. Cooking on an open fire was an event in itself, and they were allowed to help the friendly cooks. Unfortunately this kind of camping usually lasted only a few days, since my husband had work to do and needed the porters and tents for himself.

Once—the only time he did so—Toni left us alone in an old lodge, one on top of Mahadeo Pokhara, when Klara and little Monica and a cook were with us. We slept in the old house, but when rats skittered over the floor in the darkness we lost all interest in further such sleepless nights. The bags were packed, the cook rounded up two porters, and down we went to the old royal city of Badgaon. But there, to our dismay, a festival was in progress—a spring festival in which buildings, people, and animals were being sprinkled red. We left the city posthaste and drove home. We had luckily informed the chauffeur at the foot of the hill that we didn't know how long we would remain at the top. The children quickly recovered from their terror, and soon there was a new and interesting experience:

Masked dancers came to our house from nearby Patan and performed ceremonious dances in one way or another connected with the beginning of spring. Little Monica went boldly up to them and, to the joy of the dancers themselves, was photographed together with them.

Christoph had in the meantime found a playmate, Kumar Pande, a boy about his age who later received a scholarship from the ETH in Switzerland to study agronomy, in which he received a doctorate (he speaks Swiss German fluently, is married to a Swiss woman, and has long been engaged in Swiss development work in Nepal). The two played with the toy train that we brought from Switzerland (not an electric but a mechanical one), but much more interesting for Christoph was kite flying, a pastime that has long been zealously indulged in Nepal.

Monica's companion was Aila's small daughter, Lakpa Doma, who was one year older—a lively and temperamental girl. One day, in a tantrum, she fell screaming to the floor and waved and kicked her extremities about in the air. This made such an impression on Monica that she immediately attempted an imitation, and the screaming doubled, so that my husband had to come out of his office and give Monica a small slap to silence her. Aila, who was witnessing the fuss with a grin on

his face, now felt himself also compelled to give his daughter a slap—much against his instincts, since Sherpas, like Tibetans, do not make use of slaps, or beatings and spankings either, on their romping and raging children but rather wait patiently for them to calm down. The new pedagogy in our part of the world prefers this method too, but if it will prove as successful as in Tibetan families is a matter of question. In the latter, the atmosphere is, to begin with, much more peaceful, as I found out to my astonishment eight years later during my work in the Tibetan handicraft centre in Jawalakhel. Scarcely any arguments broke out among the more than one thousand people living together under crowded conditions. I often imagined how a mere hundred Swiss would conduct themselves in a similar situation. The Tibetans, like the Sherpas, are Buddhists, and Buddhism is, as far as I know, a world religion devoid of sectarian conflict.

But to get back to our camp experiences. The finest were doubtless those in Pokhara in the early spring of 1953. My husband had discovered a hill on the southern bank of the lake and settled on it as the camping place for us and later also for others. For many years it was called only the Swiss hill. I've heard that today it is entirely covered with tall trees and much underbrush. Some 100 metres below was our swimming area of choice. The Fishtail Lodge Hotel, patronized by many travellers in Nepal, is there now. The view from it, as from "our" hill up above, is one of a kind: Dhaulagiri, Annapurna I and II, Machapuchhare (Nepal's Matterhorn but nearly twice as tall), Manaslu, and other peaks to the east are within close range, but not suffocatingly so. The whole chain is particularly impressive in the first light of dawn—a unique spectacle that we enjoyed every morning, the children too being very taken with it. Afterwards they helped the two porters, who were at the same time our cooks (though it was best not to look at their hands). Still later we took short walks uphill, or else the children played, I read, and my husband worked on his geological maps. These will be unforgettable days for the rest of our lives.

The two eldest children (little Monica was not with us) had a small tent of their own. One day early in the morning we heard the two quarrelling and Katrin singing, "Dear God, let Christoph be a jologist (that is, geologist)." This she sang several times in her wee high voice. When we asked her later what she meant by that, she answered, "He'll always be away as a jologist," as she had sadly all too often experienced in the case of her father. Afterwards, however, the children got along on the best of terms while at play. Those glorious days, unfortunately, passed all too quickly, though they would be repeated in the autumn before our return home. Shortly before breaking camp, the English ambassador visited us with his servant, who was carrying a small box along with him. When it was opened what did we see but silverware and a silver bowl and plate, and thus we got an idea of how the English travelled about abroad during the colonial period. My husband had seen this for himself in the maharaja period on his first field trip, during which heavy

porcelain tableware and handsome cutlery was on hand, carried by dozens of porters. Days long gone. Trekking nowadays requires only a light set of serving and eating utensils.

From Pokhara, which from that year on could be reached by airplane instead of a ten-day walk (or nowadays in half a day by car), we took off back to Kathmandu. The children were allowed into the cockpit to visit the very friendly pilot, who had a long moustache and became, after Father Moran, the next man in Katrin's life. Her name for him was Pilot Schnauz. To her great joy, we once invited him to our place, and he was again our pilot for the flight to Patna on the way back home in January 1954. There was, of course, a tearful scene of leave-taking by Katrin from the object of her puppy love. She wanted later to become a "sturadess," as she called it, in order to meet him again.

But now the monsoon loomed with the many diseases that spread most easily during that time. Almost all of us got hepatitis—the tropical, not the dangerous, variety. Only little Monica was spared. She had "universal immunity," Toni thought. She had crawled around everywhere when she was still unable to walk and had her favourite candy man right in front of the garden wall. Toni once passed by as this man, having just applied a pat of cow dung against the wall to dry (as fuel for cooking), saw the begging child, quickly wiped his hands on his far from clean pants, and removed from the jar an unwrapped piece of candy, which she immediately popped into her mouth. This had probably often happened without our knowledge. But as I said, she was immune to everything and was a healthy child to begin with, and all of this can now pay off, seeing that she is the head of the Fairness Business of Caritas. Third World handicraft products are sold in Caritas and Third World shops. She yearly visits the producers and eats and drinks with them without knowing whether she has been served boiled water and like amenities. She has never contracted anything, in contrast to Toni, who visited the tropics not in his youth but only much later.

To return to the monsoon: I got the worst case of hepatitis, while my husband and the others were a bit more fortunate. The Americans were so kind as to supply us with diet food consisting of lighter fare than what we normally had. Father Moran, his usual helpful self, administered injections. Thanks to the Americans (some dozen families from Point Four, as the development aid of the time was called), we were treated to some very pleasant diversions. Sometimes they fetched the children and me and took us to their large, comfortable houses, and apart from the games for the children to play together with the young Americans and the chatting for me to do with their mothers, there was always something to eat—each time a party for us all. In spite of the diseases (including much dysentery and cholera, which we feared but were luckily spared from), there was a good side to the monsoon too: for weeks my husband, to the children's and my delight, remained

home, since there was no question of going on expeditions during it. He sketched his geological profiles, and for hours on end the children sat next to him in his large office on the ground floor and zealously sketched according to their own concept of "jology." During this time hardly any fighting (otherwise so customary) took place between the two eldest offspring. We played recorders, the elements of which I had taught them, and the xylophone according to the études of Orff (under whom I had formerly studied). Then, from books we had brought along, I taught reading, writing, and arithmetic to Christoph in the manner prescribed for the first class back home, so that he would be able to enter the second class in Lenzerheide in the following year when we returned.

Thus the weeks shot by, and my husband had to leave us once more, ever farther and farther from Kathmandu, so that we decided to return to our homeland in January 1954—that is, the children and I and Klara, who during the long weeks of illness, when I was confined to bed, had been of inestimable support. We experienced the final trips, city tours, invitations from the Americans and the English from the embassy, and the final unforgettable camping days, as well as the final Christmas festival in common for many years to come, again with the Americans and in the presence of a real Santa Claus. Then the packing started, and much was given away to our fellow house guests and their children. The children had picked up a bit of English and also some Nepali. Monica spoke her own mishmash of Swiss German, English, and Nepali. Farewell visits were paid all around; the driver, called Beibock by Monica, had tears in his eyes when his little favourite gave him a parting kiss. The domestics, the house owner, and his family—they all were sad to see us leave, and we had trouble leaving; in spite of the difficult period in the beginning, it had been a lovely, eventful year. We flew to Bombay accompanied by my husband, who stood melancholily on the pier watching us wave to him, while Monica kept calling out, "*Buba, eisha*," which meant that he should come with us. But then the handsome Italian liner *Victoria* with its beautiful decks, halls, and children's romping rooms beckoned, and father waving good-bye was soon forgotten for all the new experiences. I, too, had fine company in the Führer-Haimendorfs. Nor dare I forget the Italian cooking: the heavenly spaghetti, lasagna, and all the rest. Klara kept an eye on the children, and thus it was for everyone a very enjoyable nine three-week voyage, one blessed with glorious weather. The storms held back until the Mediterranean, but when they came we all became seasick, and thus we were happy to be able to go ashore at Trieste and to go home by train. There we were joyfully met by my mother and soon were riding up to our Heidhüsli in the snow and sun.

Back in Lenzerheide, what do I see before my eyes but Monica, by now three years old, with her little sun cap, tiny handbag, and walking stick. To my question what she's doing she provides the answer, "*I gang go reise und i freu mi bis i gstorbe bin, dänn bi i es Engeli und chan überall hiflüge über die ganz Welt*" (I am going to

travel and enjoy myself till the day I die, and then I'll become an angel and can fly over the whole world). Thus travelling, to which she was accustomed from her earliest days, had entered her blood and even her life beyond the grave.

Toni came back only after half a year, following a serious illness. But this had a happy sequel, in that the UN prohibited him in future from undertaking expeditions during the monsoon. Hence, in the following years, he could come and be with us and work on his geological maps and development reports from April to September. The years went swiftly by, particularly from 1957 onwards, when we spent half the year in Rome, where the children attended the Swiss school, interrupted by sojourns in the mountains during the summer and winter months. Once Toni was able to take us to Rome by auto, but otherwise we always went by train, loaded down with cello, violin, the dolls Maria-Teresa and Maria-Laura (bought in Rome), much luggage, bedding, and the like. During the cooler months of the year we rented an apartment in the city, but in the spring we lived by the sea, and daily the children rode a bus 30 to 60 kilometres into the city, up to the terminus, which was near the Swiss school. Those were glorious years in the Eternal City, not necessarily because of Toni's work, though he was sometimes able to spend the spring months with us and to work on his Himalayan geology and other reports near the sea. The friendly Italian bus drivers stopped directly in front of our house and waited patiently for the children to appear (often still with buttered bread in their hands) and enter the bus—something unthinkable in Switzerland. During the summer in Lenzerheide, the children avidly coloured in geological profiles, which for them was great fun and took a load of work off Toni's shoulders.

Then there were great changes in our lives: Toni finished his field maps and was found other work to do in Kathmandu, first at the Basic Survey Department and then soon after with the resettlement of Tibetan refugees. The rest of us, too, saw change. Christoph and Katrin were scheduled to enter the gymnasium, and so we moved into a house in Zuoz in the beautiful Engadine valley, and only during the vacations did we return by train to Lenzerheide, together with our big Newfoundland dog Ingo, two cats (all three had meanwhile enlarged our family), cello and violin, skis, skates, school materials, and what not—a true *Gugelfuhre*, as we say in Swiss German. But we were used to packing and moving from our time in Rome and earlier in Nepal, and soon the time for a second big trip to Nepal, in the autumn of 1961, was approaching. A teacher from the Roman school whom we knew well travelled with us and taught the children for half the day. The cello and violin again went along, and we added even a small spinettino, together with many other pieces of luggage. This huge amount of baggage was reason enough to make the trip a second time on the Italian ship *Victoria*. The children, by now 15, 13, and 10 years of age, were allowed to take dancing lessons prior to departure in order to enjoy life on board on a par with the adults. A VW bus was with us, and we

would travel a bit through India in it, as far as Dharamsala. There we were permitted to see the Dalai Lama, with whom Toni had for some time been in contact.

So it was back to Nepal, this time in another large house together with several people from ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), some of whom played the violin, cello, or flute, so that there were many evenings of music. We had not brought our spinettino in vain. The children received instruction from our teacher for half the day, and on the side they could ride horses, hike, and of course do much sightseeing (temples etc.). As for myself, I helped in the Tibetan handicraft centre half days. Toni will describe all that went on there himself. This time we were each without exception full of enthusiasm; our life could not be compared with the one we had led nine years earlier. Kathmandu had developed enormously, there were many foreign experts and new ambassadors, everything could be bought in the shops, and there was a much greater abundance of food. We frequently entertained guests or were ourselves invited out by foreigners and Nepalese. There was again time for camping, during which instruction continued, even though Toni was seldom able to accompany us, being fully occupied with the Tibet handicraft centre. This he will tell about himself. This time the stay in Nepal lasted only six months, since the children had to return to school in order to keep up with their classes. Thanks to the generosity of the lyceum director in Zuoz, Christoph and Katrin were once again allowed to interrupt their studies in 1963, this time for a nine-month trip to Bolivia. And thanks again to a teacher from their time in Rome, who went along as an instructor, they were able to finish all of their classes up to graduation. Their experiences in South America will be described in a later book, as well as their final year in New York, in 1966. With that our itinerant family life came to an end. Our son began to study art history, our elder daughter medicine, and our younger daughter entered a commercial school. The time of their youth had been unique, thanks to Toni's profession, and the many sojourns abroad had enriched my life too, even if the family spent hardly half of all their time together.

The major events of our children's youth have left their traces: the two daughters have since returned to Nepal, Tibet, or Bolivia every other year in order to trek, climb mountains or, in the case of Monica, engage in business. Katrin, in pursuit of her career as a doctor, was for several months each in the Ivory Coast and Thailand. The Graubündnerland (Grisons), Lenzerheide, and Engadine, however, have remained home for them.

Organization of My Expeditions (1950-1958)

Efficiency during Research Expeditions

The criterion of efficiency during research expeditions is the collection of as much data as possible in the shortest possible time with the least necessary expenditure of effort and costs. The efficiency of such expeditions, as exemplified in my own, depends upon eight *main conditions*:

- proper choice of season
- proper choice of routes
- sensible, lightweight equipment
- sacrificing all unnecessary items to keep the number of porters low
- sensible choice of porters
- sensible and strictly enforced daily routine
- self-discipline
- discipline among the porters

Research work carried out in solitary surroundings is easy for a researcher who loves nature. In the following I describe how I tried to fulfil the above conditions during my research expeditions.

Climate- and Weather-Related Experiences

The geographical setting of Nepal may be compared with that of the countries of the southern Mediterranean along the North African coast; its climate, however, corresponds to that of these countries only during part of the year. It makes no sense

to talk of a typical Nepalese climate; the climatic contrasts resulting from the vertical divisions of the country are too large. The climate takes on increasingly continental features the farther north one goes into the Himalaya and beyond. The Himalaya is a one-sided meteorological divide, lying as it does on the edge of a huge land mass and receiving moist air only from one direction, namely the south. A climate marked by seasonal rains is thus found only on the southern side of it. In the Indian lowlands, the spatio-temporal demarcation of the monsoon is clear: it slowly moves from South India northwards in the presummer season, reaching the Nepal Terai generally at the end of May or the beginning of June. Near to the mountains, however, local factors affect how the weather develops. Insolation is heavier on the southern flank of the Mahabharat Lekh and even more so on that of the high Himalaya, and this causes anabatic currents. The latter give rise to violent thunderstorms long before the arrival of the actual monsoon front. This is particularly observable, of course, on the southern slope of the Annapurna chain, with its abrupt rise from the lowlands to 8,000 metres. From April on, cumulus clouds form there with astonishing regularity every afternoon, condensing towards evening into walls of threatening black clouds and later discharging their burden in heavy electrical storms, frequently of hail, as far down as the lowlands. By the next morning the whole turbulent episode is over, and the mountains are radiant under the fresh hail, which often lies knee-deep.

The storms set in earlier as the summer approaches—towards midday—, and they often do not have enough time to discharge their rain before dawn. Rainless intervals become increasingly shorter, and the storms gradually shade over into the monsoon. On the surface, it is difficult to distinguish the storm phase from the actual monsoon period. There is, however, one distinct, easily recognizable criterion: during the storms, the winds blow from the south-west, often accompanied by heavy gales. The monsoon, by contrast, brings its precipitation in from the south-east, from the Bay of Bengal, and it does not take the form of storms. But there is no single shift from the clamorous south-west storms to the more dependable rains from the south-east. In the beginning, the monsoon is interrupted a number of times by storms, until it finally gains the upper hand. Much has been written about the "south-west monsoon" in the standard geography texts. This may generally be justified as far as the Indian part of the subcontinent is concerned. With regard to Nepal, however, it is not; the monsoon in Nepal is a south-east monsoon.

The northern boundary of the monsoon-affected region is unique and highly interesting. A trek southwards from the Tibetan plateau through one of these Himalayan valleys at the beginning of the monsoon period offers fantastic scenes: on the northern side, one can still enjoy blue skies and pleasant temperatures, with frost setting in only towards 6,000 metres. The clouds tower up blackly over the Himalaya, and it seems as if they were rolling north like an avalanche. But it only

seems that way; in fact, the clouds do not change their position, even though hurricane-force winds sweep continuously through the valleys. The spectacle is even more awesome at night: lightning flashes in the clouds without letup, the rolling of thunder echoes far and ominously. The violent wind carries spray kilometres to the north. Then, further south, the tropical rains suddenly pour down, and the vegetation undergoes a simultaneous change: ferns and bamboo start appearing; the trees of the virgin forest are hung with lichen. The monsoon probably does not reach into the high elevations; above 7,000 metres, it is likely that north-westerlies prevail throughout the entire year. Thus the peak of Mount Everest, too, is usually black, its snows blown off.

Annoying Leeches

There is another reason besides the rivers to avoid travelling in Nepal during the monsoon period: leeches. These three-centimetre-long bloodsuckers (called *tsuga* in Nepali) cling in endless numbers to grasses, bushes, and trees. With amazing instinct they stretch out towards passing humans and animals; they even fall from trees onto their victims, biting immediately into their skin. They find their way through the narrowest slits (for example, shoestring holes) and quickly tap into the bloodstream with their tripartite jaw, particularly on the ankles, between toes, or in other sensitive places. A liquid that they secrete prevents the blood from clotting, and when they've sucked their fill and fallen off, the wound continues to bleed for hours. They may be removed or torn off by force, but then their jaws are left behind. An itching infection that is difficult to heal develops after a few days. Whoever has not experienced them personally can hardly imagine what a plague these *tsuga* are for man and animal. When, after hours of trekking through soggy forests, the tent is finally set up in the evening and clothes are peeled off like wet rags cleaving to the body, it is then that underwear and socks are found immersed in and crusted with blood.

Flood waters and landslips, downed bridges and leeches—these are the gifts that the summer monsoon in Nepal has in store for those who want to trek through the country south of the Himalaya.

The Dilemma of the Choice of Season

From what has been said above it follows that, due to the manifold climatic and weather zones in Nepal, there is no single trekking season that is suitable for the entire country. For the Midlands and the Terai, the dry period (October to March) is the best time of year. The weather is generally good, the air clear, and the temperatures are very pleasant. For the high mountains, spring (April-June) and early

autumn (October-November) are most suitable. The monsoon period (June-September) is the most pleasant period to travel in the high valleys north of the main chain.

I was faced with the dilemma of having to begin my expeditions as early as possible in the autumn in order to reach the high mountain zone quickly. In September, though, there were often recurrences of the monsoon, and then I was in the Terai during the most unpleasant and malarial period.

Sensible Camping Equipment

My first expeditions suffered from a certain cumbersomeness, which resulted from unnecessarily heavy equipment and too large numbers of porters and personnel too heterogeneous in their make-up. During each expedition I succeeded in reducing the number of porters. The topnotch equipment left behind by the first Swiss Everest expedition in June 1952 made things considerably easier for me. It enabled the expedition to Shisha Pangma, the first truly light one, to be undertaken with only 12 porters. I was particularly thankful for this gesture on the part of the Everest mountaineers, since my own equipment, which had been ordered especially from Switzerland, had been left behind in New Delhi in the spring of 1952 by these same mountaineers and arrived in Kathmandu in the spring of 1953, one whole year later, and that only after sundry bureaucratic hurdles had been overcome, including the payment of high storage and administrative fees, and only after the customs authorities in Calcutta had written to me threatening to auction off my shipment publicly if I didn't clear it within two weeks. I had no other choice but to fly immediately to Calcutta and fetch the equipment myself, and this again involved much expenditure. The consequences that this delay had, not only for me and my expeditions but also for my family, were described in the previous chapter by my wife Gertrud (see under sleeping bag parties).

My own tent, which I had acquired in Switzerland from the firm of Spatz, was not a particularly small tent, but it had proved to answer the purpose very well. I could stand up in it, and there was enough space inside for me to be able to work at my table in the evenings. It also had a tolerably large covered entrance area, completely sealable, where I could store all my baggage. When it was warm, I could work under the canopy of this entrance area by rolling up the sides.

For the porters I had a special Spatz pyramid tent, which was light and stormproof. A mess tent was also very useful, and the Sherpas, finally, slept in small, light tents.

The quality of the tents was of utmost importance, since large repairs or the obtaining of spare parts was impossible along the route. I did have a small repair kit, but it was meant only for minor jobs.

During my eight years of expeditions, I spent 1,235 nights in a tent together with my team. Since I stayed more than one night in the same place only on exceptional occasions (rain, snow, accidents), the tents had to be packed and set up an equivalent number of times. Frequently there was no time to allow the (sometimes totally frozen) dew to dry, and this subjected the tents to heavy wear. The Spatz tents were nevertheless still completely usable after those eight years.

Certain precautions had to be taken, of course, to protect the material. The porters were accustomed from other expeditions, for instance, to drive in the tent pegs with stones. This would have been okay in the case of normal tents with steel or wooden pegs. The tent pegs I was equipped with, however, were made of light metal. Within a short period of time they had become damaged and unserviceable from the hammering with stones. Thus I allowed my porters to drive in the tent pegs only with heavy pieces of wood. Above the timberline, though, there was no such wood to be had. Among my equipment, therefore, I carried along a plastic hammer from Switzerland.

When my instructions relating to the use of wooden sticks or the plastic hammer failed to be strictly adhered to, I had to resort to stringent methods: I warned that the camp would be shifted to a new site the next time stones were used to drive in pegs.

The hour of decision arrived. One evening I heard the hard, clear ring of stones against tent pegs; the porters obviously thought that they were safe once I was out of sight. The camp was shifted to a new location. This had the desired effect, and in future I had no bother with stones.

My **Sherpas** had acquired suitable high mountain gear from their expeditions. They were very proud of it and wore it almost permanently. This was particularly true in the case of their down clothing, which they scarcely took off, even in the hottest weather.

I gave each of my **porters** a quilted Nepalese cotton blanket and a pair of track shoes. The latter were meant for the snow. During the first expedition, which took us through snow, I had had fears that the porters' feet would freeze. When it came to the test, though, (on steep snow-covered cliffs, for example) I saw to my consternation that the porters had tied their shoes to the loads they were carrying. "Shoes no good," they explained.

A problem for me personally was the *enormous wear and tear woollen socks were subjected to*. I recalled my military service with men from **Appenzell**. For long marches, the latter wore strips of wool instead of wool socks. I tested the strong *handwoven strips of Nepalese wool* and got the hang of wrapping up feet, and afterwards I had good results with them. A pair of such woollen strips lasted several months. At night they could be unrolled and allowed to air-dry. Since the feet were

wrapped up freshly every day, no pinching occurred. Indeed, during my 14,000 kilometres of trekking in Nepal, I never suffered from blisters on my feet.

Made-to-Measure Containers

The Nepalese carry their goods in a *dhoko* (woven dossier), which tapers down to a point. The load is secured by a tumpline. Such a basket is very convenient for local goods, but less so for the wide variety of expedition baggage, which is of a totally different nature.

Thus I had very convenient *made-to-measure portable containers* fashioned by a joiner in Kathmandu—such things as an expandable *field pantry*. When the latter was in its folded state, it formed a wooden box corresponding in size and weight to a normal load. Its cover could be folded out to make a kitchen table, and the inside was so sectioned that a whole set of nested Spatz pots, the Spatz pan, kitchenware, and my eating utensils could be accommodated. The table was important because, at first, the Sherpas used to prepare all my meals on the ground. This caused no problems above or outside inhabited zones, but near the main routes and settlements, where human waste is excreted and spread by the feet of humans or the snouts of dogs, the ground did not seem to be the proper board to prepare meals on.

A further piece of camping furniture was a made-to-measure office cabinet the size of a portable load. In it was contained the whole of my working material, such as field books, topographical maps, paper for drawing major profiles, colour pens, photographic and film gear, a supply of film, and a kit of the most important emergency medicines.

The medicines took up a full two loads. Half of them were again in a made-to-measure sectioned *medicine chest* (called a "tablet box" by the porters and Sherpas) and were so arranged that they could be immediately retrieved in case of need.

My *Sherpa Sonam*, who was mainly responsible for doing the cooking, called the piece of kitchen furniture "chigginbaggish," the "Sherpa English" expression for kitchen box. My office cabinet was called "affissbax," or otherwise *sano Singha Durbar* (little Singha Durbar), Singha Durbar being the name of the government palace in Kathmandu with its many hundreds of offices.

The customary load in Nepal for commissioned work or personal transport was about 50 kilogrammes, and in exceptional cases even more. Nowadays a maximum load of 30 kilogrammes is prescribed by the government for trekkers.

In order to make my expeditions mobile and efficient, even at high elevations, my loads weighed on an average only between 25 and 30 kilogrammes.

I myself carried only a photo bag with my field books, maps, drawing material, and two miniature cameras, along with a windproof jacket, cap, sunglasses, and the

most important emergency medicines. The quality Swiss bag, dating to 1953, is still in use, 40 years later.

The Experienced Sherpa and Porter Team

It was an extraordinarily good piece of fortune for me that the **Sherpa Aila** had taken part in the first ascent of Annapurna, by the French, in the spring of 1950 (the first ever 8,000-metre mountain to be climbed) and was often in Kathmandu during that time. In a dramatic rescue action, he together with the **Sherpa Phutarki** had carried down the half-frozen Frenchmen Hertzog and Lachenal from the icy heights. He heard of me when he was in Kathmandu to look for employment on other Himalayan expeditions and promptly sought me out. He was my *sirdar* (crew chief) during my first large expedition to Mustang in the spring of 1952 and remained in my service up to my leave-taking from Nepal in July 1962. Phutarki found work with Werner Schulthess and remained with him faithfully during his successful project to establishment cheese-making facilities—up to 1964, when Schulthess too left Nepal.

Through **Aila** I obtained the services of other Sherpas, such as the Everest veteran **Tashi** and later his son **Kami**. Further, **Sonam Sherpa** and **Angtenzing** joined on with me. Sonam was a well-to-do farmer and trader of Chaunrikarka and had no need actually to be in my service.

Foreign expeditions that knew my Sherpas often asked me whether I could lend them out for a first-time ascent. Tashi, for example, was part of the first group to climb Machapuchhare, under the leadership of the Himalayan pioneer **Col. J. Roberts**. When Tashi returned to my camp near Pokhara after the successful ascent, he reported back with strict military bearing and immediately resumed his normal work in the mess without wasting a word. Finally, though, I asked him how it had been. His answer said all that needed to be said: "Very steep road, sir." He thereupon went back to his normal mess routine, as if nothing had happened.

Tashi's son Kami lost his life in an avalanche of ice during an Everest expedition.

The distinguishing characteristics of all my Sherpas were a golden humour, absolute reliability, discretion and, what was particularly endearing, the quality that one associates with understatement.

In the beginning, the porters (at the time called coolies) were recruited through the Coolie Agency in Kathmandu. In 1953 a coolie received two Nepalese rupees as his day's wage, from which he had to provide his own rations. One porter consumes about one pound of rice a day, which at the time cost approximately one eighth of a rupee.

By reducing equipment to the essentials and making other drastic cuts, I was able, by 1954, to bring the number of porters down to ten. Furthermore, I later always took the same porters from two clans, one from a Gurung and one from a Tamang village. Once five Gurung brothers from Samri were in my service! After a short period I felt truly at ease with the team. I fashioned them into a disciplined, mobile group, and a splendid elan was developed. Each porter always had the same assigned load to answer for; thus one person each was responsible for my "office equipment," for the kitchen articles, for the tents, for the camping material, for my personal paraphernalia, for food supplies, and for the money. Two of the total of ten loads consisted of medicines, since along with my porters I had to look after the local population, who saw a "doctor sahib" in every white man.

The fixed assignment of loads cut much time off of what a daily redistribution system in the unloading and packing would have required. Moreover, each porter felt a responsibility for his load.

Sher Bahadur, a Tamang, was the porter in charge of my *office cabinet*. He was constantly by me, even though I normally kept about half an hour ahead of the main group of porters in order to gain time to make field notes. Sher Bahadur was carefully trained, in particular, to see that exposed film never came in contact with sunlight or became heated. Indeed never during my eight years of expeditions did my films suffer from heat. One other reason for this, of course, was my system of Sherpa post runners, who made week-long treks with the films to Kathmandu for further forwarding or delivered them to the UN office in New Delhi. From there the exposed films made their way to **W. Schuepp**, the director of Volkart Ltd., Bombay, who passed them on to Kodak S.A. in Bombay. There the films were developed in an impeccable manner, far better than Kodak Suisse ever did in Lausanne. Today, after 40 years, the slides from the fifties that were never or only sporadically used for presentations are still in excellent condition. They were used in the last edition (1980) of my picture volume *Nepal*.

Naturally an *expedition coffer* had to be carried along for the six months, since there were at the time no banks outside Kathmandu. Hardened by experience, I went equipped with three currencies: Nepalese rupees, Indian rupees, and Tibetan currency, reflecting the regions I intended to explore, and *all in coin*, the only form accepted. The coffer, at approximately 50 kilogrammes, was at the beginning of trips the heaviest of all loads. Its weight, though, decreased throughout the expedition. This loss was made up for by rock samples that the same porter was charged with carrying. His thoughts on the subject were apparently, "rocks are rocks," even as money is money. He threw them away and collected a few rocks close to Kathmandu that in his eyes looked similar to my samples. When I discontentedly asked Aila what had happened, he replied drily, "This coolie thinking all the same, sir." Needless to say, I made sure this never recurred.

To my surprise, the term "Indian rupee" was not in use outside the capital. Indian currency was counted in *company mor*. One *mor* is half a rupee, whether Indian or Nepalese. In order to distinguish the former one, however, it was qualified by "company," meaning the former East India Company (which had gone out of existence in 1857!).

The sum of several thousand rupees in specie—it was the lone currency throughout much of Nepal—was a huge amount for Nepalese standards at the time. The porter who was chosen to carry it was naturally aware of his special standing, and in order to underscore it to the village populace, he would always make a point of setting down his burden with a clang. At first I was annoyed at this. The 6,000 *Nepalese rupees* that we normally carried, equivalent at the then *rate to approximately 4,000 Swiss francs*, corresponded to about three years of a Nepalese schoolmaster's salary. Just imagine someone walking around today in Zurich with a sack containing three years' worth of a teacher's salary (some 200,000 francs) and making sure that everyone knew it!

The loads, which were normally fixed, were *redistributed only at dangerous river crossings*, such that each received an equal share, in line with the old adage, "Don't put all of your eggs in the same basket." In this way, were one load lost, it didn't mean that all the money, all the medicine, all the tents, or all the food supplies were lost at once.

The Choice of Campsites

I always made the choice of where the camping sites would be myself, setting great store by beauty, comfort, and cleanliness, whether it be in the form of a distant vista, the intimacy of a babbling brook where one could bathe, or a big river. One had, of course, to keep an eye on the weather. In the premonsoon period with its violent storms almost every evening, usually accompanied by hail, setting up camp on an exposed ridge along the southern slope of the Himalaya is not particularly advisable.

Finding a level, clean, unoccupied site was not always easy, especially in the thickly populated Nepalese Midlands, where every fairly suitable piece of land is in use. After the rice harvest, around November, the harvested fields were ideal places, and water was not very far away from where rice thrived. Sufficiently large flat areas were very rare in regions with steep slopes or in deep gorges. My personal desire, though, was to camp on scenic ridges with distant views, as long as there was no threat from storms.

Obtaining water on ridges was often an uncertain venture. The porter charged with this task always had his water containers on the top of his load and was taught to go in search of water immediately upon arrival at the campsite. Sometimes it took

much more than an hour for him to reappear, since he had to descend far down into the valley. I was, by the way, constantly astonished at the instinct Nepalese farmers had developed for finding water.

Firewood was another problem. We frequently had to collect it long before reaching the campsite, particularly when the timberline forced us to. Yak dung also had often to be collected in a timely fashion. Perhaps it was only my imagination, but meals prepared over burning yak dung seemed to me to be particularly pungent and otherwise agreeable to the taste.

On some occasions, due to the moisture, we were unable to get any fire at all going and had neither tea nor a warm meal. This usually implied that we then had no meal at all, having no picnic provisions along with us.

My partiality for camping along big rivers was tempered by the danger of sudden floods in the wake of overflows of glacier lakes or of glacier ice falls. Following one such unpleasant experience near Mugu, I made it a point to set up camp always at a secure height above the riverbank, or at least in a spot with an easily accessible path of retreat to higher elevations.

It was wonderful camping along small local rivers in whose lukewarm waters one could go swimming. In *virgin forest*, we protected our camp from wild animals by *large campfires* that were kept burning the whole night. Whole tree trunks were laid over what was at first a small fire. Once the fire had burned through them, the two halves were added to the fuel, and in a short time we had a huge fire going.

Once this process took uncustomarily long: the trunk did not want to divide in two. I helped it along with a powerful kick, and it fell apart. The inside was totally rotten. The Sherpas and porters seemingly didn't realize this and were highly impressed by my feat. Wherever they went from then on, for the many years until I left Nepal, they told stories about their "haggimsahb" who was so strong that he could sunder the largest tree trunks with a single kick of his foot.

I liked to avoid pitching camp too near to large villages. In the first place, we were like a magnet in the attraction we exercised over the curiosity of the local population. Nor was the vicinity of large villages always good for my porters. Once near such places, they often preferred to put up overnight in houses, particularly when there was a whiff of *chang* in the air or comely girls gathered around water taps. It was always a chore to flush the porters from their hideaways at sunrise when they had had a "rousing evening" the night before.

Finally, a certain lassitude overcame us after long treks. When very long and steep climbs loomed, they were best tackled early in the morning or after the midday break, when we were all still fresh or refreshed.

It is obvious that all of these considerations could not be given their due simultaneously. In any case, however, the choice of the camping site was always a

fascinating undertaking that engaged everyone's spirits. Of my approximately 1,200 campsites in Nepal, only a handful have left behind bad memories.

Every evening my porters got a campfire going, and I thoroughly enjoyed sitting next to it at dusk. And when, in addition, the porters sang or even merely hummed their lovely old songs in subdued tones, often in the form of back-and-forth chants, then those hours were for me the epitome of a fair and intact world.

Going without Breakfast

One problem in the beginning consisted in the bothersome delay occasioned by my breakfasting before setting off in the morning. The mess equipment could not be washed until I had ended my breakfast. When the weather was extremely cold, the breakfast was served to me in my tent, and in that case my tent, too, could not be packed.

Going without breakfast before setting off became unavoidable, and I had to adapt my eating habits to those of the porters and Sherpas, that is, to taking two meals a day. This was the only way to be up and off at daybreak.

Almost Exclusively Local Provisions

Given the small number of porters, there was of course no question of taking along canned food. Our provisions were based entirely on what was available locally: such things as maize, barley, rice, millet, and eggs, depending on the elevation. I had the unexpected good fortune to have excellent cooks in my Sherpas Aila and Sonam. Their simple curry and chili dishes continued to taste good to me even after I was served them for weeks and months on end without any variation. Aila was forever expressing the opinion, "Chili makes very strong, sir."

Vegetables were a problem. Except for *mulas* (large radishes), nettles, and other plants unknown to me, vegetables were scarcely known of at the time in the countryside.

The situation was likewise unfavourable as far as *fruits* were concerned, apart from bananas, which were available in the entire Midlands. *Suntala* (mandarin oranges) could be obtained only in December and January, but then they were dirt cheap. I recall that a whole *dhoko* (dosser) of the finest mandarins was offered for two Nepalese rupees (including the *dhoko*) at the Pokhara airport when my family was staying there.

There were a few other provisions that I had to obtain in Kathmandu, such as milk powder, but the latter was sometimes available in the larger markets along the route. The only thing that I always took along from Switzerland was bouillon cubes.

I knew what a cup of broth at every meal could do for a person. A certain amount of salt consumption was also very important in view of perspiration loss.

The *pièce de résistance* of my fare was later the yak cheese produced by the Swiss dairymen. I always took a whole cheese loaf along with me, which lasted for five or six months. It couldn't be packed due to its size and instead was subjected to the sun, wind, and rain on top of its assigned dossier. To my way of thinking, its quality only improved from this "natural treatment." During the course of an expedition it acquired more and more the flavour and toughness of Parmesan, my favourite cheese. Towards the end of the expedition, though, it occasionally became as hard as stone, so that the daily rations could only be hacked off with an ice pick.

During the first expeditions I had coffee along with me, but I got to feeling that it was sapping my vitality and reducing my fitness, so I stopped drinking it and switched completely to tea—"Sherpa tea," that is. This was very strong and very dark in colour, and contained much sugar and milk.

I also gave up smoking for the same reasons as I did coffee, even though it would have been very nice to be able to smoke my pipe next to the evening campfire.

At first Aila often purchased chickens for me. When I once dressed down the porters for their laziness, they came back that, in view of my consumption of meat, I had no right to complain; if they had more meat to eat, they would be able to walk faster. My meat rations were thereupon done away with, and every seven to ten days, on the average, I bought a goat or a sheep, which was divided up equally among all team members. My porters were "bottomless pits." They gobbled down everything, including innards and even bones. The crunching they did was what dogs do when going at a bone. Heads seemed to be a special delicacy: they cut them up with their sharp *khukuris* into thin slices, along with everything in them. These slices were divided among everyone. Everything was consumed, with the customary canine crunching.

I usually selected the days for meat to follow upon the crossing of a particularly difficult pass, and this acted as a wonderful spur on my team. The porters' eyes lighted up whenever the word *masu* (meat) was uttered.

"Last meal, sir, food finished now"

Normally I had only to tell Aila for how many days we would be staying in uninhabited territory, that is, unable to buy any rice or maize in the villages, and then to leave the rest up to him.

Having crossed a high pass covered with snow at the western end of the Dhaulagiri group, we descended to approximately 3,700 metres, to the highest forested level of the valley, in order to be able to camp safely under the threat of

deteriorating weather. I intended to leave this valley the next day and return over another high pass to the inhabited Gurja valley. In the evening, however, a heavy storm broke out, and later it began to snow. The next day it continued to snow without letup (it was the end of May), and we had to give up the idea of crossing the pass. I decided to wait in camp for better weather. We were safe there, and there was an abundance of firewood.

The second evening Aila brought me two fried eggs and a superb nettle dish, but without the customary rice or maize, and commented with a grin, "Last meal, sir, food finished now." What was worse, the porters too had consumed all of their rice. Thus we had by all means to make it over the pass the next morning, regardless of whether the weather was good or whether it would continue to snow. Fortunately the following morning the sky was cloudless. For about 800 metres we had to climb in snow up to our bellies, and local slides of snow masses could be expected. Finally with might and main we reached the pass and saw the first villages far below. The way to them, though, went over pathless terrain, and sometimes along the beds of streams and through gorges, which we had to circumvent by ascending through thick virgin forest. In the end we reached the uppermost village in the Gurja valley and were able to have our first meal in over 24 hours.

Like a Clock

Whereas during the first expeditions I had to expend about fifty percent of my time and energy animating the porters, setting up camp, and taking care of "internal affairs," and so had only the rest left over for geology, with my later team I was able to devote myself wholly to scientific pursuits. The daily routine went like clockwork, and I myself was often the one who was driven. I felt it necessary, for research work of this type, that one become locked into a regular daily programme, almost as a kind of sacred rite. In such cases, where the body is pushed to the limits of its functioning capacity, one can no longer allow oneself the luxury of making arbitrary decisions. Thus my team was drilled with iron regularity (in case I myself had trouble) to disassemble the tents, including my own, a quarter of an hour before sunrise. How often I would keenly have liked to remain in my warm sleeping bag, especially in the camps high up in the blistering cold mountains. Mercilessly, though, my tent came down over my head, and I had no other choice but to dress and hit the trail. I too, though, had the same rights with respect to the porters. Within less than half an hour, then, the whole camp was cleared, and the porters were ready to go. Towards evening, after a walk of seven or eight hours, the same procedure was repeated in reverse. All tents were up, flames were crackling merrily, and the teapot was hanging over the fire no more than half an hour after the site for the camp had been determined. Five minutes later a steaming hot cup of tea was on my field desk.

I did not need to intervene during any of this energetic activity but could take a peaceful nap on my reclining chair in order to revive myself for the evening task of drawing profiles and adding notes to the field book.

The ability, when tired, to completely relax and fall into a deep sleep within not much more than a minute, even in a sitting position and amid noisy surroundings, and then to awake refreshed after about 20 minutes proved very useful to me in the Himalaya. I still have the same ability today, at the age of 75.

The treks to the remotest parts of the country, both in the east and west, led me away from civilization in all its forms for up to six months. Among the other things I was compelled to do, therefore, was to set up my *own postal service*, with two special Sherpas as carriers.

Whereas preparing my expeditions required about three weeks at the beginning of activities in Kathmandu, this phase was later drastically reduced thanks to team proficiency. I only needed to send a letter to my Sherpa Aila in Darjeeling (where he lived at the time) instructing him to organize the expedition by a certain date. Thus, from 1956 onwards, I set off for a period of six months no later than three days after my arrival. For the last two expeditions 1957/58, I needed to wait only two days between my arrival in Kathmandu from Switzerland and our departure.

Problems with Internal Affairs

Besides difficulties primarily organizational in nature, I also had to come to terms with a number of problematic characteristics of the Nepalese.

Spitting is for the people of Nepal a *national pastime*, so to speak. They spit on every occasion, and the act itself is not only performed to clear the throat of phlegm but also has a variety of other uses: it may express embarrassment but also something more positive, such as the English use of "well," as in "Well, here we are."

My porters, too, were at first enthusiastic practitioners of this sport. When friendly persuasion had little effect, I quickly put an end to the spitting with disciplinary methods of proven success in the military. I gave a warning that the next time there was any spitting in the camp, the whole camp would be relocated to a new site free of spit, no matter how late it was and how tired we all were. The first such warning had no effect.

One evening we were comfortably settled in; there was a steaming cup of tea already on my desk and the porters were preparing their meal when, behind the mess tent, I heard one of my men expectorate. I myself was tired and had no desire to carry out my threat. Having assured myself that another site was actually available, some quarter of an hour away, I ordered the men to strike the tents and to march to the new spot. From then on my camps remained completely free of spit.

One might object that the Nepalese "national pastime" that I, as opposed to my team, was affected by ought really to have been of no consequence. However, as it related to the curiosity that all Nepalese displayed towards me, the first foreigner to visit their village, the effects of spitting were harder to avoid: such curiosity led the inhabitants of these villages and porters encountered along the way to throng by the dozens around my camp, around my tent, and finally around my desk. They almost perched on my desk and hung like grapes about the entrance to my tent. If during such times the spitting got going full swing, there would hardly be a square metre of spittleless ground around our tents, and this was a somewhat unpleasant state of affairs.

I instructed my Sherpas to tell the people that there would be no spitting at my campsite. At the same time, I warned my Sherpas and porters that, if necessary, I would use the same method that had been so successful in their case. This worked: they not only took measures when someone spit in my camp, banishing him to a proper distance, but even began to loudly upbraid their fellow countrymen, yelling at them and dressing them down for their ill-bred habit which violated all rules of courtesy and etiquette.

Toilettes were completely unknown in rural Nepal. Excrement was deposited, according to whim, near houses, along paths, and often on the paths themselves. Along the main trade routes in the Terai, where the shallow rivers had to be crossed by hopping over set stones, there was often a pile of excreta on each of them. This custom arose for purely pragmatic reasons: the activity that we Europeans use toilette paper for is performed in Nepal exclusively with water. Often one was led to believe that the depositing of excrement had an almost sacred significance: it was found concentrated around water sources, precisely because Nepalese "toilette paper" was available there. It was likewise found near holy temples.

It was consequently not easy to find a clean campsite, particularly along the main routes and in the vicinity of villages.

I directed my Sherpas and porters not to follow the call of nature within a radius of 200 metres around the camp. This command was better obeyed than the one abolishing spitting. Once, however, when I discovered a fresh pile near the tents, I had the camp relocated to a new site.

Seat Reservations in Train Compartments by means of a Khukuri Bush Knife

The first expeditions I carried out were to places near Kathmandu or, more generally, in Central Nepal. Kathmandu was the starting point for the treks. The remoter regions in East and West Nepal could not be reached on foot from Kathmandu within a reasonable time. The trek would have taken more than a month. In order to reach these regions, therefore, I first went to Patna in India with

my entire team and travelled east or west on Indian trains to the railway terminuses on the Nepal border. These "group trips" frequently involved a bit of adventure. The trains were chronically overfull, and my porters with their monstrous loads often had problems finding seats.

I remember one train trip on the Punjabi Express particularly well. This was an express train with only third-class seats and chaotically packed. At the time we boarded the train in Patna, there were already passengers hunkered down everywhere—on seats, on the floor, on luggage racks, on the tops of the carriages—or clustered like pigeons at the doors and windows. It was only with great difficulty that we managed to enter the carriage, since the nimble Indians were entering through the windows. In general, as a white, I never had problems finding a seat. Now, however, this seemed to be impossible. My Nepalese porters began to assert rights on my behalf. I feared that they might turn physical. That threat deepened when my porters drew their *khukuris* (the legendary Nepalese bush knife that the Japanese learned to fear in Burma from their confrontation with the British Gurkha regiments) and waved them around with menacing gestures. I thereupon obtained a seat but began immediately to collect the *khukuris* of all of my porters and store them out of reach in my personal luggage. My Nepalese would have defended themselves relentlessly and unto death and would probably have taken many an Indian's life, but in the end we would have simply been lynched by a crowd that was a hundred times larger than we were. In preparation for later train trips in India, I always had the *khukuris* collected before crossing the Nepal-Indian border and packed in my luggage.

The pleasant side of trips on Indian railways was the station restaurants. There I got the best curry dishes of my entire life—and also at rock-bottom prices. The colourful goings-on inside these restaurants, and in the stations in general, were always of interest.

Wild Animals, Man-Eaters, Snakes, and Scorpions

Back in those days there were wild animals throughout the country. Several of my adventures in this regard are described under the various expeditions. *Leopards* caused mischief in the entire Midlands, including Kathmandu. I often heard frightful howling at night in my camps. In general, though, leopards do not attack humans. Occasionally they will have a go at domestic animals, small creatures, and even cows. Once I set up camp near a village plagued by such assaults. One of the villagers warned me of the danger, and this instigated me to shift the camp into the village, where the inhabitants were preparing their nightly fire for scaring off predators. Not long after night had set in we heard the roar of a leopard from afar, and then more distinctly as it got closer. But then it made no sound, and the villagers knew that it

was now attempting to move in on some victim. They stirred up the flames and began to make noise with whatever objects they had available. The leopard evidently ceased its prowling and made off to other parts. I had not got to see it. One or two hours later its howling was heard from the other direction, and the drama was played out again. Even though the danger to humans was small, we still had an uneasy feeling. Having set its sights on some tasty domestic animal, it might suddenly go wild with rage at being deprived of it and be tempted to attack one of its obstructors.

Such a village, in any case, lived in terror until a government hunter came and shot the creature. This was not always easy, though. If it was only wounded, it might turn into a so-called man-eater. Then it became a great danger for humans. The same thing happens to old and frail animals that can no longer feed themselves by hunting wild game. They turn of necessity to attacking defenceless humans. Once they have smelled human blood, they become very dangerous.

During my expeditions I only once heard of a man-eater and it, thankfully, created havoc far from my route.

Snakes generally do not attack humans. They are dangerous only when they become frightened or when trod or sat upon by mistake. In Nepal there are many snakes: vipers and such, the cobra, and even the king cobra. They are hardly seen during the dry period. In May and June, however, they come out, after it has become warm and the first heavy downpours fill their holes with water. While walking, one can assure oneself that the way is clear by keeping a careful lookout. The best protection in snake-infested terrain is not to do the leading but to let the porters be up front. Bending over from their loads, they constantly look at the path and will notice all snakes, in contrast to those of us used to the civilized habit of forever looking around at the scenery.

One time, however, a viper crawled out of my office cabinet in the evening. After this incident I opened my luggage in the tent with the utmost of care. Another time a Sherpa found a viper in his sleeping bag. Thereafter I would inevitably shake out my own sleeping bag before slipping into it.

At first I carried along serum for certain snakebites. But when I actually saw the first snakes in the field, I was uncertain which species they were and which serum I would need. From then on I stopped taking along any serum. For general emergencies in cases of snakebite, I always had a razor blade along as well as bandages to check the flow of blood.

During a *postgraduate course at the ETH in Zurich* in the 1970s, I was asked by the students, after they had finished intensive classes on snakes and serology at the Tropical Institute in Basel, if I had had to put my knowledge to the test in Nepal. Receiving a negative reply, they asked me how I had protected myself against snakes. My answer was very simple: "Never be the first."

Scorpions are common in the Terai. It was not for nothing that the government had the entire grounds combed and all the scorpions removed for the large-scale hunting parties of King George V in 1911 and for Queen Elizabeth II in 1961.

I naturally could not take such measures for my camps in the Terai. During the hot months scorpions were occasionally unwelcome guests in the tents. I went over my tent carefully, though, and was glad that it could be tightly closed by means of a zipper, even if only with a mosquito net. Fortunately no one from my team was ever stung by a scorpion. Indeed the natives have a keen instinct that protects against such unpleasant surprises.

In the beginning I did not take *crocodiles* in large rivers seriously. I often swam around in such bodies of water. One time, though, after a hot day, I thought of taking a swim in a stretch of the lower Kali Gandaki and went up to the shore, but then decided not to because of an infection in my knee. Aila, who had been observing me uncertainly, commented drily, "This river no good, sir. Swimming no good, sir." At that moment a log that was almost entirely immersed in the water came floating by, and Aila pointed towards it. What I had taken for a log began to move and then disappeared. It was a crocodile!

Private Post Service

Two Sherpa mail runners kept open the lines of communication between my camp in the mountains and the outside world. Following my narrow escape from the Dolpo expedition in the spring of 1954, the UN offered to give me a portable radio so that I could send a distress signal in times of need. I rejected the idea, however, firstly because at least one or two porters would have been required to carry the heavy equipment, and secondly because there was something particularly fascinating and unique for me in being cut off for long periods in magnificent natural surroundings together with genial fellow humans. Thus the mail runners were retained, and the UN accepted the additional costs for them.

Sometimes it was a huge distance—more than three weeks in one direction—that they had to cover, over barely passable and barren terrain. Over and over again the Sherpas tried to set new records in order to complete their task as quickly and as competently as possible. Looking back on it, I myself am astonished that my mail runners and my expedition always found one another, with a precision that borders on the miraculous. There was never more than a day's interval between my arrival in a certain place and that of the carriers. Often, in fact, we reached our destination on the same day. It should be recalled that I had only one map at my disposal, a Survey of India map scaled to 1:250 000, and that neither my Sherpa nor I was familiar with the territory where we intended to rendezvous, be it in the high

mountains, the Midlands, or in the Terai. In view of the vast distances (going and coming was at least a six-week walk), the meeting point had to be determined at least six weeks in advance. In the interval, I criss-crossed Nepal through terrain that was unknown not only to me but also to my porters. Along the way I made it a point ask the virtually endless columns of porters where they were coming from and where they were going in order to determine the locations of public markets that might serve as dependable meeting places.

During the first years, when I was doing research in Central Nepal, the mail runners walked to Kathmandu; from 1954 to 1959, however, when I was working in the remote eastern and western parts of the country, they had to reach the Indian border on foot and catch a train to New Delhi, where my post was taken care of by the representative of the United Nations Development Programme, my friend **James Keen**. The arrival of a Sherpa of mine at that UN office in New Delhi must have been something out of the ordinary: the Sherpa, who had left my camp in the high mountains three to five weeks before, travelled to India fully equipped for the mountains, that is, with climbing pants, down jacket, goggles, hat, and ice pick. It was understandable, and at the same time somewhat contrary to fact, that the UN boss should have written me that my Sherpas always brought the "fresh wind from the Himalaya" with them into his stuffy office!

Once Aila, whom I had sent as the mail runner to New Delhi, did not show up at the agreed place in the eastern Terai. After four days of waiting I naturally became concerned that something might have happened to him. On the fifth day, though, he arrived with a sheepish grin and full of apologies for his tardiness but not forthcoming on the reason for it. Without further ado he returned to the work of preparing food as if he hadn't been absent a single day.

In the evening, though, my curiosity got the better of me, and I asked him about the cause of his delayed return. His answer was laconic, given without looking up from the fire he was cooking at: "Train fallen down, sir." There was little, of course, that I could make of this statement, and since Aila himself seemed not to attach much importance to the incident, I was not impelled to ask any more questions. Several months later, back in Kathmandu, I questioned him in the presence of Father Moran. Aila opened up and told how the Indian train that he had ridden had derailed on a bridge over a large river and with the exception of the last two carriages, which were left hanging on the bridge, had plunged into the river. Aila had been in the second last carriage. Father Moran confirmed that the accident had made headlines in India and Nepal.

The Throne of Gods and Spirits

The Himalaya figures significantly in the legends and sagas, and also in the religious thought, of the people who live in its shadow. Being the source of large rivers, these infertile high mountains in some cases are regarded as providers of food, as the name Annapurna, for example, implies. Above all, though, these tall peaks, so unapproachable for humans, are viewed as the homes and thrones of the gods. Thus Chomolongma, the Tibetan (and consequently autochthonous) name of the Everest group, signifies 'mother goddess'. That a person would want to climb a tall mountain for the sheer pleasure of doing so used to be totally incomprehensible to the Himalayan people. The only exceptions were a few Sherpas in whom a sense of the beauty of the high mountain milieu and the joy of conquering peaks was aroused by their having repeatedly taken part in expeditions. This is particularly true of my own Sherpa Aila, who for seven years shared with me his joys and sorrows. When we were alone on a peak that offered magnificent views in all directions, he would often remark drily, "Very much country, sir." That was his way of expressing joy—one might almost say ecstasy—at the expansive, sublime vista. After years of shared expeditions he even became accustomed to saying, "Very beautiful country, sir." Genuine bliss lay hidden behind this expression. The situation in Nepal after its opening in 1950 might be compared with that in Switzerland over a hundred years ago: in the latter case, too, it was foreigners, namely Englishmen, who provided the impetus to open up the Swiss Alps to mountain climbing. It would have hardly occurred to the local inhabitants to climb up the barren heights for pleasure. The best and most enterprising herdsmen were taken on by the English as porters and guides. The system of Swiss mountain guides developed from this.

The local population maintains an attitude of respect or fear and dread towards the mountains that varies according to their religion, their linguistic and ethnic roots, or the deity that lives in the nearby heights. Only those portions of the Tibetan population that generally live north of the main chain as well as the closely related Sherpas, who live on the southern slope of the Everest group, are acclimated to the mountain environment. The Sherpas, in carrying out trade, have for centuries crossed the high (and in some cases glaciated) passes to Tibet with their Yak caravans or lived the life of solitary herdsmen during the summer months in pastures that lie at elevations up to 5,300 metres. As herdsmen, they often climbed to smaller peaks situated above the pastures or above the summer settlements, there to erect large stone walls with prayer flags in honour of their gods. According to their belief, such measures protect humans and animals from weather-related catastrophes and other perils. These bannered walls thus have a meaning similar to that of mountain crosses in our Alps. So-called *deorali* (stone heaps) are also piled up at every pass. Those who cross the pass add a stone of their own to it.

Interestingly, I found the same custom in the Andes among those who conduct salt caravans by llama from the salt seas on the plateau over the passes of the eastern Cordilleras to the eastern lowlands. Every llama driver lays a stone on the Andean *deorali*.

Across Nepal as a Barefoot Doctor

Already during my first expeditions at the beginning of the 1950s I realized that the local populations viewed me, the first foreigner in their villages, as a doctor. Whenever we set up camp in the vicinity of a village, all the sick or injured inhabitants of it came to my tent for "consultations." At first I treated such people from my own supplies, but soon these were no longer sufficient. Soon, too, I noted that the people were constantly affected by the same recurring diseases: diarrhoea, abscesses, infected sores, leopard-inflicted wounds, injury from pointed bamboo along cleared paths, and the like. Severely burned infants and small children were also regularly brought to me. Left briefly unattended, they had rolled into the hearth, which in many Nepalese houses consists simply of a hole in the floor. For such cases I was at first unable to do anything, having naturally had insufficient (and improper types of) dressing for wrapping up entire bodies of children with. With this experience behind me, I took care to have a large supply of special bandaging material for burns.

For "general" cases, I stocked up on the necessary medicines, the fundamental ones, such as WHO later required. All such medicines were already being produced in India. Some, such as Sulphoguanidin, had long since become stand-bys and were cheap to buy on the market. CIBA, in the person of their representative in India, Dr. Otto Wenger (later a member of the Swiss parliament), provided me with everything I wanted free of charge. Particularly effective (almost miracle drugs in fact) were the new medicines, such ones as Cibazol for wound infections and penicillin for advanced stages of infection and blood poisoning. The Nepalese did not manifest at the time any immune-related syndromes towards the new antibiotics.

The problem of my "treatments" consisted in the fact that the sick might not continue to take the medicine after my departure. I could not afford to wait in a village until the effect of my treatment became apparent. In the beginning I naively believed that I could get the patients to take their medicine regularly with the threat that they would otherwise die. They were not at all cowed by this. Only when I said that without the medicine they would die an excruciating death did they condescend to take it. The fear of pain was much greater than that of death.

Only in a very few, exceptionally critical cases, when I feared the worst, did I stay an additional one or two days. One such was a young girl with a horribly

festering wound almost to the bone. I disinfected it and gave an injection of penicillin. This was repeated on the following two days, but then I had to march on.

Two years later, at a local market, a father came up to me with his little daughter, joy written all over his face. I didn't recognize her at first, but when the girl proudly showed me her scarred but completely healed leg, I realized that it was the same one I had treated two years before.

The miraculous properties of modern medicine had other, unhappy effects, though, particularly on my porters. They became hooked on pills, from which they expected reinvigoration or even wonders. When suffering from any infirmity, they came to ask for tablets. It was difficult to make diagnoses in the beginning, before I knew my men (and they knew me). In cases of toothache, I made use of a somewhat unrefined method: when someone came asking for pills, I told Aila to bring my geologist's hammer. With that the toothache generally went away. If the person still insisted on aid, the case was really serious.

With the years, the pill addiction made increasing inroads among the population, one reason being that tourists often left their supplies behind, and a second one being the nonsensical practice of sending free samples of medicine during catastrophes and even as a well-meant charity. Such samples are usually the most modern of antibiotics, but they come in such small quantities that only half a patient can be treated with them.

Demons and Mysterious Accidents

In the opinion of the peoples of the Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan language groups, particularly those living south of its main chain, the Himalaya is inhabited by not a few demons. I repeatedly had experiences with my own porters that are dramatically illustrative of this fear: During a trek along a dry wash (Uttar Ganga) on a hot and humid day in May 1954, one of my porters suffered heatstroke, with a long period of unconsciousness and repeated relapses. Coramin injections got him back on his feet after one day of rest. The success of my treatment was disputed, however, by the other porters. In a special ritual, a Tamang lama among them had sacrificed a chicken with rice to his gods in order to appease them. In any case, the victim of the attack later trekked around for months with me (and over some high passes) without the slightest problem. In January 1958, four years and several thousand kilometres later, we passed through the same valley again, this time on the other side of the Uttar Ganga River. We set up camp where our route made its nearest approach, of some 300 metres, to the scene of the incident of 1954. For days in advance, and then even more so, of course, at the site itself, the porters who had been with me then (1954) told the new porters gruesome tales of evil spirits in connection with the former mishap. It was only because of the sacrifice and prayers

that the spirits had departed from the poor porter (the Tamang lama was still a member of the team). I was sitting at my field desk, busily adding sketches to my field book. The porters were smacking their lips on goat bones (every ten days I treated them to a goat), when all of a sudden, for no rhyme or reason, one of the porters—the bone still in his hand—toppled over sideways from his squatting position and remained lying unconscious with upturned eyes. A great lamentation arose at this renewed seizure by the evil spirits. Even my Sherpa Aila, who in the most difficult of situations would normally remark, "All right, sir," came running up with a contorted face: "This place very bad, sir." The remaining porters, having recovered from the first shock, dispersed to the surrounding villages to buy a sacrificial chicken as quickly as possible.

I, too, felt the situation to be highly unpleasant, for Aila went on to say, "This valley very bad, sir, many people falling down like this, sir." I had to prepare for the eventuality that my entire team might shortly fall unconscious, like a row of dominoes, so to speak. I ordered that we break camp immediately to get out of range from the evil spirits. With the aid of Coramin and other injections, the demons were made to evacuate the unconscious porter after some ten minutes. Large sacrifices of chickens preserved my team from further calamity.

Whereas the first incident, the heatstroke case, was marked by the intermittence and total irregularity of the pulse, during this latter one the porter's heart beat fully normally.

Not all run-ins with demons ended so mildly. My first trek to the Everest region (1954) was fated to have an especially tragic ending. Two days before crossing the 5,741-metre Trashi-Labtsa Pass, the western entrance into Khumbu (Everest region), one of my Tamang porters handed over his ready cash to his friend to be passed on to his next of kin; according to him he would not make it over the glacier pass alive. He screamed for his mother during each of the two following nights, particularly in the last and highest camp before the pass. All injections of Coramin, which were administered on the assumption of his suffering from altitude sickness, proved ineffective. And when I expressed my wish to send him back with two porters, he flatly refused. Fifty metres below the pass, under bright sunshine and the serenest of autumn skies, and showing no external signs of disease, he sat down in front of a large rock and half an hour later was dead—just like that.

On the advice of a friend of mine who was a doctor, I took precautions to deal with such cases more effectively on following expeditions. Evidently only one remedy had an ameliorative effect on the psyche: morphine. Indeed I would have lost porters for sure had I not been able to reverse by means of a morphine injection their decision to die. One of my porters slipped and injured his knee on a tract of snow leading up to Tipta La on the Tibetan border north-west of the Kangchenjunga group. It was obviously very painful, and he declared that he could not go on and

would die (among most of people of the Third World, the fear of pain is much greater than that of death). From previous experience (for example, at Trashi Labtsa Pass), I had no reason not to take the porter's statement seriously. With the former tragic events behind me, however, I now had doses of morphine with me. I thus administered one to the wailing porter. Then I returned to enjoying the magnificent panorama and waited for the sequel. After some twenty minutes the porter moaningly stood up and attempted a few steps. Ten minutes later he thought he could now go on if he didn't have to carry any load. After half an hour of walking he was asking for his load back, and presently he began to sing along the way. We arrived in happy spirits at the uppermost village (Thudam) after several hours on foot and were now out of harm's way. In the evening the porter asked for another "rakshi injection" (*rakshi* is Nepalese distilled liquor)—such was the extent he had recovered by then.

A Dangerous Meeting Leads to General Secretary Dag Hammarskjöld

In 1953 I set off on an expedition beyond Ganesh Himal and around Manaslu. This expedition promised to be particularly rewarding, since the entire route would go through the Himalaya and up to the sedimental zone and the Tibetan Border Range.

From Kathmandu I first walked along the southern slope of Ganesh Himal, over Tham Pass (4,100m), and then followed magnificent crest trails to the southern outlet of the huge transverse gorge of the Buri Gandaki between the Manaslu group and Ganesh Himal. At Jagat, right at the beginning of the gorge, I ran into the Nepalese border post, still a good four days' walk from the Tibetan border. Curious and friendly, they looked over my magic letter from the government in Kathmandu. After these Gurkha soldiers served me a cup of tea, I marched on. The path is very difficult, with great variations in altitude. In contrast to the situation in the Marsyandi gorge, the route does not follow the river but ascends between those points where tributaries empty into it, high up into the mountains that form the divide to neighbouring valleys. The path is hair-raising, and the rare wooden supports along the sides of cliffs were rotted and inadequate. Obviously it was not a very heavily used trade route at the time.

Following the Shia valley behind Ganesh Himal into its far northern part, I climbed Salbu Pass (5,326m) and Shia Pass (5,093m), from which I enjoyed a stupendous view into Tibet and down onto the large Tibetan village of Kyirong Dzong (where Peter Aufschnaiter had lived). A splendid trail high along the northern slope led back to the valley of the Buri Gandaki, the bottom of which was reached at the village of Bih. Then the path ascended sharply to a moraine ridge, on which, near the village of Prok, the valley opened out broadly, and I got my first view of

the proud pyramid of Manaslu (8,125m) from the north. At first I did not notice the several tents belonging to Tibetan nomads at the entrance of the village, but then a few noticeably slit-eyed Tibetans emerged. With one exception, they were wearing Tibetan clothing. One of them had a Mao brooch on his chest. They first addressed me in Tibetan, which I didn't comprehend. Then they gave me to understand by means of gesture that I should wait there. I hoped that my Sherpa Aila would soon arrive so that we could at least communicate. (I was always accustomed to going on ahead in order to be able to do my field work along the way. Aila normally walked not far behind, whereas the porters were often one hour back.)

Finally Aila did turn up and talked with the Tibetans. Then he said in a serious tone, "Sir, this place very bad; this people very bad, toldhim have order to arrest all people without Chinese passport." (Aila used the word "toldhim" as one word, meaning "he told.") I asked Aila to tell them that we were in Nepal and not in China. (The Chinese had, of course, annexed Tibet in 1950 but up to then had occupied it only sparsely.) My lesson in geopolitics had absolutely no effect. A sense of uneasiness arose in me, and I pictured myself being abducted to China. The obvious accusation they would bring was that I had entered China illegally as a CIA agent. I looked about to see if these people possessed weapons but couldn't see any. My pistol was in the load of one of the porters. Needless to say, it didn't seem advisable to trade shots.

Aila elicited the fact that they were acting on orders of a Chinese detachment far off to the north, on the other side of the Tibetan border. I considered our course of action. I quickly saw that bluffing was our only chance to escape unharmed. I had Aila inform the "border posts" that we were inside Nepal. If there was any arresting to be done, I would be doing it. In order to make my threat achieve its desired effect, I let it be known that I was the commander of a company of Gurkha soldiers, the vanguard of which was expected at any moment. I gave them the friendly piece of advice that they pack up and return to Tibet, where they had come from. It seemed like an endless wait for my "vanguard" of several Sherpas and ten porters to arrive. Aila had practically no opportunity to talk with my team when they finally did so. They sensed the seriousness of the situation immediately, however: silently placing their loads on the *chautara* (Nepalese walled rest spot), they calmly drew their *khukuris* from their sheaths and began to hone them on the edges of the stone wall. Again and again they ran their fingers testingly over the sharpened blades, in that inimitable gesture of the Gurkhas, and whetted them even more. The Tibetans seemed to understand that their throats might be the target of the sharpened *khukuris*. They became extraordinarily friendly and began in fact to pull down their tents.

We spent this interlude having our midday break at the *chautara*, wanting to make sure that the Chinese patrol actually did march back north. This adventure,

having passed off smoothly, left me in a cold sweat, and I considered what had to be done next. Should I call a halt to the expedition and turn back? In the end, though, climbing the high northern border passes proved to be too enticing. According to the map, one could expect to have an extraordinarily broad view of Tibet from Ghia La and from Lajing La, and there was a powerful attraction to cross Larkya La, on the other side of which I had pitched my tents the year before, near Bimtakothi at the foot of the huge northern face of Manaslu.

I prompted Aila to find out more about the location of the Chinese detachment beyond the border. He received soothing news, though whether it was actually true or not was another matter. Apparently, though, the border was not in fact being reinforced; the Chinese were located somewhat north of it. The manning and hermetic sealing of the border occurred only in 1959, following the revolt in Lhasa and the flight of the Dalai Lama into exile in India.

Thus I resolved to continue the expedition as scheduled. Aila made no comment at all on my decision beyond his customary "All right, sir" (pronounced as though it was all one word). As a precautionary measure, I made inquiries in each village we passed through as to the whereabouts of the Chinese north of the border, and whether the advance unit that wanted to arrest me had actually gone back that way. It had been my experience that the "bush telephone" functioned amazingly well. As further precautions in the succeeding days before crossing Larkya Pass (5,105m), I chose the campsites to be off the beaten path and hidden as much as possible behind large morainic swells, and kept a constant lookout for men on the move both near and far.

The glacier world on the northern side of Manaslu was monumental, but I could enjoy it only after descending from Larkya La into the Dudh Khola valley.

This was far from being the end of my expedition, however: I followed the Marsyandi valley north of Annapurna and spent the night with my friends in Manang whom I had met during my 1952 expedition (see Chapter 5 above). From there I recrossed Thorung Pass and returned via Muktinath to Kathmandu.

Upon arrival in Kathmandu, I immediately reported the incident to **Prime Minister M. P. Koirala**. He thanked me and immediately drew the proper conclusion: "They just want to probe how far they can go. We have to put our border posts much closer to the border and we have to control it."

I naturally reported the incident also to my superior in the UN in New York. He in turn forwarded it without delay to the UN secretary general, **Dag Hammarskjöld**, who had me come to New York to brief him personally.

This contact would later prove to be very consequential for me: Dag Hammarskjöld received me during future visits to the UN headquarters, and on each occasion I reported to him in detail the political situation in Nepal and its relations with its large neighbours. He seemed to have developed an unusual liking for Nepal.

Indeed, during his trip to the country, he requested a special flight to Mt. Everest, about which he wrote an article of his own in the *National Geographic Magazine*, published together with photos he took himself. The meetings with this outstanding personality were for me a very great experience.

My contact with Dag Hammarskjöld provided the background in 1960 for him to intervene personally to have me seconded by the UN to the International Committee of the Red Cross, this through the mediatory efforts of the then Nepalese ambassador to the UN and in Washington, **Rishikesh Shah**. For me this meant that I could retain my employee status with the UN which, besides financial security, provided me with the independence necessary for carrying out the delicate task of resettling Tibetan refugees in Nepal.

The Methodology of My Field Surveys

The Choice of Route

Over the years I had developed special techniques for my own geological field work. Starting from Kathmandu in the centre of the country, I systematically extended my field surveys to the east and to the west. The routes were basically intended to trace out a geological cross section—that is, from north to south or vice versa. This posed no problem in the densely settled Nepalese Midlands. There I could walk almost exclusively along the crests, first because settlements, and thus also paths, were laid out on hilltops, and secondly because more information could be gleaned from that vantage point, with the crests providing good views to both sides.

The east-west routes in the Midlands that I had to take from one cross section to another were genuinely difficult. They all passed through the Himalayan river valleys, which meant that considerable elevational differences had to be overcome daily.

In the high mountains, however, I was necessarily forced off the crest trails, being dependent on paths that went through the huge gorges northwards to the Tibetan plateau. Wherever possible, I tried to avoid repeating the same route by crossing from one transverse valley into the neighbouring one near the Tibetan border. These transits usually occurred by way of high glacier passes, and they sometimes caused problems for me and my porters.

As a lone traveller, I was naturally prevented from climbing the truly high peaks, which can be reached only by establishing several campsites high up on the glacier one after the other. It was only in exceptional cases, when there was no other way out, that my faithful Sherpa Aila and I arranged to undertake protracted "two-man expeditions." In such cases, we had to carry our tent gear, food supplies, mountain equipment, and the like on our own shoulders. This is what happened, for example,

in surveying the south side of Shisha Pangma and its long access route over the Langtang glacier. Whenever possible, though, I preferred to set up the last camp as far up as possible with my entire team and then to reach as high an elevation as I could alone in a forced march with one Sherpa, unburdened by any load. In this way I completed about a dozen first assaults of 6,000-metre peaks that, from a mountaineering point of view, presented little challenge. It is not always necessary for a geologist to climb up tall peaks. He will sometimes see better cross sections from the low valleys, and in most cases the geological strata on the peak dip, clear to the naked eye, into the valleys, where they can be studied from close up.

Working Methods

My working methods consisted in constantly investigating rocks with my geologist's hammer during the treks and noting the results in my field book. The rocks were macroscopically identified. Rock samples were taken when they appeared to be of significance. At the same time, I entered the discovered strata and structures onto the topographical map 1:250 000 of the Survey of India—a geological map of Nepal in the making. I produced drawings of panoramas and also 360° photographic records from good vantage points. In conformance with previously completed cross sections, the geological features were entered onto the panorama sketches and onto the geological map without too much problem. I of course had access to the details and data previously recorded along the trail of the neighbouring ridge. For the side opposite to it, unknown territory geologically, my geological understanding consisted in a provisionally plausible assumption, an extrapolation. From my location, prominent geological strata—for example, layers of hard quartzite or soft micaceous slate—could nevertheless be followed with the eye across the valley to the next ridge. When I surveyed that ridge along the next route, the work consisted essentially in verifying these previously hypothesized, extrapolated conditions. From that ridge, then, I simultaneously extrapolated onto the new territory. Thus each of my route surveys was, in the first instance, a verification or correction of the region situated between it and the previous route and, secondly, an extrapolation onto the new territory. Nearly global coverage of the land features could be achieved by means of such systematic surveying. The lateral distance between separate survey routes (an average of 15 to 25 kilometres) depended primarily upon topography, atmospheric visibility conditions, and the significance and complexity of the geological features. From April to June when, due to summer haze, visibility in the Nepalese Midlands drops to a few kilometres, the cross sections were necessarily close together. On the Tibetan plateau, by contrast, where individual limestone formations can be observed for distances of over 50 kilometres, only a few cross sections are needed in order to provide total surface coverage. Thus I shifted activities in the period from April to

June to the haze-free high mountains, and later I ceased all field work during this unsuitable period. The best time for scientific work in the Himalaya is autumn for the high mountains and winter for the lower foreland. Consideration must also be given to route conditions. In the part of the Terai covered with virgin forest, particularly in the Siwaliks, one cannot freely move about except along paths and streams. The same holds true for the very steep south slopes of the Himalaya covered with dense virgin forests.

What later proved to be much more important than my geological investigations was the *general observations* carried out simultaneously on basic natural conditions, ethnology, and the economy, which would evolve into the first global geographic and socio-economic study of Nepal and lead to general proposals regarding development.

Eight Years of Expeditions in Nepal

Hail at Machapuchhare

On the trek from Pokhara into Thakkhola along the southern foot of the grandiose Annapurna chain, Machapuchhare rises up in all boldness as a freely standing mountain. Seen from the south-west, it looks like the tail of a fish, from which form it derives its name: *macha* = fish; *puchhare* = tail. A hike up to elevations of approximately 5,000 metres along the ridge of the foothills promised to provide good insight into the geology of the huge glacier basin on the southern slope of Annapurna. Moreover, I had seen very large and imposing villages at the southern foot of Annapurna during my survey flights—the largest such in my experience. They also interested me.

During my approach I was able to observe how, after clear mornings, gigantic cumulus clouds piled up along the southern slope of Annapurna, thickened into a threatening wall of black clouds towards evening, and finally let loose in a fury of thunderstorms. The next morning the southern slope of Annapurna was white all the way down to 2,500 metres. It was not snow as I had assumed, though, but rather hail.

It was a marvelous day, and I climbed up the hills, first through inhabited zones with imposing Gurung stone houses, and then into the forest zone above. Beyond the latter there were extensive pastures, as is the case everywhere on the southern slopes of the Nepal Himalaya between approximately 4,000 metres and 5,000 metres. It was always a stirring experience to reach the edge of the forest and suddenly have a sweeping panorama open up before one's eyes. I ascended along the ridge northwards until I reached the first rock cliffs at approximately 4,500 metres. The ridge below, sparsely covered with grass, had room for scarcely more than a small tent. For this reason, and also because of the danger of an evening thunderstorm, I

sent my porters down into the forest some 300 metres lower where, during the climb, we had seen a protected forest clearing suitable for camping. Since the weather seemed to be good, we raised the two small tents for Aila, Sonam, and me on the ridge itself.

I was mistaken about the weather, however. Towards evening we were engulfed by clouds, and it became dark before dusk. Then a frightful thunderstorm broke loose, together with snow flurries and hail. For hours I feared that my tent would be swept from the ridge. I had to hold the tent poles steady and constantly reset the pegs. Lightning strike followed lightning strike, luckily not upon our ridge, though, but upon the lower lying land further to the south. For short periods of unhampered view we were able to observe, horizontally to us, lightning flashes that struck from approximately our elevation (4,500m) down to the level of Pokhara. The ceaseless thunder could also be heard from a horizontal position.

The hubbub of the storm subsided as quickly as it had arisen; it turned into a perfectly clear night, and the moon stood high, as if nothing had happened. The high mountains exuded a magnificent and majestic serenity round about us. Towards the south the lower lying land presented an almost frightening view: no lights shone, even though I knew that the region was densely settled. It was a dramatic example of what an "underdeveloped country" without electrification means.

The next morning I enjoyed a superb view in all directions under radiant skies. The sight of the ice-covered western face of Machapuchhare was particularly impressive. Snow appeared to have fallen in the foothills during the past night down to an elevation of 2,500 metres.

I set off the way I had come, full of high spirits and expecting to receive a cup of tea at the campsite of my porters. Far ahead of the others, I plunged into the forest. Soon I was covered in clouds, and then suddenly I saw a fully grown Himalayan bear standing upright some ten metres in front of me. The shock went through my whole body. I stood motionless and could only hope that the bear was not also startled but, more frightened than I, would retreat. Indeed this is what it did after several terrifying seconds. Shaking all over, I walked back in hopes of quickly meeting up with my two Sherpas. Happily they arrived soon afterwards.

During the further descent the snow, some 30 centimetres deep, gradually turned into hail, and the next surprise was waiting for us: the campsite of my porters had been abandoned; there was no trace of them. I could make neither head nor tail of it. There was already some 10 centimetres of hail there. When we descended further, to approximately 3,000 metres, the covering of hail thickened to 20 centimetres, enough for the hailstones to get into my boots. Along the way we found a discarded dossier Aila recognized as belonging to one of the porters. Finally, near the houses we found, we caught up with the majority of them, the others having fled

hastily further down into the valley. They had apparently found themselves in such a violent thunder- and hailstorm—hailstones as big as nuts, they said—that they had straightway broken camp and descended to the first houses. Two of them had gone so far as to throw away their dossers and flee downhill all the way. They did not reappear. Probably they fled on back to their villages. (This had occurred in the beginning. During later expeditions I had my seasoned team of porters.)

What with all the wading through deep hail, my legs had become abraded from the hailstones that had entered my boots. The skin above my ankles had been rubbed away. Recovery was long in coming, since the upper edge of the boots continued to rub against the sore spots. The sores themselves were very painful.

I did not let this discourage me, though, and continued on with my programme, which was to take me through Siklis and over Namun Pass into the Marsyandi valley north of Annapurna II. We spent the night in one of the imposing houses in the large and prosperous Gurung village of Siklis. An annual festival took place in the evening, involving dancing and much consumption of *chang*. Two pretty and richly adorned Gurung girls danced throughout the night to songs and the beat of percussion instruments, and when I returned to the festival site the next morning, the throats of those singing sounded a bit tired, but the two dancers were in a state of trance.

After being terrorized by the hail, my porters, of course, freely indulged in *chang*. It was a struggle getting them back on their feet. I thus decided to schedule a day of rest. Moreover, Siklis was the final village before crossing Namun Pass, which would require several days. We therefore had to stock up on food supplies, namely rice.

Namun Pass Not Found

We first descended from Siklis into the valley to the east, crossed the Madi River, and climbed up to the ridge of Karapundanda-Taprang, and continued on up to around 4,200 metres, to a campsite on the ridge. This walk along the crest is one of the loveliest experiences Nepal has to offer: Lamjung Himal hard by to the left, the remaining Annapurna peak to the north-west, and Manaslu-Himalachuli to the east. Towards evening the clouds again closed in around us and it began to drizzle.

The next morning the skies were again cloudless. Since Namun Pass, which was visible from our camp, appeared to be glaciated, I decided to traverse it only with Aila and two of the best porters. The remaining porters I sent to Bagarchap, our planned meeting point, along the normal valley route through the Marsyandi gorge. We nimbly ascended in a northerly direction and soon came upon a steep bank of firn. There one of my porters slipped on the hard-frozen snow and slid headlong down the incline, right between two large boulders, and came to a halt at the end

of the snow-filled slope. He was none the worse for it except for a few scratches, which I treated; he had, however, gone into a minor shock. His load had dashed against an outcropping of rock, but we were able to recover the scattered pieces. After this adventure I sent the two porters back to the main party and continued alone with Aila the ascent over a level expanse of firn. Once we reached a peak of approximately 5,400 metres, we realized that it was not Namun Pass at all and that we were on the southern side of the Miyardi river valley, which drains eastward into the Marsyandi gorge. The valley was heavily glaciated in its upper portion. Namun Pass, if it existed at all, must have been located on the main summit of the eastern spur of Lamjung Himal further to the north. The latter was highly glaciated and studded with rugged rocky peaks. It was clear to me that Aila and I would have to waste too much time if we were to find the pass we were after. Moreover, I had begun to doubt its existence.

For a while Aila and I enjoyed the majestic view from our vantage point. Then we fastened on our rope and began the descent to the north over small rocks to the glacier below. The temperature warmed up, and the snow became soft.

Large crevasses doubtless lay waiting for us under the covering of snow, visible from discolourations and depressions in it. Aila and I made our way carefully along the rope, with Aila taking the lead. Once, when things became particularly ticklish, I secured Aila and told him to sidle forward delicately without causing any shaking. I eyed each of his steps intently. In the middle of the supposed crevasse, however, he turned around and called out grinningly and reassuringly to me, "Very good road, sir, I am still here."

Incontrovertible Proof of Yetis

Directly following this interlude we came upon tracks that crossed our route whose identity I could not make out. I asked Aila what kind of animal it was. "This is the yeti, sir," he said immediately without hesitation. How he knew that, was my next question. He gestured with his hands out into the life-threatening landscape of snow, ice, and rock and then said, very convincingly, "Nobody else here, sir."

Our Lost Porters: Saviours in Need

Finally we reached the end of the glacier and continued descending to the first alpine pastures. Rhododendron bushes provided welcome firewood, and we warmed ourselves next to a large blaze under a drizzle that had arisen. My legs with their open sores from the hail at Machapuchhare and from the day's tramping around in the snow were causing me great pain. My salve and bāndaging material were almost gone.

Suddenly several figures appeared in the fog; dusk was approaching, and I felt relieved. I thought that they must be local herdsmen and would be able to provide information on Namun Pass and the way to Bagarchap in the Marsyandi valley, where I hoped to meet my porters. As the figures came nearer, I realized instead that they were my porters. They, too, had thought to take a shortcut and had hopelessly lost their way up to where we were. I was glad, as now we again had something to eat, and medicine and bandaging material for my wounds were available.

I was now sure that we had not found Namun Pass. Together with the porters we descended in the direction of Tharpu at the entrance to the Marsyandi gorge. We walked at first along a very broad path, passing large herds of water buffaloes. The latter stayed there from spring to the end of summer. Surprisingly, the path became continuously worse and finally dwindled away in an impassable bamboo thicket of the type common in virgin mountain forests on the southern slopes of the Himalaya at elevations between 3,000 metres and 4,000 metres. Seeing the highest lying Gurung villages several hundred metres below, my porters attempted to blaze a trail through the thicket with their *khukuris*. We ended up at a cliff and had to retrace the whole 800-metre difference in elevation.

On later expeditions I learned by repeated experience that only a very few paths lead from the villages through these virgin forests to the alpine pastures. From the pastures above, however, the water buffaloes trample out broad paths that end at the forests. Woe be it if a trekker lands up on one of these paths during his descent!

The Evil Tsamar

We finally reached, behind schedule, the uppermost Gurung village on the heights above Tharpu. Glad to be reunited and in a safe location, we set up camp at a site offering a nice view. It was a glorious full moon night, and for a long time we sat around a cosy campfire.

The eventide peace was soon shattered, however: round about the dogs started to howl, and even the village inhabitants let forth with loud lamentation. My first thought was wild animals that threatened the village. When I came out from the tent, however, everything was totally dark in spite of the full moon. The moon was visible in the sky only as a thin crescent, and the dark part of it glimmered red. It was an almost total lunar eclipse.

My porters were very uneasy, and even Aila watched the proceedings with great anxiety. What with all the lamenting from every direction, I too found the mood most distressing. Then Aila gave me his explanation of the strange happenings: "This is Tsamar catching moon, sir. When Tsamar catching earth like this, then we all finished, sir!" Tsamar was an evil spirit in the world who every now and then seized hold of the moon. The lamenting was meant to drive this spirit away.

A Meeting with Japanese
The Grindelwaldnerlied in the Marsyandi Gorge

After the descent to Tharpu we began to follow the huge Marsyandi gorge between Annapurna and Manaslu. At the very beginning of the gorge, near *Satale*, we had to cross the Marsyandi on a suspension bridge that stood in great need of repair. It was frightening looking down from the bridge into the surging white water. This route, be it said, like the one in Thakkhola, was an important artery, one used during the dry season by whole columns of Nepalese farmers. It became clear to me during this second year of my expeditions in Nepal that the repair and reconstruction of *suspension bridges* would probably be, in the eyes of the farmers, the most urgent development project. In crossing the bridge over the Marsyandi, I had no way of knowing that the first new suspension bridge of the Swiss development programme would later be built at this site.

In this approximately 10-kilometre-long gorge bordered by predominantly vertical cliffs on both sides, there was only one single place where a small alluvial plain allowed a tent camp to be set up. The melting of snow had already begun, and the streams and waterfalls thunderingly disgorged their muddy water along both sides of the Marsyandi. Dusk was already setting in by the time my camp was ready. Suddenly a few Sherpas came on the scene. Porters followed. They were the harbingers of an expedition, and soon the mountaineers also appeared—Japanese. They were on their way back from the successful first ascent of Manaslu (8,163m), the mountain bound up by fate with Japan. The Japanese had concentrated on Manaslu since the first reconnaissance expeditions and carried out numerous expeditions to the area. They paid their price in several dead, the same way that the Germans did for their fated peak, Nanga Parbat.

At first the welcoming was done in English. But when they found out that I was Swiss, two of the Japanese began talking to me in the Swiss German dialect. They were **Masataka Takagi**, professor of psychology at the University of Kobe, and **Jiro Taguchi**, entrepreneur. The question I was quick to ask, of course, was where they had learned to speak Swiss German. Both, it seems, had been in Switzerland at the beginning of the war in 1940 to do some mountain climbing and were held in detention there until 1947. Their detention camp was Grindelwald, an ideal spot for mountaineers. I was thus not astonished to learn that they spoke not only Swiss German but also perfect Bärndütsch. By the time these friendly greetings were over, the small alluvial terrace was completely filled with porters, Sherpas, mountaineers, and tents. Many fires were lit, and the cliffs on both sides took on a subdued red tone. The whole campsite with its busy goings-on radiated an atmosphere of carefree contentment. After my adventures at the southern foot of Machapuchhare and my

having gone astray at Namun Pass, I felt in safe hands now with the Japanese mountain climbers.

The Japanese invited me to partake of a festive meal, which I greatly enjoyed after weeks of unvaried fare. Fine Japanese cherry brandy was one of the treats, and it soon had us singing Swiss songs, such as "In Grindelwald den Gletschern bii." It was late by the time we slipped into our sleeping bags.

The next morning the Japanese gave me a large amount of medical supplies. These I was able to put to good use, especially the salve and bandaging material, since my own supplies, which were being used for treating the scrapes on my legs caused by the hail, were almost used up, and my wounds were still by no means healed.

I have continued to maintain contact with some of the Japanese. This paved the way for the Japanese edition of my picture volume about Nepal (Kümmerly & Frey, Bern) in 1960. Yasuharu Machida, a member of the Japanese Alpine Club, translated it on his own initiative.

Our paths separated and I walked further up the valley in the direction of Larkya at the northern foot of Manaslu. There I set up my tent in a grandiose glacier circus. Long valley glaciers have their origin there, along the mountains bordering on Tibet, among them a series of unknown 7,000-metre peaks.

During the following two days I made side trips into the glaciated valleys to the north and also in the direction of Larkya Pass. There were no plans to cross the latter on this expedition, which would have been very difficult, given the large quantities of snow. The harbingers of the monsoon had already arrived.

Unknown Dolpo 1954—An Adventurous Expedition

(Excerpts from an article by the author in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, no. 3046, of 3 December 1954, titled "Monsoon in the Himalaya.")

A Jolty Start

My 1954 expedition, which lasted from the middle of March to the middle of July, took me to a totally unknown region called Dolpo north-west of the Dhaulagiri group, where the Nepalese territory extends up to 100 kilometres north of the main chain of the Himalaya and is completely Tibetan in character. In the middle of March, at the beginning of the expedition in the Indo-Nepalese lowlands, all the porters fell sick with a serious intestinal infection. The trek nevertheless went ahead, and within a month everyone was back to normal, thanks to the modern medicinal products that I had with me. In the end I, too, fell victim, not being a native of the tropics, and it hit me the strongest. Heavy attacks of vomiting, diarrhoea, and nausea came and went repeatedly. It was not possible, though, to stop for one day, as

otherwise my ambitious programme could not have been fulfilled. Then too, the exertions the porters made while trekking would have continuously lessened if they had seen their sahib concede himself a rest break rather than go on working when he wasn't feeling well. Each day before the beginning of the monsoon in June, moreover, is too valuable to waste.

The Supplies That Didn't Arrive

I had made arrangements for desperately needed supplies of medicine, food, and photo equipment to arrive in the *district capital of Jajarkot* at the end of April. A young Nepalese geologist was supposed to accompany me from Jajarkot onwards (he was to have been with me from the beginning, but since he was "not feeling so well nowadays"—as many Nepalese are accustomed to saying—he would be meeting me in Jajarkot). No one arrived in Jajarkot, however, even after one full week's wait. At the time there was no radio connection with Kathmandu and thus no way to find out what had happened. Luckily the governor of Jajarkot was friendly and cooperative and helped me out with edibles as well as he could. I could not wait any longer but had to continue my long journey northwards beyond the main chain of the Himalaya. Following a temporary improvement, my health took an increasingly downward turn the farther north I got. The nadir came at the end of May, when I reached Mugu, a border post across from Tibet 160 kilometres north-west of Dhaulagiri.

Seriously Ill—SOS Request Turned Down

The border post, manned by the Indian army, had a functioning radio connection with the Indian embassy in Kathmandu (all Nepalese border posts along the Tibet border were occupied at the time by Indian detachments). I explained my precarious condition to the Indian non-commissioned officer and asked him to send an SOS message during the next radio relay. The transmission was to occur the next morning at 10:00. My shock was great when Kathmandu answered, "No time to receive your message." What was I to do? To wait there until Kathmandu found time to receive my call for help or set off on foot? I had the choice either of attempting to reach the Indian border by heading south or of going ahead with my original plan of trekking beyond Dhaulagiri through the unknown region of Dolpo to Muktinath. The decision had to be made quickly. Each of the routes would require at least three weeks of walking. Getting to India seemed highly problematic; the monsoon had already set in south of the Himalaya, visible from the nightly sheet lightning in the bizarre stacks of clouds over the Himalaya far to the south. My decision fell in favour of the northern route through Dolpo. I asked the Indian

radioman to get in contact with the Foreign Office and Father Moran, should Kathmandu see fit to receive my call for help, and to have money and supplies of food and medicine sent to Muktinath, which I hoped to reach in approximately three weeks' time. Then I set off.

A Difficult Trek over the Lonely Heights of Dolpo

My conditions became ever more critical. Medicine and also money started running out. Day after day I dragged myself over numerous passes, in some cases more than 5,000 metres high. Repeatedly I pulled myself together with what seemed like my last reserves of energy, being more than three weeks on foot from the airport in Pokhara or from a train station in India. As on all expeditions, I had to be my own doctor, which was a depressing thought in the face of the decreasing supply of medicine. Never in my life had I felt so alone and abandoned. On several occasions I arose early in the morning to prepare myself for departure only to find myself on the floor of the tent coming out of a state of unconsciousness. The feeling of abandonment was particularly strong during moments when Aila brought me fried potatoes to get me on my feet ("This makes you very strong"), even though he knew that for weeks I had been able to tolerate only boiled potatoes. It was not only my own troubles, however, that I had to deal with; my porters, in suffering minor accidents, injuries, infections, and altitude sickness, often became totally dispirited and could only with great difficulty be forced to go on. We still had various high passes to cross, some with fields of firn, such as Moha La, which was extremely difficult, given that the porters always took off the shoes that I had given to them for such crossings; they believed that they could walk much more safely barefoot, as was their normal custom. This resulted in cracked skin on the soles of their feet, leading to infection. My injection needle saw daily action, so to speak, with Coramin and penicillin.

In my case, a keen pain developed in my fingers, which went on increasing. It had nothing to do with the cold but was apparently a symptom of malnutrition. Later my fingernails turned black and blue.

In terms of landscape and geology, this three-week trek beyond the main chain of the Himalaya was among the most magnificent I had ever experienced. It was a purely Tibetan landscape. The local inhabitants are immigrants from Tibet—Buddhists, that is—and there was no lack of mystical Tibetan monasteries. I had unfortunately no time to stop long anywhere. The path generally kept to ridges, offering incomparable views far to the north into the endless expanse of Tibet, and to the south the radiant Dhaulagiri group rose blindingly white from the brown desert landscape. In the afternoon the 50-kilometre-long Dhaulagiri group was usually veiled in a huge bank of clouds, and a distant roll of thunder could often

be heard, a sign that the monsoon had already set in. Glorious weather prevailed, though, north of the Himalaya. Towards the end of the long trek to Thakkhola, there was a slight improvement to my health. On 20 June I was on an approximately 6,000-metre peak (one of the countless unnamed mountains of that height in Nepal) near Sangdak La, the last pass before one reaches the valley of the Kali Gandaki, otherwise known as Thakkhola. The broad depression of Mustang could be seen to the north, and to the south the entrance of the huge Kali gorge between Annapurna and Dhaulagiri, in which again there was an immense cloud bank. It was a memorable day for me; for the first time in two and a half months, I felt genuinely hungry and finally back to health. It was comforting to know that I was on the only route for miles in both directions that led from Tibet through Nepalese territory to India and that was normally passable even during the monsoon. The Tibetans at the time brought down salt on yaks and mules and traded it for rice. One of the most heavily used trade routes went through Thakkhola. I had been there two years earlier when the monsoon had already started, and thus, I thought, there were no longer any unpleasant surprises awaiting us. I did not take the fact too seriously that the supplies that had been ordered through my SOS to be sent to Muktinath had arrived the week before but that the two porters, after a week of waiting in vain, had set off back to Kathmandu the day before my arrival. Rumours were afloat in Muktinath that I had decided to return from Mugu southwards, that is, in the direction of India.

The medicine was thus, practically speaking, all gone, but I was expecting to be in Pokhara shortly. I had no idea that the worst part of the expedition was still ahead.

Into the Middle of the Monsoon

We were getting closer and closer to the huge bank of clouds around Tukucha-Lete. The sky was still radiantly blue, but the transformation to a black, rain-laden monsoonal atmosphere was accomplished almost within the space of a single hour's walk. The Tibetan expanse with its dry climate lay behind us; now we entered the virgin forest of fir, rhododendron, and ferns, and everything was moist. We were surrounded by a completely different world. Once settled down in the camp, I worked, as usual, late into the evening and finished all of my geological drawings. Then two drenched porters appeared from down in the lowlands and sought shelter with us. They reported that the monsoon was playing havoc as it had never done within living memory; all the bridges over tributaries were down, the path impassable in many places because of landslides, and even the large iron suspension bridge near Diplang had been swept away. Aila himself told me the disastrous news in his own Nepalese way. He said, "Diplang bridge broken, sir. I thinking some hours waiting."

He himself knew quite well that the bridge could never be repaired within hours, but that it might well take years!

My confidence began to sink. The Kali gorge is probably the most colossal gorge on earth. The distance between the 8,000-metre-tall peaks of Annapurna and Dhaulagiri, as the crow flies, is only some 35 kilometres, and between them the elevation of the Kali River at Dana is only 1,300 metres! From my previous trek through the region, I knew that the path consisted in part of galleries hewn out of vertical cliffs or else led along immensely steep mountain slopes. Before me loomed the unpleasant prospect of no longer being able to pass through the gorge and having to wait out the end of the monsoon north of the Himalaya without any money and in sagging health.

Before setting off the next morning, I explained to my porters that we had to take advantage of the temporary clear skies to make it through the gorge as quickly as possible before further ravages could occur. My words, however, did not appear to make much of an impression upon them; they registered them with impenetrable looks, with Asiatic indifference, and walked, if anything, slower than normal. When we reached the tributary near Lete, the bridge had already been washed away; small landslides were constantly rolling down into the valley on all sides. Everyone tried to get across on his own as best he could. Afterwards we blazed a path for ourselves through thick patches of bamboo and brambles and maize fields. The gorge proper lay still further down the road. Entire valley slopes with their houses and maize fields had slipped down. A monstrous roar of torrents, waterfalls, and landslides filled the air.

"Very glad to see you, sir; I thinking you finished"

I myself barely missed being the victim of a landslide: Walking in a field of maize, I noticed that the trees and the tall maize plants suddenly began to sway at the edge of the terrace. Instantly I lurched over onto an outcropping of rock, while the entire slope under and behind me fell off downhill into the river far below.

It took a while for me to recover from the shock, to a point where I could give thought to going on to a secure spot. I wondered what had happened to my porters behind me. Were they caught up in the landslide? I intended to wait for them at the next farmhouse. Hours passed with no sign of my men. I feared the worst. Then all of a sudden Aila was approaching the house from the uphill direction, and when he saw me he let out with a grin, "Very glad to see you, sir; I thinking you finished." Aila knew that I had gone on ahead, but he could not have known that I had escaped the landslide. The porters for their part were unable to cross the spot where the landslide had occurred, as it had left behind only bare rock. They had to make a long detour up and around to get to the farmhouse where I was.

We spent the night in Kabre. Directly next to our quarters a torrent roared from lofty heights down into the Kali Gandaki. The house trembled, and I feared that it would be swept into the depths if the rain continued on into the next day. There appeared to be no safe spot in the whole of the hamlet, which somehow managed to cling to the side of the slope. The bridge over the tributary was long gone, and our path forward thus blocked.

Dramatic Bridge Building

Towards midday the rain stopped. Following incessant urging on my part, the seniormost man in the village finally came around to the idea, with oriental deliberation, to organize the construction of a temporary footbridge. Before things could get going, however, the rain set in again, and the risk in laying the bridge became too great, since the only possible crossing point lay below a waterfall, from which rocks and stones constantly plummeted.

The next morning a makeshift footbridge was erected by the people of the opposite lying village. When I turned up in person, though, they immediately withdrew. We thereupon set up communications with short notes tied to rocks and thrown over the roaring torrent (the noise of the crashing waterfall made conversation impossible). They demanded first 5 rupees, then 10, 20, 50, and finally 100 rupees as the toll, realizing that I wanted to cross at any price. I agreed to everything (with hardly 100 rupees left in my pocket!), intending to settle on a price once I was on the other side. During these protracted negotiations, however, the rain again began in torrents, and thus there was no possibility to cross on that day either.

I now gave the order to my Sherpa and the porters to hew down trees at break of day and erect a footbridge themselves. At eight o'clock the next morning, though, they were still fast asleep. When I woke them up, Aila scratched his hair disconcertedly, and the porters brought unabashed grins to their faces. My patience was at an end, and I boxed the ears of the most insolent one energetically, which got them all immediately to their feet and down to work. The trees were soon felled, and now it remained to bind them with branches and to span the impetuous stream with them. Two porters took positions somewhat farther uphill in order to warn the others working below of large stones about to come crashing down. There was an unholy roar, but once they set about working, the porters went about things deftly. They did not even make way for the smaller rocks. It was only in the case of boulders that they jumped aside, often at the last moment. Two hours later and the work was done; no one had been injured. After days of waiting we could now finally cross the stream on our own footbridge. This was far from being the last stream, though! Further downhill the destruction became ever greater, and many streams had to be crossed on single unsteadied tree trunks. I pressed forward, and the porters,

having by now sensed the danger, marched at a pace they had never held to before. They, too, wanted to go home to their families rather than wait out the end of the monsoon where they were. It was with a great feeling of relief that we finally reached the secure eastern bank of the Kali Gandaki River over the single remaining suspension bridge at Tatopani. Now we were safe, and in two days we made it to Pokhara where, with great warmth, I was admitted by English lady doctors and nurses to their mission station. They restored me with injections of vitamins and other medicines. The next day—quite unexpectedly during the monsoon period—we heard the hum of motors in the air and saw a plane land. I made haste in order not to miss it. Fifty minutes later I was in Kathmandu. The porters arrived in the capital ten days behind me on foot.

Saved—with a Relapse

I had a happy reunion in Nepal with the Nepalese geologist who had left me in the lurch. He pretended as though nothing had happened.

Now that I was back in Kathmandu, I felt my health improving even if, as a result of malnutrition, my fingernails had become totally black and had started to loosen from the nail beds—beriberi disease of some sort. I had to make plans to return to Switzerland as soon as possible. Frequently a DC3 landed in Kathmandu bringing freight from Delhi for the U.S. mission and flew back empty. This time the return flight was obligingly postponed so that I could be taken along—for the two days for me to renew my expired cholera shot; otherwise I would not be able to get a transit visa for India. In the meantime a connecting flight from New Delhi via Bombay to Zurich was arranged in Kathmandu and application made to be admitted to the Zurich university hospital.

The routine cholera shot in the American mission hospital in Kathmandu, however, had disastrous consequences: that night I suffered a severe relapse accompanied by vomiting and diarrhoea. Painful cramps developed, beginning from the tips of my fingers and toes and advancing towards the centre of my body. The fingers and toes doubled up under the agony. For me the reason was clear: dehydration. The next morning I called a Nepalese doctor I knew. He came but declared that he had no salt infusion, the druggist's being closed that day. By way of reassurance he said, "Today is the king's birthday; we shall see tomorrow." I thereupon quickly summoned Father Moran, and he gave me the necessary salt infusions. I recovered just in time to be transported by stretcher on board the DC3 to New Delhi. From there the Americans took me to the plane bound to Bombay, where Managing Director **Schuepp** of Volkart was waiting for me at the airport.

I spent a peaceful night under the good care of the Schuepps in their house. For the first time in eight months I enjoyed fresh salad. The next day I flew to

Switzerland. On the flight I developed a bit of appetite and was feeling better, so I did not go directly to the hospital upon arrival at the Zurich airport but headed instead to the railway station cafeteria in Zurich for fried sausage and potatoes to gear me up for the coming stay in the hospital.

In the *university hospital in Zurich* I was placed in the "special ward." It was only when I saw the visitors speaking through plastic windows that I realized that this was what used to be called an "isolation ward." In two weeks I was back to normal. From what the head doctor, **Prof. Löffler**, told me, however, my blood count was very poor and indicative of cholera. He asked me to conduct a slide show on Nepal for the doctors and nurses before being discharged. At the end of my presentation I thanked everyone for the fine care they took of me but couldn't help voicing a personal opinion: I ascribed the quick recovery not only to the good treatment and the strict diet of thick gruel but also in equal measure to the fried sausage and potatoes with which I had fortified myself in the railway cafeteria prior to proceeding on to the special ward in the hospital.

Happy Outcome

From the hospital in Zurich I was summoned directly to the *UN headquarters in New York* for a debriefing. My black fingernails and Prof. Löffler's medical report had their effect: the UN decided that in future, given my simple and unbalanced diet, I would only be allowed to go on expeditions in Nepal six months out of the year. The rest of the time I would spend in Switzerland recovering with my family and writing my reports.

This was a liberal attitude, one scarcely thinkable under the present-day faceless bureaucracy. The advantage it had for Nepal and for the UN was that I was able to put my extensive socio-economic observations and drawings into shape, so that they could be published by the UN in 1959, almost immediately upon completion of my field work. The UN, especially in the person of **David Owen**, the chief of the whole Technical Assistance Programme, granted me permission to write the first global geographic and socio-economic study of Nepal and to publish it in the form of a *picture book*—what later became the volume titled *Nepal* (1960).

Expedition to Khumbu 1954/55

A Merry Gompa Inauguration in Rolwaling

Now the time had come, in the autumn, that I could finally visit Khumbu, the homeland of the Sherpas and the region of Everest. Making side trips through all the valleys leading to the Tibetan border and to the crests in between, I in the end arrived in the Rolwaling valley at the southern foot of Gauri Sankar. From there I

intended to cross the notorious *Trashi Labtsa Pass* (5,755m) into Khumbu. In *Beding* (3,600m), the administrative capital of Rolwaling, we found lodging in the house of a cousin of Aila's. Rolwaling is inhabited by Sherpas, and Aila, whose home village of Thami lies on the other side of Trashi Labtsa, had many relatives there. In the evening when we arrived, an inauguration of the new *gompa* (monastery) was being held. Aila's relatives immediately invited us to the *gompa* celebration. The entire night was spent praying, dancing, and drinking large quantities of *chang* (homemade beer). My friendship with the lamas was sealed, according to their ritual, by using bamboo pipes to drink dry a wooden pot containing some eight litres of *chang*.

We wanted to set off early the next morning, since the Trashi Labtsa Pass into Khumbu lay before (with two camps in between). Suffering from a throbbing headache (it was as though I had a hedgehog in my skull), I drove my porters out of the Sherpa houses early the next morning. Even though we set off towards eight o'clock, it was midday before we reached the edge of the village, our headaches in the interval having grown into jumbo hedgehogs, for in front of each Sherpa house there stood a Sherpani with the customary *changtu* pot of *tsampa* (parched barley) and tea with rancid butter along the edge of it as the traditional departure drink. It would have been very impolite to have refused it. We finally left the village and staggered through the pastures along the level floor of the valley, and Aila began repeatedly tripping, excusing himself each time with the words, "Very steep road, sir." As soon as the village was beyond view, I called a halt; we lay down in the flowery meadows and fell fast asleep.

We naturally did not get as far that day as we had planned but set up camp on the same verdant meadow in a lateral morainic offshoot of the valley glacier.

The next day we quickly gained height and reached our final camp on a narrow moraine terrace at approximately 5,200 metres, after which point the rocks begin that lead to the upper part of the glacier.

One of porters succumbed to *demons* while crossing the pass and died (see the account in Chapter 11 of the mysterious occurrence). Being in a daze, I was unable to enjoy the magnificent and unparalleled high mountain landscape atop the pass and during the descent to Thami. A very subdued mood prevailed in the first camp after the pass.

Thami was the home village of my Sherpa Aila. For several days, of course, I was his family's guest of honour in his own stately house and in the houses of his relatives. I was allowed to set up quarters amid splendid wood carvings and paintings in an adjoining private temple. The whole time was given over resolutely to the consumption of *chang*, and the cosy evenings around the hearth amid hospitable surroundings are among my pleasantest memories. However, valuable days were lost again to the advancing season, and November was almost over before the relaxing days in Thami came to an end and we resumed the journey to Nangpa La (5,716m).

Even with the glorious weather, the daytime was never truly warm, and the nights were icily cold. The morale of my normally spirited porters was somewhat dented by what they had gone through at Trashi Labtsa and by the bitter temperatures.

The glaciated Nangpa La was the only, and a thus crucial, trade route between Khumbu and Tibet. A lively trade carried out with yak caravans grew up along it that lasted till the Chinese occupation of Tibet. On the way back from the pass, we set up camp near Lunak, and with Aila I climbed a small peak on the eastern side of the valley, from which I obtained a good view of the grandiose glaciated surroundings, including Cho Oyu.

The Well-Known but Never Seen Yeti

While I was busy on the peak with my geology, Aila was taking careful note of the near and far surroundings through my binoculars, particularly deep down into the valley. That caught my attention, for never before had he used my field glasses. To my question what was up, he said laconically, almost without turning towards me, "Looking yeti, sir." Now I turned towards him. Seeing my querying look, he went on to explain, "Now very good season for yeti, sir; now yeti very hungry; now yeti eating man." Then he pointed to the group of alpine huts of Samsu Ogma below us and said with darkened mien that the yeti had totally consumed two herdsmen down below us one night three years before. No, no, he hadn't been present himself, he said in response to my question, but a cousin had told him about it. I made a point to ask him whether he was carrying my pistol. "No, sir," he said, "down with the luggage!" He continued to tell horror stories while peering around with the field glasses. The stories were nothing new to me; I had been told in Thami of encounters with yetis with all the gory details one could wish for. For example, one night the yetis had come into the village and, finding the doors barricaded, proceeded to unroof a house. A clamour raised with drums and trumpets from the adjoining temple succeeded in driving them off. I had long cherished the desire to see a yeti. In the camps in Khumbu, I always had my two Alpa cameras within reach at night, their flashes mounted and ready to go off. The pistols were always merely a secondary consideration; they were only for protection and in any case not within easy reach. The possibility that I might now, alone and completely unarmed, perhaps meet a yeti or two, which according to all accounts were very aggressive, did not fail to stir a slight sense of unease. Evening was already approaching, and there was no doubting that we could not reach the highest lying village before night.

In a sober assessment of things, I had to admit that, much to my disappointment, I had practically no chance to see a yeti. All the stories, no matter how detailed and even though narrated in the first person, were always only second- or third-hand. If one tried to get to the bottom of them by asking the narrator

directly whether he had seen the yeti himself, then it was always his uncle three years dead who had or his brother who lived beyond the next chain of mountains and had been off on a trading trip now for two years et cetera.

It is understandable why scientific and also pseudoscientific expeditions should have gone in search of yetis. For a long time such expeditions had once been "in." I remember, for example, the case of **oil billionaire Tom Slick of Texas**, who financed one of these expeditions. He himself never made it beyond Kathmandu or Pokhara. I met him once walking around in the latter town fully geared up for the mountains, with goggles and ice pick, and accompanied by his young, attractive girlfriend.

I recall also an American from the U.S. development aid service, a very gentle and kindly fellow but not at all an outdoorsman, someone who never ventured beyond the Kathmandu Valley. Werner Schulthess once persuaded him to go with him over Gosainkund Pass to the cheese factory in the Langtang valley. Before reaching Gosainkund, however, he collapsed and had to be transported back to Kathmandu, whence he was evacuated Stateside seriously ill. There he needed months to recover.

I was not a little astonished, then, to see a few years later a cover story appear on a renowned American hunting magazine titled "The First American to Fight the Yeti." The cover featured a riotous drawing of a man holding fast at the edge of an abyss and with his pistol heroically fending off the attack of a grim-faced yeti.

In spite of photographed trails in the snow, apparently no person has ever actually seen a yeti. Even the famed scalp of Tengpoche later proved to be a fake.

I do not doubt that there is some animal in the very high elevations, but in my opinion this animal is far less spectacular than made out to be. It may be a monkey or some other animal that, although it doesn't live on glaciers, crosses glaciated passes in moving from one valley to the next. I had already seen monkeys at heights of 4,000 metres and more.

Personally, though, I am inclined to go along with the simple, clear, and logical proof of my Sherpa Aila. On the Namun Peak glacier of Annapurna we unexpectedly came across tracks in the snow. I asked Aila what the animal was. He said immediately, without blinking an eyelash, "This is the yeti, sir." To my follow-up question of how he knew, he looked around, pointed with his hands to the surroundings consisting of nothing but rock, snow, and ice, and noted convincingly, "Nobody else here."

I find it fascinating, in a world in which men have already walked around on the moon, that there should still be a mysterious creature on earth that no one has ever seen.

But even if the yeti doesn't really exist, it would have had to be invented in the interests of Nepal's tourist industry.

At Everest Base Camp

Following these yeti "adventures" I proceeded on with my Khumbu expedition. I had to leave my porters in Tengpoche because of the biting cold and replace them with local Sherpa herdsmen. It took till 23 November, after side trips to the Imja basin, for me finally to set up my base camp on the Khumbu glacier, on a slope over the site where the large mountaineering expeditions had set up theirs. The final night in the base camp was extraordinarily cold. My tea quickly froze in the tent after sundown. I looked forward with great impatience to the morning's rays of light, since daytime temperatures in the sun were relatively mild. With the passing of every day, though, the north-west storm wind, which had settled in over the highest peaks after the monsoon, got worse and worse. When Aila and I set off from the base camp (4,300m), it was dead calm, but some 200 metres higher, near the southern ridge of Pumo Ri, we ran into the strong wind from the north-west, which quickly assumed hurricane force. It was only with great difficulty that we could go forward; we often had to cling to rocks to keep from being blown down. The air temperature, however, was not that low, and certainly far less cold than during nights in much lower lying areas. The storm brought to mind the föhn in the Alps. Like the latter, the north-west storm over the Himalaya produces katabatic currents on the southern slope that warm up as they descend.

The geological work from a good vantage point at some 5,000 metres became a source of real torment. The wailing storm took one's breath away, and nevertheless there wasn't a cloud in the sky except for one cloud of snow sweeping over Everest. In peering at the nearby peak, black because its snows had been blown off, I thought of the men who by a remarkable series of feats had conquered it. Visible above the Lho La gap was the peak of Changtse (7,537m), which lay north of the North Col, the peak famous from the period of discovery. I recalled, too, those men who more than thirty years before, after months of walking through completely unknown territory in Tibet just to reach it, had approached Chomolongma from the north under far less favourable conditions than at present, with equipment that must be termed primitive in comparison with what's available today, only to be rewarded for their pioneering spirit and courage with death.

One final side trip the following day took me up to 5,100 metres, to the spur north of Samso Chopo, on the south-eastern ridge of Taboche. The breathtaking panorama over the whole of the Imja and Khumbu basins served to advance the work of compiling geological results obtained during previous side trips. There the storm was less strong, as we were leeward of Taboche. Bizarre peaks and fathomless escarpments were open to view round about. The granite mass of Makalu (8,470m) rose up through the gap north of Baruntse. The view skirted Kantega (6,718m) and came to rest on the Midlands, where a cloud cover approximately 3,600 metres high

was churning. It stretched out what looked like greedy fingers towards Namche Bazar.

A Joyful Sherpa Wedding

During our return march to lower elevations I was the guest in *Chaunrikarka* of my Sherpa **Sonam**. Since the wedding of his daughter Lakpa would be celebrated in two days' time, he invited me to remain. I was put up in his private temple, which he had adorned with 1,000 miniature earthen Buddhas.

Preparations for the celebration were already in full swing. Mountains of very tasty curry dishes were being assembled in large wash basins and in something that looked like a giant cheese kettle. Very nearly "half a chicken farm" was sacrificed. *Chang* was likewise produced in large quantities. The bridegroom was scheduled to show up early in the afternoon from his village on the opposite side of the valley but failed to. In the meantime, though, the many wedding guests—bridegroom or no bridegroom—launched into the feast. Towards evening a messenger brought the news that so much time had been consumed in the bridegroom's taking leave of friends and relatives in his village and that, moreover, he was so drunk that he would only be able to make it to the wedding the next day. I was astonished that no one was up in arms in Sonam's house; rather, people quietly began preparing food and *chang* anew for the following day, drawing upon suppliers from farther distances. I for my part enjoyed the two-day celebration immensely, but I pictured to myself how my wife would have reacted were I to have showed up one day late for our wedding in Rapperswil.

Through Solu to India—"Bad rocks, sir"

A very pleasant period of tramping about in the Sherpa territory of Solu and wending our way gradually into the lower lying regions of the south followed upon the celebration in Chaunrikarka. Our destination was the railway town of Jaynagar in India, just south of the Nepalese border. Towards the end of March I crossed the so-called Main Boundary Thrust, where the Himalayan nappes had been pushed out over the Siwalik formations, the latter corresponding to the molasse in the Alps. It was then that I delivered up my geologist's hammer to Aila for packing, saying to him, "Good rocks finished, now bad rocks." To which he replied drily, "Yes, sir, bad rocks, Indian rocks."

Into Forbidden Tibet North of Mount Everest, 1955/56
The Lordly Kangchenjunga

This expedition took me from Darjeeling into the entire area east of the Arun River and, in its northern parts, included the territory around Makalu west of the Arun. It was a grand journey, beginning with the trek along the border ridge between Nepal and India (Singalila Range) towards *Kangchenjunga*, at 8,598 metres the third highest mountain on earth, and then on through the very lovely Khunza valley behind the mighty peaks. All of the border passes leading to Tibet between Kangchenjunga and the Arun were visited, and in some cases a few kilometres of Tibetan territory was entered upon in order to return from the north to Nepal across the next neighbouring pass. Not all too many years before a lively salt trade must have thrived from Tibet to Nepal. This is evidenced by the many *deorali* (stone heaps) adorned with pennants on top of the passes. It is to the salt trade that the very large village of *Walungchung* owes its size and prosperity, the latter borne witness to by the stateliness of its houses. I met up in fact with a few salt caravans.

From the border passes east of the Arun and from neighbouring peaks, I enjoyed a magnificent panorama northwards into the regions north of Makalu—Chomo Lönzo and Everest—, the regions in which the English pioneers had carried out their crucial reconnaissance of Mt. Everest and the first serious attempts to scale it in the 1920s. To my great surprise, I met no Sherpas in this easternmost part of Nepal: the ethnic peoples of Nepalese origin (primarily Limbu) border directly on those from Tibet.

I cast yearning glances upon the north-east slopes of Makalu, Chomo Lönzo, and Everest and toyed with the idea of daring a short excursion into the forbidden land of Tibet. I was already inquiring in villages along the transit routes about the location of the nearest Chinese detachments. That the Chinese were not to be taken lightly was vividly illustrated at about this time when Dag Hammarskjöld personally flew to Peking to gain the release of two American pilots who were being held prisoner.

An Excursion into the Forbidden Land

After much vacillating I decided to take the risk. Aila knew exactly where we were. He merely drew my attention to the fact, curtly and without further commentary, that we were now in Tibet. Where we could we sedulously avoided the most travelled routes and in the process negotiated hair-raising bridges (some of which we had to repair ourselves to make traversable), streams, alpine peaks, extremely thick virgin covers of rhododendron, and finally the huge moraine of the Kangshung glacier, until we reached the nearly vertical Kangshung slope of Everest

(more than 4,000 metres from top to bottom), luckily without coming across one single person. The vistas into the unknown land with its immense glaciers, moraines, and escarpments of ice were overwhelming. The number of photographic records made was correspondingly large.

A number of the photos, taken officially from "border passes," were published in my picture book *Nepal* (3rd edition, 1980, after the statute of limitations had run out on my illegal hop into the forbidden land). Strangely enough, I was never approached about the subject, and even during the 1980s hardly any expeditions were undertaken there, even by the Nepalese, due to the long approach routes.

Only one person, the Nepalese **Bikram Rana**, owner of the Annapurna Trekking Agency, once asked me where I had taken the pictures from, suspecting that it must have been in Tibet.

The Momentous Expedition through West Nepal to Api, 1956/57

Nepal attains its maximum north-south width of almost 300 kilometres in the sector Nepalganj-Mugu/Simikot; there, in other words, the approach through the lowlands to the high mountains is the lengthiest. The foothills, with heights of 3,000 metres to 4,000 metres, are also significantly taller than in Central Nepal around Pokhara and Kathmandu.

This cross section lies some 500 kilometres west of Kathmandu. In order to get there I had to go with my porters from Kathmandu to Patna in India and travel by Indian train west to Katarnian Ghat on the large *Karnali River*, there to reenter Nepal from the south. In doing so, I was forced to journey through the malaria-infested lowlands of the Terai. To avoid the risks of the disease, I was well advised not to begin the trip too early—to wait, that is, for the dry period to start. On the other hand, I needed enough time, in spite of the long approach route, to reach the high mountains before the winter monsoon set in at the end of December. We began our trek northwards, from the Indian border through extensive virgin forests, under clear September skies.

Molestation by a Wild Buffalo

There were, during this period, still vast tracts of virgin forest in the lower reaches of the Karnali and Bheri rivers. At the same time, there were only a few roads in the Terai, and the transit routes used for trade through Nepal to Tibet were also scarcely made use of, because the distance from the Indian to the Tibetan border ranged between 230 and 300 kilometres.

For hours I could walk through the forests without coming across a soul. I had grown accustomed to always marching on a bit ahead to gain time to make notes.

I did this, however, only so long as the path was clear-cut and did not fork or cross another one. In a number of situations, though, my carelessness in this regard was dramatically brought home to me.

At one stage of my walking through the Karnali forests, for example, I heard cracking and creaking sounds from afar and thought that woodcutters were at work. A rising breeze then blew an acrid cloud of smoke in my direction, and a host of wild game came running towards me. Bewildered, I started to retrace my steps in the hope of meeting my porters. After some anxious minutes I came upon them, but they did not yet realize the danger. We switched paths and soon came to a clearing from where we could observe the forest fire. We replanned our itinerary and thus were able to detour around it.

Later, in the Inner Terai near where the Bheri flows into the Karnali, I was again some minutes ahead of the others on a well-marked path. Suddenly a thudding sound against the ground came from far away, as if of galloping horses. When it got nearer, I took cover behind a tree, and it was not long before an elephant came running past me some 100 metres off. Again I waited impatiently for my porters.

I greatly loved to camp in virgin forests, particularly along big rivers: there was enough wood available for genuinely big campfires, and the evenings spent in the company of myriads of fireflies and a multitude of sounds from insects, birds, and other animals were always enchanting ones for me. The large campfires, kept going throughout the night, were a tried and true means of protection against such wild animals as tigers, leopards, bears, and elephants. This time, along the Karnali, we saw this borne out. We had just lain down to sleep when we heard a far-off thudding, again as if of galloping horses. The sound came frighteningly nearer, and soon I heard the cries of my porters. I quickly crawled out of my tent and saw, some ten or twenty metres from the campfire, and in its gentle glow, a wild buffalo snorting and pawing the ground. My porters tried to drive it off by shouting, but only when they threw a brand at it did the threatening creature retreat. The fire was fed in case of further emergency, and two porters sat watch. About an hour later the drama of the galloping buffalo was played out again before the flames of the campfire. And again it was driven off by means of pieces of burning wood. The ritual was repeated every two hours or so. I trusted my porters and slept relatively undisturbed. At dawn I pictured to myself what might happen if the buffalo was still around at sunrise to continue its antics. There was no way to take a fire along with us while trekking, and burning wood would make less of an impression as a defensive weapon during the light of day.

We proceeded on cautiously and soon came upon a somewhat more frequently trodden path; luckily the wild buffalo had not turned up again.

The Karnali Hydroelectric Project

The virgin forests in the Inner Terai, in the region along the waters of the vast Karnali and the Bheri, were wonderful to walk through. Sadly I recalled that a huge lake would be created there as a result of the large dam being planned at Chisapani, and it, deplorably, would flood the majestic forests.

I myself had discovered at the beginning of the 1950s the huge potential for hydroelectric energy in the lower reaches of the Karnali and Bheri. At the time, though, I foresaw this potential being tapped by run-of-river power plants. The huge loops of the Karnali provided virtually ideal configurations for them, with practically no need of disturbing nature. The loops of the powerful streams could be cut off by tunnels only a few kilometres in length and with a fall of up to 200 metres.

Unfortunately, the Japanese consulting firm that was commissioned by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) to conduct the preproject studies took no note of these loops in the Karnali, planning instead for a huge dam near Chisapani where the Karnali issues out into the Terai. This dammed lake would have a length of approximately 125 kilometres and would be up to 10 kilometres wide in its lowest lying section. Furthermore, another lake was projected for construction along the Karnali near Lakarpata; it would back up water along the Karnali River for a length of about 75 kilometres. The fact was completely overlooked that the dam would come to rest right on top of the Main Boundary Thrust, that is, the large geologically very unstable nappe and fault zone which was activated during the large Nepal-Bihar earthquake of 1934, when there was a slippage of several metres along one large fault.

Trapped on an Island in the Bheri River

We set up our next camp on a very romantic, if mosquito-infested, island in the Bheri River. Overnight the monsoon returned with full force, and it rained for two days straight. The water rose menacingly, and our island became smaller and smaller. Luckily the rain stopped as suddenly as it had started. The Bheri River itself is not deep at that spot, only very wide. When the water level was normal, a person could have waded across not much more than up to his belly in water. Now, though, the Bheri was channelling flood waters, and the water was a muddy yellow, so that its depth could no longer be gauged.

Except for me there were only two others who could swim. The majority were non-swimmers and had a justifiably great dread of the water and any river crossing, be it in canoes or by wading. With mixed feelings I began to wade across the river alone in order to test its depth. If worst came to worst, I could swim, and there were no rapids and whirlpools in sight.

We had luck: at the deepest point the river came up to my neck. There was, of course, the danger that one of the porters might be buoyed up and swept away. With their heavy loads on their heads, though, their resistance ought to be sufficient. As always when making dangerous crossings, I had distributed the loads so that not all of the important medicines, or all food supplies, or the entire tent equipment was in a single load, according to the rule of not putting all one's eggs in the same basket. Moreover, the porters and Sherpas held on to each other's hands. In this way they made it across with their loads on their heads without incident.

In looking back, I naturally could have kicked myself, wondering how I was so stupid as to set up camp so near the water. It had always been my custom, particularly along rivers that originated in glaciated regions, never to set tents too near the water. One was never safe from sudden glacier overflows. Indeed in 1954 I had to decamp hastily near Mugu due to a sudden rise in the water level. Such drills are not very pleasant, especially at night.

"This coolie no more pissing, sir"

The trek continued on at an invigorating pace northwards through the Nepalese hill country. After some days Aila came to me with a porter during the midday halt and said with sombre mien, "Sir, this coolie no more pissing." He had, moreover, a chill and at one point almost fell unconscious. Good advice was hard to come by. Some symptoms appeared indicative of malaria, others not. Nepal "hill malaria," as it was called, was notorious for its atypical symptoms and thus could be diagnosed only by doctors specializing in tropical diseases. When I myself contracted malaria in 1954, the main symptoms were intensive pain in the back and limbs and attacks of fever that were by no means regular. Pyelitis also frequently occurred in connection with the disease. It was not impossible, then, that the sick porter was suffering from an attack of hill malaria. I gave him Aralen pills that had been recommended to me by a New York specialist as an anti-malarial medicine. The porter recovered quickly after one day of rest, and we continued on. A number of days later the same thing happened to another porter. When a third case arose, I began to do some calculating: the first case struck ten days after the camp on the mosquito-infested river island, and all other cases followed at intervals of approximately ten days.

I evidently caught the third case in its early stages: its effects were mild; after resting thoroughly the porter continued on. Given this experience, I told my Sherpa and porters that they should report to me at the slightest sign of a chill. I carried the Aralen pills where I could get at them easily in case I needed them. Thus I succeeded in staving off further trouble. Everyone, however, fell victim, even if

towards the end only to a slight degree—everyone, that is, except my Sherpa Aila and me.

The expedition appeared to go on endlessly. One highlight for me was the view from a high border pass, Thaku La, north-east of Simikot, towards the sacred mountain Kailas and Manasarowar Lake, some 200 kilometres away.

In March we finally safely reached the Indian border near *Tanakpur* at the very south-west tip of Nepal.

Relieved after this very long expedition, I enjoyed the last camp at the edge of the virgin forest, under beautiful old trees along the Kali Ganga, the river that forms the Indo-Nepalese border. Not suspecting a thing and "very happy inside," I revelled in the lovely evening mood around the campfire when suddenly I was seized by a chill, and I became so weak that I could barely hold on to the cup of tea that Aila immediately brought me. I hastily swallowed the Aralen pills. During the night I recovered but the next morning had great trouble reaching the railway station in India, which was located only a few kilometres away. Aila got me bedded down in a first-class compartment, and towards evening we reached New Delhi. I sent the porters immediately on to Kathmandu with the expedition baggage and then made my way to the nearest hospital. I had by then reacquired my ability to pass water, but the examinations revealed pus in my urine. Now I was certain: I was the last one of the entire team to have come down with hill malaria, or whatever similar disease it may have been. When all the various tests had been carried out, I was in for a big surprise: the doctors said I had syphilis! I told them that that was utterly impossible. I knew the symptoms of the disease on the basis of my experience with the porters: they had appeared every ten days and had been successfully counteracted by Aralen. Needless to say, I fled the hospital and continued to treat myself with Aralen and penicillin. I recovered quickly and returned soon thereafter to Kathmandu with my faithful Sherpa Aila, having sent the hospital bill to the UN. It was time to prepare for my trip home, for my regularly scheduled vacation in Switzerland.

The Last Expedition, Spring 1958: South-West Nepal to Kathmandu

My last expedition was concerned primarily with compiling data on the southwestern part of Nepal, out from under the shadow of the high mountains. At the end of it I trekked through the whole of the intervening country back to Kathmandu, which—including a few side trips—took approximately six weeks, in all some 500 kilometres. The purpose of this transverse route was to tie up the dozens of geological cross sections, particularly where there were still gaps.

It was, in spite of the long stretches in the Midlands, a fascinating trek. All of the high mountains of West Nepal came into view one after the other. When the Dhaulagiri group, the westernmost of the 8,000-metre peaks, first appeared, they

were unbelievably far off. Each day, though, they inched closer and closer. I chose the route through *Dhor Patan*, the alpine valley that was to acquire special importance for me three years later in connection with the resettlement of Tibetan refugees. On the northern side of *Lumsum Pass*, which leads from Dhor Patan to the Gurja valley, I found the rhododendron forests in full bloom. Entire slopes were red. I had already been there twice before, but at neither time had the weather allowed me to take the photograph of my dreams: blooming rhododendrons in the foreground with the nearby Dhaulagiri in the background. Rhododendrons bloom at that elevation in April and May, in the season, that is, in which the sky is very hazy and the Himalaya is normally visible only early in the morning, before the heat-generated clouds veil it.

We set up camp in an open pasture in the middle of the rhododendron forest. In the afternoon the sky, as customary, clouded over, and an evening thunderstorm was unleashed along Dhaulagiri. The next morning weather conditions were exquisite—ideal for photos. The skies were cloudless and limpid, and Dhaulagiri blanketed in blinding new snow. I now could take the photos that I had been waiting for for six years (published in my picture book *Nepal*).

Finally I arrived in *Niskot*, a magnificently situated Gurung village with a view onto the aloof southern slopes of Dhaulagiri. On 16 April, in Niskot, I made my last entry into my geological field book. With this last expedition of 6½ months I took leave, heavy of heart, from my fascinating task in this lovely country and its ingratiating population. Mixed in with my sadness was a deep gratefulness that I had been able to fulfil my task without injury to health. I felt grateful, too, to my brave and loving wife **Gertrud**, whose patience and self-sacrifice made it possible for me to live the life of a researcher.

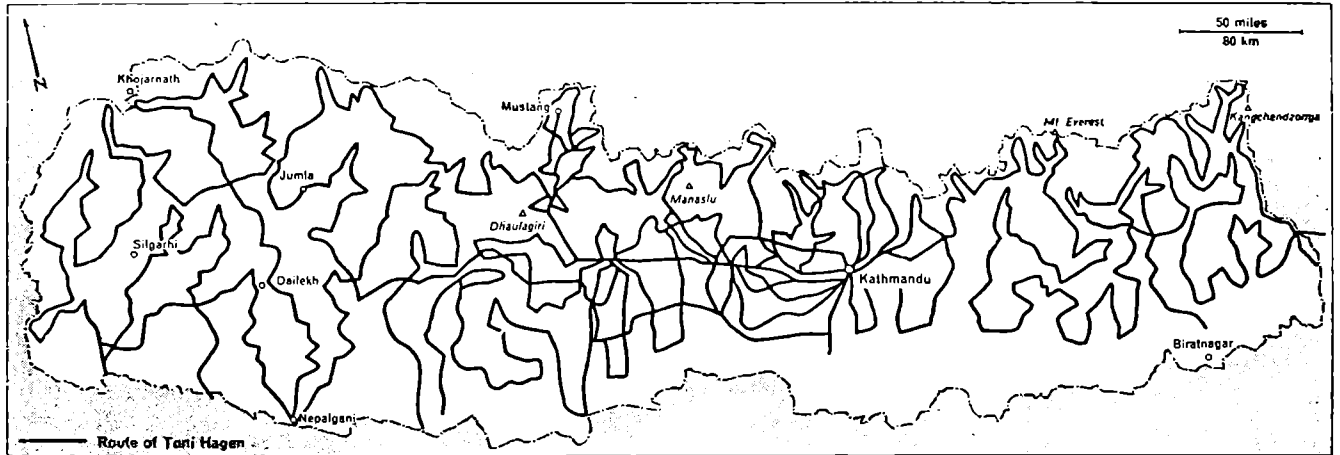
The Revenge of Dr. Seeming Szee

There was an unpleasant surprise awaiting me, however, in Kathmandu when I arrived there from my last expedition: a new contract with the UN together with a covering letter in which the following was written:

Your medical history does not allow the UN to give you a further normal contract, but only a contract with limited medical liability.

The letter pointed out that I had had to be admitted to hospital as early as 1954 (in Zurich) and again the previous year (in Delhi). Apparently I was no longer physically up to the job.

The limited medical liability consisted in my pension rights being put on hold for a probationary period of five years. If the period passed without incident, I thought, I would then be eligible for full retirement benefits with retroactive force.



1. Map of the routes taken by Toni Hagen from 1950 to 1958, a total of 14,000 kilometres covered on foot.

I thereupon committed one of the worst mistakes in my life: in my enthusiasm for my work in Nepal, I signed the contract.

When I entered into retirement in 1973, having long since forgotten about the limited liability clause, I was informed that five years had been deducted from my pension coverage in the UN.

The UN was far from treating me shabbily. In some respects, as a matter of fact, I was accorded preferential treatment, enjoying as I did personal contacts at the highest levels that redounded to my benefit. Should I perhaps have taken on a lawyer and demanded disablement compensation, seeing that I had become no longer "fully fit to work" in the employ of the UN?

It had all been an act of revenge on the part of the top man of the UN health service, **Dr. Seeming Szee**, an American of Taiwanese origin, for my film of 1955.

On the occasion of my visit to UN headquarters in New York in 1955, I showed my expedition film to an illustrious assemblage of persons (including David Owen, the head of the UN Technical Assistance Programme). One sequence showed the medical treatment I gave to one of my porters. The latter was suffering an acute infection with heavy suppuration on one of his big toes. I had set up my 16mm camera, with Aila serving as cameraman. At "go" he had to push the button, and at "finish" let go of it again.

The documentation was a genuine success. I cut open the abscess with a razor blade, and the pus flowed out in a large-sized close-up. Some of the ladies screamed. It was only then that I myself saw in the picture that I had completely black fingernails during this operation. The head of the UN health service, who happened to be present, promptly asked me whether I was a doctor. When I said no, he told me that I should give up any further thoughts of practising medicine. I told him of the great need the people were in, and that I treated only simple, straightforward cases. When this failed to reverse his opinion, I asked which danger was the greater: my dirty fingernails infecting the pus or vice versa. A burst of laughter broke out in the auditorium. Dr. Seeming Szee never forgave me for that remark. And now, in lopping off five years from my pension entitlements, he was submitting the bill for payment.

The Results of My Field Work

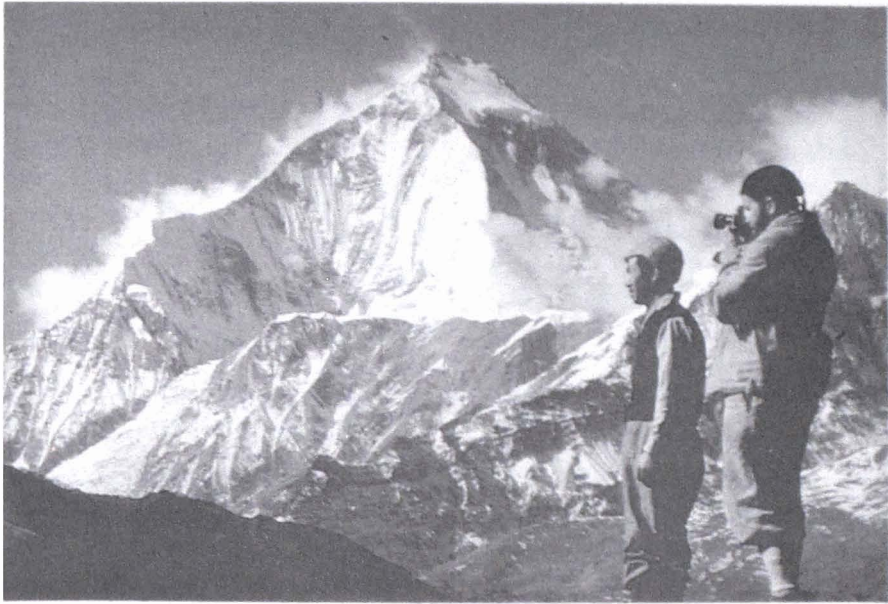
Quantitative Results of the Field Studies

I stepped onto Nepalese soil for the first time on 29 October 1950. In April 1958 I returned to Kathmandu from my last expedition. During the 19 expeditions throughout the whole country I covered a horizontal distance of at least 14,000 kilometres and climbed a total of at least 950 kilometres, more than 100 times the height of Mt. Everest measured from sea level. Every two months on the average I wore out a pair of good Swiss hiking shoes—in all more than 20 pairs.

Of a total of 1,810 days that I spent in Nepal from November 1950 to April 1958, 1,235 days were devoted to field work. This amounts to an average of 68% of the time in the field. The first expeditions required an unusually long preparation period (recruiting of porters, organization of food supplies, medicines, camping material, professional equipment, etc.), so that only 42% of my time in Nepal could be devoted to actual field work in the beginning. When all the members of the team had been broken in, I needed only two days in Kathmandu to prepare for the final expeditions.

The material collected during the expeditions includes, among other things:

- 20 field books, containing
- 2,437 geological sketches and panoramas
- 96 geological profiles 1:100 000 from the Gangetic plain to the Tibetan border
- approximately 8,000 photographs (slides and negatives) for geological purposes
- geological maps of Nepal 1:250 000
- several hundred rock samples



2. Toni Hagen studying the geology of Nilgiri's southern flank, with Dhaulagiri (8,167m) in the background. Aila Sherpa is standing at the author's side.



3. The author with an exceptionally large fossil ammonite that he found on Thorung Pass (5,000m). This ammonite lived about 200 million years ago in the Himalayan Sea of that period.

- more than 300 fossils
- several thousand slides documenting the country, its peoples, and its development problems
- 1,200 diary pages devoted to personal experiences and observations on the people, economic problems, resources, and development problems
- 16mm colour film of my expeditions 1950-58
- 16mm colour film of peoples, customs, and dances

The End of Nepalese Wishful Thinking

After completion of my field work, the government of Nepal naturally looked forward impatiently to the practical results of my field studies. These were summarized in two reports. One of them was the geological report:

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE GEOLOGY OF NEPAL, United Nations, Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs, UN Report No. 2 on Nepal, New York 1960

This report, containing 27 sketch maps and photographs, incorporated the conclusions relating to the potential of economically exploitable mineral reserves, including petroleum, and to the existing deposits which had already been exploited but whose exploitation might be reactivated with the aid of local trades and industries.

I had no choice but to burst Nepal's dream of rich mineral resources and petroleum. The geological nappe structure made it very unlikely that there were concentrations of ore in sufficiently large quantities to be exploitable, and even if there had been extensive mineral deposits before the Himalaya was raised, they would have been completely attenuated and destroyed by the thrust of large rock masses (so-called geological nappes) over distances of more than 100 kilometres. Mining possibilities are very limited in Nepal, as they are in Switzerland, whose Alps likewise exhibit a nappe structure. There are some minerals, but they occur in very small quantities. It is not economical to exploit them, especially given that the problems of accessibility are so enormous.

As for petroleum, I did not find prospects to be hopelessly poor. To the extent that oil fields existed, though, they did so only in the Terai, the region bordering on India, and there probably only at very great depths, below the many kilometres of Siwalik formations lying on top of them.

The political implications of any discoveries on the border region between Nepal and India can easily be imagined. Nepal's dreams, however, were by no means made to vanish by my report. The government under Prime Minister Koirala accepted my UN report and acted accordingly, but later governments let themselves be led astray

by other international experts and enticed into continually new adventures in the mining sector.

The other report published by the UN was:

OBSERVATIONS ON CERTAIN ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS IN NEPAL, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN Report No. 1 on Nepal, 10 July 1959

This first global geographic and socio-economic survey of Nepal came out with nine chapters and 103 illustrations (sketches and photographs). It outlined the division of the country into its natural geographical regions and the corresponding agricultural zones. The unusual partition into ethnic races and groups according to elevation was recognized and presented for the first time, with ethnological borders running along the contour lines. For the first time, too, the extent of the winter migrations of approximately two million people on their annual "salt trips" was documented. The main trade and transit routes were presented in sketch form, and the curious system formed by these main trade routes was analysed.

The report contained proposals concerning the development of the transport system by means of paths, suspension bridges, and roads. Maps were made indicating possible sites for hydroelectric power plants. General guidelines for future development were provided, particularly in the sectors of agriculture and forestry. Great significance was attached to ecological degradation even at that early date (the 1950s), when "ecology" was not yet a hot topic; the destruction of the soil, for instance, was documented in dramatic photographs.

The results of my field studies were fashioned into a standard work on Nepal, my picture book titled *Nepal* (first edition 1960).

A Key Turning Point in My Life

Did some deeper meaning attach to the fact that my general report to the UN with its socio-economic observations came out on 10 July 1959, becoming Report No. 1 on Nepal, whereas the geological report appeared only on 16 November 1960, as UN Report No. 2 on Nepal? The geological studies were the outcome of my originally assigned task, whereas the 1,200 diary pages that were reshaped into the general report were for all purposes a mere by-product of my geological field work. A fundamental shift of interest had occurred within me during the eight years of expeditions as a result of the close contact I had developed with the people of Nepal: I found the people to be more important than the rocks; I was simultaneously fascinated and moved by them and their problems.

The Koirala government, in any case, in comparing the two reports, recognized immediately that my general observations were much more important for the development of Nepal than the geological report.

One consequence was that the Nepalese government, realizing that I was by far the most knowledgeable person on the subject, made known their desire to secure my services beyond 1959. In October 1960 I was assigned a new task in accordance with the wishes of the government of Nepal.

This turning point in my career is exemplified by the following incident: When the programme for the integration of Tibetan refugees had been successfully initiated, the Soviet ambassador at the time (whom I knew well) put the question to me during a party in 1961, "How is it that you, a geologist who has made a name for himself, have become involved with the lazy, shiftless, and backward so-called Tibetan refugees?" (At the time the relations between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China were still very fraternal.) In answer I asked simply, "What is more important, rocks or human beings?"

Twenty years later, in 1980, I was invited to a reception being given by the American ambassador. He told me, "The Soviet ambassador (a new man) is very keen to meet you." The latter greeted me in a very friendly manner and congratulated me on my successful programme for the Tibetan refugees, continuing, "Those poor Tibetans have been so suppressed by the barbaric regime in Peking."

I Become the Director of the Basic Survey Department

At the same time as my new task, a novel type of programme, a so-called *OPEX programme* (Operational and Executive), was created along the lines of a proposal put forward by the Nepalese ambassador to the UN, **Rishikesh Shah**. Under an agreement with the UN, experts would not only exercise non-binding advisory functions but also assume operational functions within the governmental apparatus as well, with all the responsibility that that entailed.

Within the OPEX programme, I became the director of the newly created *Basic Survey Department*. I was put under the National Planning Commission, and the administrator directly above me was my friend Kulenath Lohani, the capable secretary of planning and a man of integrity. From 1957 to 1959, as the election commissioner, he did the spadework for and organized the first free elections in Nepal.

As the director of my department, it was my job to define its tasks and activities in concert with the Planning Commission and to draw up its budget on my own, and it was also up to me to disburse the approved funds in line with the budget. I was empowered to employ trained specialists and auxiliary personnel (naturally all Nepalese). It was an entirely new kind of job for me, having had as I did no

experience in administrative affairs. I was thus condemned to learning by doing. I had no illusions about the problems a bureaucracy would pose that had just recently emerged from a medieval setting and was beset by many birth-related complications. A prerequisite for the success of an OPEX programme is naturally a relationship of complete trust between the foreign experts and the government. Such a relationship existed between me and the elected Koirala government.

Among the *tasked areas* were the acquisition of documents for preproject studies for

- road construction, construction of suspension bridges, improvement of paths, hydroelectric power plants, agriculture, irrigation;
- planning in the Kathmandu Valley, particularly in the large cities;
- inventorying the stands of forest in selected regions, land-use maps of selected regions, etc.
- planning measures of an ecological nature

The institutions necessary to complete these tasks had also to be built up.

Close cooperation was necessary with projects of other organizations. Thus, in my department, an *earth mechanics and construction materials laboratory* was established in collaboration with, and with the support of, the *Israeli development aid programme*.

It was a unique and fascinating task in what for me was a totally new context. What was principally needed, of course, was *aerial photographs*. During my next vacation home, I obtained on loan a *professional aerial camera* from the *firm of Wild in Heerbrugg* and also acquired several *mirror stereoscopes* for the analysis of the aerial photos. In addition, I brought from Switzerland the necessary equipment and chemicals for developing the long rolls of film.

Much of the work that had been planned was tackled, but not all of it came to fruition, due to my activities in resettling Tibetan refugees and unfavourable political developments later on. Some things were, however, accomplished.

*The Leap from the Middle Ages to Modern Times
Before My Own Eyes*

The Deterioration of Indo-Nepalese Relations

The radical historical change that occurred in Nepal between 1950 and 1952 has been described in earlier chapters. By the time I left Nepal for good in July 1962, I knew that I had experienced a fascinating period, one which saw numerous governments replacing one another, the first free elections in the country's history, and the uncertain groping towards some semblance of a modern political system. With one exception, I had fine and in fact cordial relations with all the prime ministers.

Within the above indicated period, problems in the relations between India and Nepal dominated day-to-day events. The Indian army intervened three times between 1951 and 1953, this at the request of the Nepali Congress government. In May 1954, on the other hand, Kathmandu witnessed the largest anti-Indian demonstration in its history on the occasion of the arrival of an Indian parliamentary delegation. It was a frightening scene, with the Gurkhas brandishing their *khukuris* against the acoustic background of choruses chanting anti-Indian slogans.

India's Appeasement of China

Despite the Indian influence, the Nepalese government under M. P. Koirala displayed a remarkably doughty independence in its relations with China. In April 1954 Koirala described Nepal's relationship with Tibet as one with an independent country not under Chinese control. By contrast, in May of the same year, India signed an agreement with the Chinese under which Chinese sovereignty over Tibet was recognized in accordance with the "panchashila principle" of "peaceful

coexistence" between differing systems of government. However, in negotiations in Delhi with King Tribhuvan and Foreign Minister Regmi, a secret agreement was reached that Nepal would redefine its relationship with Tibet along the same lines as India. In a document published in a Nepalese newspaper after an interim of four years, the true meaning of "redefinition" was made known: India had no intention of sharing its interests in Nepal with China.

The Death of King Tribhuvan

King Tribhuvan died on 13 March 1954 in the university hospital in Zurich. I myself had never had an audience with the king, nor had I asked for one. It would probably have taken place, in any case, in the presence of his Indian advisers. I doubt that I could have talked to him about his country's development problems in the first place. From within his golden birdcage, he was hardly likely to have had any idea of the condition of his subjects. His chief contacts—besides Indian politicians and his own ministers, that is—were made in the nightclub in Narayan Bhavan in Kathmandu. This was—before the legendary Boris Lissanevich opened his equally legendary Royal Hotel in Kathmandu—the meeting place of many young Ranas of the former elite and the Shahs, particularly the royal family and their relatives, all of whom enjoyed this new form of freedom to the hilt. I, too, was introduced to King Tribhuvan and two of his sons in the night club, in the summer of 1952. Crown Prince Mahendra I never saw there.

The cremation of King Tribhuvan in the sacred place of Pashupatinath was a memorable event. The procession from Kathmandu to Pashupatinath on the Bagmati River required almost two hours in the dry, searing heat. Exhausted and dehydrated, the foreign diplomats who had come for the king's cremation from all around the world finally took their seats on the simple wooden benches in front of the pyre. The ceremonies were endless—with prayers and the bathing and reclothing of the corpse. The first foreign ambassadors were on the point of collapse, having suffered in the swelter for approximately five hours without any liquid intake. Some Gurkha soldiers finally brought a milk bucket; its hygienic appearance hardly inspired confidence, though. Water was drawn from it with a single mug and passed to the diplomats one after the other. The latter forgot all etiquette and greedily gulped down the contents.

When King Tribhuvan's cremation was over, all the foreign ambassadors together with Nepal's jet set naturally made a beeline for Boris's Royal Hotel. Parched throats avidly indulged in whiskey and other alcoholic drinks, of which Boris, in his wise foresightedness, had sufficiently large stocks on hand. The alcohol showed its effects in no time at all: a joyous mood arose, and a public festival of the elite got under

way. The evening meal in the Royal Hotel was served, as usual, only towards midnight, further allowing the alcohol to take effect.

King Mahendra on the Political Tightrope between India and China

The successor to the throne, **Mahendra**, was a completely different person from his father. Fully aware of what he was doing, he entered upon a dangerous but in the end successful balancing act on the political tightrope between India and China.

On 27 January 1956 he named **Tanka Prasad Acharya** to the post of prime minister in place of M. P. Koirala, whom he accused of being too friendly towards India. In his first press conference a few days later, Tanka Prasad declared his intention of modifying the Indo-Nepalese Agreement of 1950, to the extent that the hitherto "special relations" with India would be changed into "equal friendship with all countries." By "all countries" he meant, of course, primarily China. The first victim of this new polity was Tibet, which officially ceased to exist as a free nation in Nepal's eyes. By way of thanks China offered generous technical assistance. Under Chinese influence, Nepal introduced restrictions for mountain climbers in the border regions—which in some cases continued to be in force up to 1991.

Soon thereafter Tanka Prasad paid an official visit to Peking and with much pomp was received as a great statesman by Mao Tse-tung. An agreement was signed, under which China would give Nepal 20 million Nepalese rupees in cash and 40 million rupees of military hardware for use as it saw fit, with no strings attached.

"Please make some schemes"

I enjoyed very cordial relations with **Prime Minister Tanka Prasad Acharya** and was able to discuss all of Nepal's problems with him. Hardly had the prime minister returned to Kathmandu when I was summoned to his office. Highly satisfied with his success in Peking, he said to me, "Now we have money from China; please make some schemes."

I was naturally surprised at his demand and wanted to answer that development projects were not things that could simply be pulled out of a hat. I thought of Kathmandu's urgent need to be supplied with water, which in the long run could truly be met only by tapping mountain watercourses in Hellambu and in the region of the Gosainkund lakes. For this, though, a feasibility study and cost estimate were needed, which would require the resources of several experts for some length of time.

I did not get around to airing my arguments; having evidently seen my perplexed face, and before I could say anything, he quickly added, "We would like that the Swiss make some schemes with the Chinese money."

When I displayed still greater surprise, he came back, "Why not? Chinese money is not painted red, after all."

The Chinese aid money was soon idling in the administrative jungle of the Nepalese government, with no projects in the offing. This had no adverse impact, though, on the enthusiasm the Nepalese population showed for the unconditional Chinese aid.

From 25 to 28 February **Chou En Lai** paid an official visit to Nepal. This statesman made a strong impression on everyone who had the opportunity to shake his hand. He was more than well informed about the activities of the experts serving under the UN at the time and probed each of them about his tasks.

No improvement in the relations with India could now be expected, of course, under Tanka Prasad Acharya. On the contrary, they got worse, and given the open border in the Terai, India was in the stronger position.

A Rebel Becomes Prime Minister

King Mahendra realized that he had charged ahead a bit too rashly in his relations with China. On 14 July 1957 he removed Tanka Prasad and appointed the former rebel **K. I. Singh** to the post of prime minister. Singh was a leading member of the Nepali Congress Party but did not want to accept the "special relations" in the form in which they had been negotiated in New Delhi in the agreement of 1950. Following an attempted coup d'état, the Indian army intervened at the behest of the Nepalese government and took him prisoner. He escaped, though, and in a series of adventures made it past Ganesh Himal into Tibet and later to Peking. King Mahendra, in order to demonstrate his independence from India, a few months later granted Singh the freedom to return to Nepal. Back from his exile in China, Singh showed that he had executed a complete about-face in his politics, from a Saul to a Paul. He wished to renew the "special relation" status with India, thereby renouncing diversification in foreign affairs at any price.

During his next visit to India, whose army the year before had crushed his coup attempt and taken him prisoner, K. I. Singh was received in New Delhi as a hero. This is not what King Mahendra had wanted, and he dismissed Singh on 19 November 1957.

King Mahendra Rules Directly

The king assumed the reins of power personally and instituted an advisory commission. My good friend and counterpart **Khadga Narsingh Rana** was a member of this commission. He informed me of this with ringing laughter and his typical sarcastic humour, saying that he was now the member of the Funeral

Commission for the King. He was implying that direct rule by the king was not good; a king should be above day-to-day politics in order not to be worn down to a frazzle.

King Mahendra was largely successful, however, in advancing Nepal's independent stance vis-à-vis India. This was also the achievement, though, of the Indian ambassador in Kathmandu at the time, **Bhagwan Sahai**. The latter was not actually a professional diplomat but the former governor of New Delhi. His appointment by Nehru was very farsighted, for Bhagwan Sahai not only proved himself to be an extraordinarily able diplomat but also radiated human sympathy and warmth. He gained the full confidence of King Mahendra.

I knew Bhagwan Sahai very well and often saw him in Kathmandu. He always listened with interest to my observations on the country. Later I also met him in his residence in New Delhi, where he showed me his sculptures. He was an artist whom heaven had richly endowed.

Under King Mahendra's direct rule, Nepal established diplomatic relations with numerous other countries, including the Soviet Union. All of this served to solidify its independence.

The Cancelled State Banquet for King Mahendra in Bern

In 1958 King Mahendra paid a state visit to Switzerland. At the behest of his Foreign Office, I visited him in Hotel Victoria in Interlaken, where he was staying with his entourage. His chief adjutant was Colonel Khatri, one of my best friends.

The Swiss federal government was planning a state banquet for King Mahendra in Hotel Bellevue in Bern. I had received a personal invitation to attend the banquet with my wife some weeks before.

Three days prior to the banquet, however, King Mahendra cancelled his participation in the banquet with the typical Nepalese phrase, "not feeling so well nowadays."

On the day following the cancellation I received a telephone call from Interlaken from Colonel Khatri, who informed me of the king's desire that, instead of a state banquet, a colourful evening programme of Helvetic folklore be organized for him and his retinue. I immediately set off for Interlaken. The Heimwehfluh above Interlaken seemed to me to be the appropriate place for the festivities. I organized a programme featuring *ländler* music, an alphorn player, and a flag thrower, and ordered a cheese fondue for the royal party of approximately 20 persons.

It was a very successful, relaxed, and gay evening.

The Swiss federal government was irritated at this kind of behaviour, which was naturally foreign to it. The demonstration of complete independence, however, was

a typical character trait of Nepalese, which they had also revealed on many an occasion to their close British friends.

My wife, too, was of course angered at the cancellation in Bern. While both of us had participated in numerous official banquets abroad, this would have been the only opportunity for us as expatriate Swiss to do so in Switzerland.

The First Free Elections in the History of Nepal

Thorough Preparations under Trying Conditions

Preparations for the first free elections in Nepal were by now proceeding at full speed ahead. I had seen for myself the preparations being made by functionaries in remote regions. I also had the opportunity while in the field to get to know the election commissioner, **Kulenath Lohani**. A genuine friendship later developed out of that first meeting, and he became my counterpart when I took up the post of director of the Basic Survey Department in the Planning Commission.

In the meantime political events were transpiring beyond Nepal's border that likewise were to influence the political climate in Nepal later on: the revolt in Lhasa and its bloody suppression by the Chinese army of occupation, and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India. The upper echelons in the Nepali Congress Party, particularly the seasoned warriors **Ganesh Man Singh** (who would again play a leading role in the democracy movement of 1990) and **Surya Prasad Upadhyaya** (who later, as home minister, signed the document allowing the integration of Tibetan refugees), sharply condemned the Chinese action, calling it a relapse into the "imperial tradition of the 19th century."

On 27 May 1959 the first freely elected government was formed under **B. P. Koirala**, who enjoyed a comfortable two-thirds majority.

My friend **Kulenath Lohani** became the secretary of planning; Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, with whom I had excellent relations, became the home minister.

Prime Minister Koirala was naturally disturbed about the events in Tibet. He sent one of his closest colleagues from the Congress Party, **Tulsi Giri**, to Peking as the head of the official delegation to the October festivities. No statement on Giri's talks with the regime in Peking was ever made public; he was given only vague assurances by the large northern neighbour that China would maintain a

"reasonable" stance towards Nepal. On his own initiative, however, Giri offered his services as a mediator in the Indo-Chinese border dispute, an engagement in foreign affairs that Prime Minister Koirala had wished to avoid at all costs. This was evidently the first step in the parting of ways between Koirala and Giri. I would later get to know Tulsi Giri personally.

I maintained fine and indeed cordial relations with Prime Minister **B. P. Koirala**. The same applied to his foreign minister, **Rishikesh Shah**, to his home minister, and to his secretary of planning. I sat in as an adviser in many meetings. I was in New Delhi with Koirala for the discussions concerning the large Karnali hydroelectric power plant. He introduced me to Nehru as one of the group. Koirala had the requisite skill to craft an agreement with India on the sale of electric energy generated from it. (India's offer was later retracted, and the problems have still not been resolved to this today.)

The "also good governor"

I recall one meeting in Koirala's house in Kathmandu particularly well. It concerned the redivision of Nepal's administrative and development districts. A large topographic map of the country lay spread out on the floor, and we all got down on our haunches around it in a circle. It was the intention of the Nepalese, first, to have the district borders run along rivers and, secondly, to make all districts as far as possible equal in size.

My objections were that a river should not be a border but a nexus. A hydroelectric plant, a dam for irrigation, or a bridge cannot be planned, financed, and built separately from each side of the river. Natural borders ran along mountain crests.

In answer to my question why all districts should be of the same size, I was told that governors should receive comparably sized districts. I likewise failed to see the logic of this argument, and I began to say, "Why can't you give a large district to a good governor and a small district to a...?"

My voice trailed off as I was about to say "to a bad governor." That, I could naturally not say under any circumstances; it would have been very improper. I hesitated and desperately groped for a way out of the trap I had set for myself. Everyone was looking tensely and expectantly at me, and finally I found the redeeming words: "...and you give a small district to an also good governor."

Everyone laughed heartily, and the phrase later became a turn of expression that was much used when one did not wish to be impolite towards a less than first-class functionary.

"The man with the key"

One day Prime Minister Koirala called upon me to hold a slide show for the entire cabinet on how I viewed and experienced the country during my field work. For the show I made sure that there was a wall socket, a way to keep out sunlight, and a suitable screen. As for a projector, I luckily had my own Leitz Prado with me.

On the appointed day I showed up at the government palace on time. The room set aside for the slide show, however, was locked. I waited for the famed "man with the key," who in Nepal really is the "key man." No lock, not even the simplest padlock, is ever forced. Nothing—literally nothing—functions without the "man with the key." A half-hearted attempt to trace the man brought no quick results and soon petered out. Thus the slide show was postponed a few days, and then it went off without hitch.

The prime minister saw my lightweight but very practical camping equipment in the slides and took great interest in it. He complained that he would have liked to travel about the country frequently, but that doing so was difficult with the heavy army tents and with the many teams necessary to maintain them; there was no getting to where the people were.

We fixed a date when he could visit me in my camp in Pokhara. As usual I had set up camp on the "Swiss hill" above the present-day Fish Tail Lodge. Mr. Koirala turned up as promised, and after an inspection he placed a large order through me to Spatz in Zurich.

My Shock Therapy for King Mahendra

Prime Minister Koirala apparently told King Mahendra about my slide show in the government palace. Not long afterwards I received an invitation from the king to repeat it for him in the royal palace. I enriched the collection with pictures of particularly dangerous bridges, hair-raising paths along gorges, dilapidated suspension bridges, sick persons, deforested areas, forest fires, soil erosion, and the like.

The entire royal family looked on and was obviously affected by what they saw. There was an open discussion with King Mahendra. In the end he said, "It's time that I see my country."

Marshal Voroshilov, the Soviet President, in Nepal for a State Visit

Marshal Voroshilov was a hero and one of the great military leaders of the Soviet Union in the Second World War. In the autumn of 1961 he paid an official state visit to Nepal. Few security measures were in evidence in the country. As I knew from similar occasions, however, the guards protecting the old marshal could have

been taken from a gangster album: stocky figures with grim faces. They contrasted sharply with the old man, who gave the impression of being paternally kind and somewhat helpless.

The solemn act in Kathmandu—the flowery speeches by host and guest reinforcing the "long-lasting friendship" between the two unequal countries—took place on the parade ground under radiant skies. The royal couple and entourage took their seats on the royal platform. Foreign diplomats were assigned seats below, in front of the platform.

Remarkably, the speeches both by Prime Minister Koirala and by Marshal Voroshilov were pleasantly brief. Voroshilov read his speech from a prepared text in Russian, and it was translated by an interpreter as a whole at the end. This interpreter, however, went considerably beyond his time. Koirala made repeated shows of impatience, which was clearly noticed by the entire huge crowd. When the interpreter had finally consumed more than double the time of the original speech, Koirala went up to him from behind, pointed to the manuscript, and asked openly how far he had reached. The place was indicated on the manuscript, whereupon Koirala made an unmistakable gesture with his hand as a sign to stop. The speech came to an abrupt end. An enthusiastic applause welled up. It was not entirely clear, though, whether it was meant for Voroshilov's speech or for its desiderated conclusion and thus directed towards Koirala.

As usual, too, the state banquet for Voroshilov took place in the Royal Hotel under the management of the legendary Boris. The former was naturally quick to make contact with the latter. He was glad to be able to talk again with someone personally who was not a member of his own entourage.

When Boris accompanied the old marshal to the toilette, both arm in arm, the latter sang a paean of praise for the banquet. At the same time, he complained that there was no hotel in Moscow that could have arranged one of equal quality. He offered him the freedom and whatever he needed to manage such a hotel. Boris answered with his typically sardonic brand of humour, "I am used to travel on round-trip tickets."

Black 15 December 1960

The Enigmatic Surprise Coup by King Mahendra

On the eve of 15 December 1960 a messenger from Prime Minister Koirala showed up at our house in Jawalakhel with a note expressing its sender's desire to receive that very evening without fail the proofs of my picture book *Nepal*, which I had previously shown to him. Complying, I sent him what he requested.

The 15th of December 1960 was one of those glum and gloomy days that often occur during that time of the year. The sky was covered by a dense and relatively low (approx. 3,000m) layer of clouds. From my own experience I knew that above the cloud cover it would be radiantly sunny and pleasant. In the Kathmandu Valley, though, it was cold, with the temperature approaching the freezing point. No rays got through to provide a bit of warmth.

In the morning I had a meeting with Kulenath Lohani, the secretary of planning. His office was a large, barren room. In the middle of it there was one of the customary small locally produced charcoal burners, around which the government officials hunkered wobblingly, their necks and heads wrapped almost up to the tips of their noses in the typical Nepalese scarves; they held their hands stretched out with splayed fingers over the small burner in order to be able to warm at least that part of their body.

The discussion ended early in the afternoon (the government office hours were from 10:00 to 17:00 without a break), and I left the meeting room. However, when I tried to leave Singha Durbar, the government palace, I was stopped by Gurkha soldiers and told that I would not be able to exit for the time being. This struck me as puzzling, but I was not actually alarmed.

Two hours later we were finally allowed to go out. Everything looked deserted. The few small detachments of soldiers were scarcely noticeable. As soon as I met a

Nepalese, however, I learned the bad news: Prime Minister Koirala and his entire cabinet were under arrest. These were ill tidings indeed. In my opinion, this coup by the king would bring the democratic process to a standstill. B. P. Koirala had been in office only 18 months. His integrity was widely known; he lived a simple, ascetic life; freedom of the press and human rights had been guaranteed. Parliament functioned with an astounding degree of democracy and civility, with the aid of a constructively critical opposition.

King Mahendra dissolved the popularly elected parliament a few days later and had its most prominent members arrested, including its president, **Krishna Prasad Bhattarai**. The king's reasons were not credible, and the majority of the people did not believe him; he maintained that the Koirala government had collaborated with "antinational elements." India was the only possible claimant to that title. For me, none of this rang true at all; I knew quite well that B. P. Koirala was a genuine patriot.

King Mahendra's motives were naturally discussed after the coup and for many years thence. One widespread opinion was that Koirala was so popular among the people that the unapproachable king had become jealous and feared for his power.

There is surely something to that. Koirala was, to be sure, loyal to the king, regarding him as an integrative and stabilizing figure in a country made up of very different ethnic groups and cultures. On the other hand, he had visions of a more constitutional monarchy further down the road, something in the British or Scandinavian tradition.

These events made my own personal future a bit more insecure. I worried particularly about the resettlement project of the Tibetan refugees that I had been directing under commission of the ICRC since February 1960. For such a politically sensitive task, good, open, and honest relations with the responsible parties in the government were, quite simply, a prerequisite for the success of the programme.

Needless to say, my future work was influenced by the political developments. In order to provide a better understanding of my experiences and problems after Mahendra's coup, I shall now describe the political turbulence up through 1962.

My Preface for the Picture Book Becomes a Testimonial for B. P. Koirala

Political complications threatened to arise for me personally in connection with my picture book on Nepal, which was on the point of being published.

In November 1960 I had brought the proofs of my book from Switzerland. Prime Minister Koirala, to whom I had shown the richly illustrated volume, was enthusiastic. He said, "This book will put Nepal on the map." He immediately acceded to my request to write the preface.

He also desired to have a special edition with luxury binding produced at Kümmerly and Frey in Bern as a gift copy for Queen Elizabeth II on the occasion of her upcoming state visit to Nepal in February 1961. I was to hand the book over to her personally in his presence.

I for my part wrote the following about B. P. Koirala in the preface:

... what could have been more appropriate than to ask the Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. B. P. Koirala himself, to contribute a short introduction to this volume? For him, freedom and human dignity are no empty words; for he has set his own life at stake fighting for Nepal's liberty.

The freedom fighter and popularly elected prime minister was now in prison and, in contrast to some other members of the government, he remained true to his convictions: he refused the king's offer to release him on condition that he promise to refrain completely from politics. For the next eight years, therefore, he was held, not in prison, but under house arrest in a small mansion in Singha Durbar, at first in complete isolation. **Ganesh Man Singh**, Koirala's comrade-in-arms, shared the same fate.

The question in my mind, of course, was how King Mahendra would react to my words of admiration for B. P. Koirala and to his introduction to my picture book, in which the royal house, including Mahendra, was not mentioned at all. Did my book risk being banned, and was my further work in Nepal even in danger? The latter would have had particularly fatal consequences for the project, recently started with success, to resettle Tibetan refugees and to get the carpet-knitting industry on its feet. Would the hitherto sympathetic attitude of the new government change under the friend of China Tulsi Giri? These were all very tormenting questions for me.

I sounded out all my friends, high officials in the former Koirala government (they were not all immediately replaced). They all said spontaneously with regard to my preface, "Keep it; it will be a monument for Koirala."

Even the foreign secretary, General Khatri, expressly reconfirmed the government's intention, in accordance with former Prime Minister Koirala's proposal, to have me hand over personally a luxury gift edition of my picture book to Queen Elizabeth II.

A Moving Reunion with B. P. Koirala, 1982

B. P. Koirala was held prisoner in Kathmandu from 1960 to 1968. Following his release he went into exile in India, from where he was allowed to return to Nepal only in 1977.

After the day before his arrest on 15 December 1960, I did not see Mr. Koirala again until 1982, shortly before his death. The American ambassador organized a meeting in his residence. We were totally to ourselves, and it was a very moving reunion when we looked into each other's eyes. During our talk I asked Mr. Koirala whether it had been happenstance that he had urgently asked for the proofs of my book on the day before his arrest. His answer was no. His intelligence service had alerted him to the imminent coup by King Mahendra and had advised him to escape to India. Koirala had no desire, however, to flee, only to remain true to himself.

My book had meant much to him during the long period of isolation. And not only the book, but also the Spatz camping equipment that he had ordered through me during his period in office. The shipment had arrived only after he had been interned, and it was delivered to his place of confinement. He had particularly valued the down sleeping bag in his cold house.

He told me, too, how he had been informed about everything that was going on "outside," and in particular about the intrigues against me conducted by the Swiss in connection with the integration of the Tibetans. Such intrigues had naturally played into the hand of his successor, Tulsī Giri. He said that he was happy that I was now revisiting Nepal regularly to see my old friends. Unfortunately B. P. Koirala died that same year.

I was in Nepal briefly in 1990, shortly after the political revolution. Prime Minister Bhattarai and other earlier comrades-in-arms of B. P. Koirala whom I had known well in the 1950s had not forgotten my "monument for Koirala" in my picture book. They all brought up the topic of my preface.

The Correction of an Error—Nepalese Style

An unpardonable error had slipped into my picture book. I had written of the last maharaja, Mohun Shamsher, that he, following the change of regime at the beginning of 1951, had gone with dignity into exile in India, where he had died. Field Marshal Keshar Shamsher, the brother of the last maharaja, apprised me during an invitation to his house, "Your book is wonderful, but there is just a little mistake. My brother Mohun Shamsher is still alive."

I was taken aback. Keshar Shamsher patted me on the shoulder reassuringly, however, and said, "Don't worry. My brother is a very old man; just wait a few years and your book will be most up to date."

My Picture Book "Nepal" is Banned in India in 1960

Shortly after its publication, my picture book was banned by India's censors. It took not a little effort and much time to find out the reason for this. It was the map

of South Asia on the book's inner cover, which showed the border of Kashmir. This border, it will be recalled, was never recognized by India in its dispute with Pakistan. Once the map had been removed from the book, India lifted the ban on it.

Renewed Ban, 1980

The third edition of my picture book *Nepal*, which came out in 1980, was once again put under ban. The reason this time was never finally determined, in spite of intervention by the king of Nepal, the government of Nepal, and the Swiss embassy in New Delhi.

This ban had serious repercussions, since 800 copies of the English edition were being held up in Calcutta and could not even be sent on as transit items to Nepal. All efforts from the highest quarters to get the shipment released were to no avail. A year later, following the payment of high storage fees and renewed transport costs, the shipment was returned to Switzerland.

The Nepalese booksellers nevertheless later found a way to bypass India. It was a vivid illustration of the trials faced by a landlocked country in the Third World.

King Mahendra's Adroit Posturing Between His Large Neighbours.

The Neighbours' Initial Confusion

The official reaction on the part of Nepal's large neighbours to King Mahendra's coup was at first restrained. China reported on the upheaval without commenting upon or drawing attention to it. Similarly, the Indian government regretted the abrupt end of democratization but took pains to maintain a good working relationship with King Mahendra. The Indian press, however, expressed itself in very negative terms.

In the first half of 1961 India went so far as to offer new development aid worth 13.2 million Indian rupees.

King Mahendra was quick to exploit the two large neighbours' initial confusion, having his ministers make contradictory statements and allowing them repeatedly to change their official stance. Prime Minister Tulsi Giri at first assumed a conciliatory attitude towards India, whereas Home Minister Thapa was highly critical. Later the roles were switched: Tulsi Giri became pointedly pro-Chinese. Only Finance Minister Rishikesh Shah consistently recommended a policy of quiet diplomacy towards India.

This obviously conscious posturing on the part of King Mahendra gave him the flexibility in foreign affairs he needed and kept him from being held directly responsible.

A Favourable Border Agreement with China

The negotiations to demarcate the boundary between Nepal and China took place during this period. China had previously published maps in which Mt. Everest

and parts of Khumbu were shown belonging to it. Nepalese national pride had been offended. Joint commissions made trips through the border regions. I was often summoned to consultations in the government palace by General Khatri, the head of the Nepalese delegation. In the end China accepted without demur the former boundary demarcated by India over the main crest of the Everest group.

In the Langtang valley, too, China freely accepted a border running significantly north of what had been drawn on the map of the Survey of India, resulting in an enlargement of territory for Nepal over what was shown on that map. On my expedition to Shisha Pangma (1952), I had determined that the main chain of mountains was much further north and thus that the whole upper part of the Langtang valley ought to belong to Nepal and not to China.

China also strengthened its relations with Nepal by quietly offering new development aid amounting to approximately 35 million Indian rupees, 10 million of it in hard, convertible currency. It was intended to be spent for construction of a paper mill, a cement factory, and a shoe factory.

In order to reinforce his independence, King Mahendra personally led the Nepalese delegation to the conference of non-aligned countries in Belgrade in September 1951.

Shortly thereafter the king visited Pakistan, India's arch adversary, and was very cordially received by General Ayub Khan. This, of course, could only serve to arouse India's mistrust. Outwardly, however, the government in New Delhi put on a display of calm.

King Mahendra as the State Guest of Mao

At the end of September 1961 King Mahendra began a 17-day state visit to China. The Chinese attempted without success to maneuver the king into making anti-Indian statements.

On the last day of the royal visit Prime Minister Tulsī Giri unexpectedly signed an agreement for the construction of a road from Lhasa to Kathmandu. Nepal officially played up the economic significance of the road, which was understandable in light of India's repeated chicanery with regard to transit through its country to Nepal. It was clear, however, that the road would be built with primarily political and strategic considerations in mind. Even at that time one could foresee that the road would be of next to no significance economically, particularly as far as trade relations were concerned, given the exorbitant transport costs over the huge distances and high passes. In Nepalese newspapers it was written that the Chinese could now "conquer Kathmandu by taxi."

The Bold King Mahendra

At the same time, however, King Mahendra made a very bold statement in Peking by way of restoring equilibrium:

History notes that China defeated other races and was also vanquished. But I believe the Communist Government of... China will take lessons from history and not adopt the path of encroachment upon and interference in the political sovereignty and territorial integrity of her neighbours. China should make all possible efforts not to repeat past mistakes.

The Indian press reacted very sharply to the road project, whereas the government in New Delhi for the time being restrained itself. A deterioration in relations between Nepal and India was, however, inevitable. On 6 December 1961, in order to offer India a measure of reassurance, the government of Nepal declared a ban on exports of strategic importance to the Chinese army of occupation in Tibet, such as iron, cement, coal, and petroleum products—a step India had already taken.

A Battle of Nerves between Nepal and India

While all this was going on, the former finance minister **Subarna Shamsher** reorganized the Nepali Congress Party from his exile in India and carried out several attacks on Nepalese border areas in the Terai with India's sanction and aid. Nepal's demand to India that it not allow further armed incursions from its territory was not met. While militarily insignificant, the attacks further soured relations between the two countries.

Finally, at the beginning of 1962, King Mahendra called upon India to turn over the rebel leaders. India responded that, according to the former extradition treaty, only criminals could be handed over, not political refugees. Mahendra balked at calling the rebels criminals, so that the armed incursions continued.

In a deft countermove, King Mahendra on 23 March 1962 offered no less than 76 of the most prominent Congress rebels the freedom to return to Nepal.

On 31 January 1961 the Nepalese Foreign Ministry announced that weapons destined for Khampa rebels in Mustang had been dropped from an "unidentified" aircraft. Nepal naturally saw India's hand in this. According to the Nepalese, the threat existed that, with the Nepalese army unable to disarm the well-equipped Khampas, the Chinese might possibly intervene to bring the Tibetans under control. (Reference has already been made to Nepal's request for Indian army intervention to help to quell disturbances in 1951 and to apprehend K. I. Singh.) The ploy backfired, though, for according to Tulsi Giri the Chinese government had never

threatened such a course of action, and New Delhi hastened to confirm its earlier offer of granting Nepal military assistance in case of external aggression. Nothing more was ever heard from Kathmandu about the Mustang incident.

Relations with India deteriorated very quickly. The language Nepal used towards India became increasingly undiplomatic and even insulting. Internally, King Mahendra was able to boast of some success: those parts of the population that still harboured resentment towards India from the beginning of the 1950s lined up behind him. He evidently realized, however, that things had gone too far. He dismissed Prime Minister Tulsī Giri and appointed **Rishikesh Shah**, who had previously served in the Koirala cabinet, as foreign minister. The latter, though, was soon dropped, having failed in New Delhi to secure an end to the armed incursions from Indian territory. India for its part tightened the screws, instituting at the end of September 1962, without ever officially announcing it, the first economic blockade against Nepal, while at the same time it increased its support of the Nepali Congress Party in their attacks along the southern border.

Peking Bares Its Teeth

On the occasion of a banquet to celebrate the first anniversary of the signing of the Chino-Nepalese border agreement, the Chinese foreign minister made a significant statement. He said:

In case any foreign army makes a foolhardy attempt to attack Nepal... China will side with the Nepalese people.

A few weeks later the Chinese army overran Indian territory in the eastern border province of NEFA, penetrated deep into India, and just as quickly pulled back. This was a sensationally humiliating military defeat for India. Nepal reacted with a sigh of relief, knowing that it could now expect Indian pressure to moderate.

Such, in fact, promptly occurred. India decisively altered its policy towards Nepal: the unofficial economic blockade abruptly ended; the Nepali Congress Party was forced to discontinue its attacks across the border. The forces opposing King Mahendra within the country now realized that they would no longer have the clout they had before. Instead, the bugbear of a division of Nepal raised its head, with the line of demarcation going right through the middle of the country, as in Korea and Vietnam. Thanks to the Chinese military victory, King Mahendra emerged with his hand strengthened to deal with India.

Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, the former home minister in the Koirala government and a Congress freedom fighter of long standing, was one of the Congress leaders to return from Indian exile. He remarked to me concerning this period:

There is no use to fight with arms. Such activities would just give both of our neighbours a pretext for intervention.... Both neighbours of Nepal are devils, however; the devil in the north is certainly more black than the one from the south.

King Mahendra's Domestic Policies, the Ultimate Cause of Stagnation

Internally, Mahendra fell back upon the panchayat system, a traditional system of local self-government under elected village councils. Mahendra allowed a parliament to sit, but only half of its members were elected; the other half were appointed by the king. The panchayat system would have stood a chance of succeeding if only the other conditions imposed on it had been favourable. They were not, though: no opposition was tolerated in the partyless system, and there was no freedom of press. The media were all under the control of the state. The door was open, in the long run, for nepotism, mismanagement, and corruption. Moreover, all important decisions were made in the royal palace, so that de facto there were two governments operating simultaneously. Any enthusiasm that ministers and chief officials might have had to assume responsibility quickly dissipated.

Elizabeth II's State Visit Amid Obstacles

An Inopportune State Visit?

Queen Elizabeth II was scheduled to pay an official visit to Nepal in February 1961, barely two months after King Mahendra had dissolved parliament and placed the popularly elected Koirala government under arrest. Voices were raised in England and also in Nepal against the visit as being inopportune under the circumstances. It would, so the argument, only serve to strengthen the autocratic regime of King Mahendra and undermine democratic forces. There were even a number of demonstrations against the visit in Kathmandu.

Nevertheless, Queen Elizabeth arrived in Kathmandu in the middle of February, accompanied by, among others, Prince Philip and Foreign Minister Homes.

The mood of the people was gloomy; the government feared demonstrations. A so-called beautifying plan did nothing to lift people's spirits. Under this plan a number of wide avenues had been created, but much destruction occurred to unique medieval buildings and other old edifices. An orgy of concrete buildings, concrete walls, and concrete flagpoles ensued. One of the victims of this was the former parade ground, the large unmatched expanse of green with magnificent old stands of trees between the old part of the city and the newer quarters around the government palace—the one-time evening playground of the city's dwellers.

There were exhilarating festivities and banquets. Boris was naturally in top form. He was responsible for catering affairs attended by the high-ranking guests. In a city that was hopelessly jammed and in traffic conditions that were normally chaotic, he secured the necessary freedom of movement for himself by requisitioning the city of Kathmandu's large fire engine on the spur of the moment and whizzing through the streets, clanging the bell (there were no sirens yet).

Book Presentation over Political Hurdles

The foreign secretary informed me that the presentation of my picture book to the queen was scheduled to take place in Pokhara in the presence of the new prime minister, **Tulsi Giri**. The royal party had been invited to Mahendra's bungalow on the lake.

For the arrival at the airport in Pokhara, the government had the Gurkha veterans who had received the Victoria Cross stand guard of honour. It was probably the most moving scene of the entire state visit. Two hundred thousand Gurkha soldiers had been recruited by the British government for the First World War; 300,000 fought worldwide in all the theatres of the Second World War, and 40,000 fell in battle.

There were not the hoards of people in Pokhara that had been present on all other occasions. The airport was closed to all non-official aircraft, and the road from Kathmandu to Pokhara did not yet exist. Were it not for the Pilatus Porter belonging to the ICRC, I would not have been able to get to Pokhara to present my picture book.

So there they stood and sat now, the Gurkha veterans, some 30 in number. A large number of them were cripples seated on simple wooden chairs. Some had taken days to walk down from their villages in the mountains to see "their" queen. They sat and stood expectantly, their gleaming eyes set in furrowed faces. Queen Elizabeth, in inspecting the guard, exchanged a few friendly words with practically all of them and asked them about the particulars that had led to the conferring upon them of the Victoria Cross. King Mahendra remained a few discrete metres behind the queen. He made it plain that this was his guest's day. Despite the cloudy and hazy weather, the mood of the occasion was warm and luminous. As only a very few privileged spectators were allowed to be present, the ceremony had a feeling of intimacy to it.

The party in the royal bungalow on the lake lasted about three hours, and the plan was for me to wait with book in hand in front of the royal aircraft, a DC3. It had also been agreed that Prime Minister Tulsi Giri would introduce me to Queen Elizabeth immediately before she boarded the plane.

My wife and I thus waited shiveringly. Finally the convoy of some half dozen Landrovers arrived. It stopped approximately 70 metres from the airplane, and the guests got out. The Gurkha veterans formed a cordon. The queen was in the first Landrover. She began to pace down the line of sentinels and exchanged friendly glances with them. Prince Philip walked on ahead, reaching the plane long before the queen. Then I saw Prime Minister Giri begin to get out of the second Landrover. It appeared, though, as if he had somehow caught his pants on the vehicle; that was my impression at least. In any case, he did not come in our

direction. I was afraid that he, and I along with him, would miss the opportunity to present the book. Prince Philip had reached the top of the boarding ladder, and Queen Elizabeth was now slowly approaching it.

I, Toni Hagen, Lenzerheide/Obervaz/Switzerland, looked helplessly on with my book in my hand. Then my wife gave me a nudge from behind and whispered, "Now or never!" I almost fell over frontwards. A certain sense of unease arose among the security forces at the boarding ladder. Prince Philip noticed this just as he was about to enter the aircraft. Nettled, he turned around and asked with a raised and not altogether friendly voice, "Is something wrong?" Queen Elizabeth noticed how I had almost fallen over. She sized up the situation immediately, came in a friendly manner the few steps up to me and my wife, greeted us very amiably, and said that she had been informed and gladly looked forward to receiving my book. Having exchanged a few words with me about my activities in Nepal, and then also with my wife, she entered the airplane.

A large reception and state banquet took place that same evening in Singha Durbar. My wife and I had also been invited. During the introduction of the guests she immediately brought up the subject of my book. She had leafed through it on the return trip from Pokhara, as there was nothing to be seen under the overcast skies. Thanks to my book, though, she had nevertheless gained some idea of Nepal's beauty. She also asked about the Tibetan project. Here Prince Philip interjected with the question of why the ICRC rather than the UN High Commissioner for Refugees had assumed responsibility for the Tibetan refugees in Nepal. In the first moment I was somewhat at a loss. Many officials were listening and waiting for my answer. It was likely that he knew the answer himself and had put the question as an express provocation. This gave me the opportunity to mention that the Tibetan question had been labelled an internal Chinese matter during the vote in the UN General Assembly, and that Western powers had also unfortunately gone along with this.

This seemed to be the answer that Prince Philip expected. He thereupon inquired about the progress of the ICRC campaign on behalf of Tibetans.

A Traditional but Environmentally Sound Royal Hunt in the Terai

One affair unique in character was the large royal hunt in the famous hunting grounds of Chitwan in the Terai.

The last large state visit of British royalty featuring a large hunt was when George V came in 1911. He remained in Nepal for ten days as the guest of Maharaja Chandra Shamsheer, having just been crowned emperor of India. A contingent of 10,000 Gurkha soldiers and 600 elephants stood ready for the hunt in the Terai. George V bagged 21 tigers, 10 rhinoceroses, and two bears.

Just how much times had changed in the half century between 1911 and 1961 is apparent from a comparison of the two hunts. Nepalese preparations for the hunt for Queen Elizabeth began weeks in advance; they were anxious that the presence of tigers to bring down in the predetermined area be not left up to chance, both tigers and rhinoceroses being threatened with extinction as a result of indiscriminate shooting. Happily, the creation of natural reserves had reversed the trend. It was the great merit of King Mahendra that he was fully awake to newly felt ecological concerns and held this hunt down to comparatively small proportions, giving one single tiger free to be shot.

The singular method of Nepalese hunting, however, was adhered to: Once the tiger had been located, a circle about 300 metres in diameter was marked out and fenced in by approximately three-metre spans of white cloth. Experience had taught that tigers never jump over such an enclosure, but just to make sure a water buffalo was driven every day into the ring to keep the tiger in good spirits and up to normal strength.

The first piece of business at the site selected for the royal camp was to go over the entire grounds and remove all scorpions. The camp itself was fitted out with every luxury, such as electric lights, bath and shower tents with warm and cold water, and flush toilets. The tent camp was set up at a scenic spot on the edge of the virgin forest along the Rapti River.

The government asked me to put Captain Wick and an ICRC Pilatus Porter at its disposal for an air link serving important passengers and other transport needs. This provided me with the opportunity, following an official invitation, to be virtually the only non-Englishman along with Emil Wick to take part in the royal hunt.

It was a magnificent day in the fair-weather month of February when the royal guests arrived at the enclosure. All the guests, some thirty in number, were mounted on caparisoned elephants. These elephants were stationed around the outer edge of the ring of cloth. One of the elephants, manned by a trained Nepalese, moved into the ring to flush out the tiger from his lair (the entire ring was covered with high elephant grass) and to chase it towards the guests' gun.

Political Bandage on the Trigger Finger

Normally Prince Philip would have been accorded the honours. His right pointer finger, though, was wrapped up in an impressive bandage, and his arm was in a sling, so that he was unable to shoot. The bandage owed its existence to the British Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which had raised a hue and cry against the prince, who before his visit to Nepal had shot 300 ducks as the guest of the Pakistani president, Ayub Khan. To have shot a tiger, one of a species

threatened with extinction, would have been carrying things too far. Thus Prince Philip had his trigger finger swathed in a political bandage, so to speak. Notwithstanding, the battue got under way inside the ring. Lord Homes steadied the royal firearm in the prince's stead.

The tiger for its part was not going to let itself be flushed out and chased around the ring so easily. Nevertheless, there was never a dull moment. As usual, Boris had the responsibility to see to the guests' alimentary needs. He had set up a mobile bar on one of the elephants, with his beautiful blond wife Inga as the barmaid. This pachydermic bar made the rounds from one mounted elephant to the next. The best fruits that the earth had to offer were served, down to the most exquisite French champagne. Soon a relaxed mood spread among the illustrious guests. The initial call for peace and quiet could no longer be observed. When English security officials on an elephant of their own obviously failed to establish radio contact with their set, and two hours had already passed with no tiger in sight, one witty chap called out into the middle of the ring of elephants, "I think the tiger is not on the same frequency."

Finally, though, the tiger was flushed out and chased around the ring by the elephant in the middle. It was fascinating to watch its elegantly long and supple jumping. I could barely suppress a certain malicious joy when three of the foreign minister's shots went wide of the mark.

Boris had by now set up an inimitable "garden buffet" under lovely old trees along the Rapti River, and the guests were starting to feel hungry.

Lord Homes turned the gun over to General **Kiran Shamsheer**, the commander of the Nepalese army. With his first shot he dispatched the tiger. A pity for the beautiful animal, I thought.

Then the guests betook themselves to Boris's nearby buffet on the banks of the river. A lunch of choice delicacies awaited them there. Unfortunately the guests had to be encouraged to eat quickly. The tiger's hide-and-seek had thrown the whole royal programme into disarray, and further official parties and functions were scheduled for the evening in Kathmandu.

Captain Wick and I enjoyed the lovely evening and complete quiet that set in after the large-scale activities. The sounds—so familiar and dear to me—of all the birds and animals in the virgin forest reasserted themselves. We sampled the titbits left over from the royal lunch. The gradually advancing twilight, though, finally forced us to start the short flight back to Kathmandu.

And with that, the memorable state visit of Queen Elizabeth II ended for me.

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PART III

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The Integration of Tibetan Refugees in Nepal

A Summary Chronology of Events

1951

The People's Republic of China annexes Tibet.

1959, March

Uprising in Lhasa. Flight of the Dalai Lama to India. Approximately 30,000 Tibetan refugees flee to Nepal, at first to the northern high valleys.

1959, December

Refugees start appearing in Kathmandu in large numbers, concentrating principally around the Buddhist centre of Bodnath.

1960, 2 January

The author's first concrete talks with Prime Minister B. P. Koirala and Home Minister Surya Prasad Upadhyaya; the oral presentation of his ideas on resettling and integrating the refugees. The government basically assents to the plans and requests that an outline programme be formulated in writing.

1960, 8 January

The author submits to the government his outline programme for the integration of refugees. Included, in particular, is the proposal for a *carpet-knitting workshop*.

1960, 21 February

Positive response from the government, signed by Home Minister Surya Prasad Upadhyaya. The government desires the selection of a neutral Swiss organization to carry out the integration programme.

The author is commissioned to seek out suitable donors to provide the necessary funds and to approach the *ICRC* in Geneva about accepting the mandate.

1960, February-March

The Swiss development aid workers of SHAG (Schweizerisches Hilfswerk für aussereuropäische Gebiete, today HELVETAS) stationed in Nepal (with the exception of the cheese producers) react in a completely *negative* fashion to my governmentally approved proposals concerning the resettlement of Tibetans in Nepal, saying that the Tibetans are not integratable and have had no reason to flee in the first place; they have merely been "freed" by the Chinese from a medieval theocratic dictatorship.

1960, March

The American Jesuit **Father M. D. Moran** together with the author and **Boris Lissanevich** forms a local *Nepalese Tibetan Refugee Committee*. Later a number of ladies connected with foreign embassies or development aid organizations join this committee. A few thousand dollars are collected for the first emergency aid—for example, the distribution of food around Bodnath.

1960, April

The author, back home on vacation, holds talks in Bern with *federal authorities* (DftZ, Dienst für technische Zusammenarbeit; today DEH, Direktion für Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und humanitäre Hilfe) and with the NGO *Swiss Aid Service* (Schweizer Auslandhilfe) on behalf of the Nepalese government. Reactions are *negative*. Both bodies back up their views by citing SHAG/HELVETAS development aid workers in Nepal.

The *ICRC* nevertheless commits itself to providing *40,000 francs for emergency aid* to Nepal.

1960, 7 April

SHAG/HELVETAS demands that its team leader in Nepal formulate an official position with regard to my resettlement proposals.

1960, 1 May

The position taken by the *SHAG team leader in Nepal* vis-à-vis my proposals is *completely negative*. Under these circumstances, the Swiss Aid Service in Bern firmly rejects the idea of financing the Tibetan project in Nepal; the federal government does the same.

1960, May

Once back in Nepal, the author manages to limit the disarray and harm caused by the Swiss to the resettlement programme.

The author is also able, thanks to personal connections, to mobilize the first substantial funds for the resettlement programme. In spite of the setbacks in Switzerland, the *government insists* on my *resettlement programme* being carried out, and explicitly desires that this be done by the *ICRC*.

With this mandate in hand, the author flies back to Switzerland and asks Ambassador **August Lindt**, at the time the UN high commissioner for refugees in Geneva, for his assistance. Ambassador Lindt's reaction is unhesitatingly *positive*, and on the same day he mobilizes over the telephone *580,000 francs for the ICRC* to allow it to carry out my resettlement programme. (All the money came from England and Australia).

The government informs the *ICRC* through its consul-general in Switzerland (and later member of parliament), **Otto Wenger, M.D.**, of its desire that the author be appointed the *ICRC's chief delegate for Nepal* and that he be charged with *heading up the Tibetan resettlement programme*.

At the same time, at the formal request of **Rishikesh Shah**, the Nepalese ambassador to the UN, the author is seconded by **UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld** to the *ICRC*, thus remaining on the payroll of the UN.

The beginning of the resettlement programme; the *establishment of the carpet training centre in the Jawalakhel section of Patan*.

Temporary hiring of Tibetans by the Nepalese army for *road construction* (Tika Bhairav road), under a *cash-for-work* programme.

Colonel Khatri of the Engineer Corps is in charge of the road construction. He praises the Tibetans as hard-working, reliable, and steady workers—in contrast to the biased picture painted of them by the *SHAG/HELVETAS* development aid workers.

Prime Minister **B. P. Koirala** appoints Colonel **Khatri** to the post of **foreign secretary**, and King Mahendra simultaneously promotes him to the rank of general.

The *government* creates a *National Refugee Committee* consisting of the defence minister, the secretaries of the Foreign Ministry and Home Ministry, and the author.

1960, May-July

As a result of the continuing negative reports from Nepal, however, the ICRC retains doubts about the programme and asks for a two-month review by **Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann**, a member of SHAG's executive board. This review is carried out from 20 May to 3 July 1960. The author's opinion is not sought out, the "review" relying entirely on SHAG/HELVETAS development aid helpers and the expert on Tibetan affairs **Peter Aufschnaiter**, who lived many years in Tibet together with Heinrich Harrer.

1960, beginning of July

Towards the end of the above review (during the author's absence in search of further money), a *representative of the ICRC* from Geneva visits Nepal. He, too, is negatively influenced by the same informants and demands that a Nepalese Red Cross be established to assume responsibility for the aid.

The government does not agree but insists, in view of the delicate political situation, that the neutral ICRC continue to assume responsibility.

1960, July

The official report of the SHAG review is *completely negative*. Since *resettlement is "impossible,"* the proposal it makes is for there to be purely humanitarian aid, to be distributed by a local aid committee staffed by SHAG personnel. The name Toni Hagen is not mentioned in this proposal, even though he was officially charged both by the government and by the ICRC with directing the integration programme from May onwards.

Talks with the ICRC in Geneva in the presence of the author of the above report. The report, however, is obsolete and irrelevant, now that the programme in Nepal has been running for some time. Its effect of blocking money sources in Switzerland, though, continues for more than a year.

1960, 25 October

The first visit to the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India; agreement reached on the resettlement programme in Nepal; the recording on tape of an address by the Dalai Lama to his countrymen in Nepal.

1960, November

Nepalese newspapers sympathetic to China begin a *campaign* against the Tibetan refugees.

Peking delivers a sharp protest note to Kathmandu against the harbouring of Tibetan refugees.

General Khatri assures the author in the name of the government that *not one single Tibetan will be handed over to China.*

1960, December

Alarming reports on the situation of the refugees in *Khumbu*.

Reconnaissance flight by helicopter. The situation is indeed alarming, there being in Khumbu 4,000 refugees as against only 2,000 local inhabitants.

Since the transfer of supplies by columns of porters would be costly in terms of both time and money, and would come too late for many refugees, the author plans the use of *Pilatus Porter STOL aircraft*. The government approves the use of such ICRC aircraft flying under the Swiss flag as well as the construction of landing strips in Khumbu, Solu, Jiri, Thakkhola, and Dhor Patan.

The ICRC approves the chartering of two Pilatus Porters and the hiring of pilots and mechanics.

Thanks to the unique relationship of trust between the author and the government, the upcoming *ICRC operation* is accorded *special concessions and privileges*, such as:

- the duty-free import of all aid material and its exemption from being inspected (the submitting of a list of imported goods signed by the author suffices)
- carte blanche to fly anywhere in the country with the ICRC STOL aircraft
- carte blanche to move about freely and uncontrolled throughout the country, applicable to all ICRC personnel

1960, 15 December

King Mahendra, in a *surprise move*, *dissolves the government and parliament* and has its ministers detained. One of the reasons given for this is the supposed friendly stance towards India taken by the Koirala government. **Tulsi Giri**, the new prime minister, soon shows his leanings towards China. All of the top officials in the government are replaced with the exception of General Khatri. Through painstaking efforts, the author succeeds for the time being in obtaining from the new regime the same favourable conditions for the Tibetan integration programme as before.

December 1960 - January 1961

Construction of the landing strips at Jiri, Chialsa/Solu, Mingbo/Khumbu, Jomosom/Thakkhola, and Dhor Patan.

1961, January

The arrival of two Pilatus Porter aircraft for ICRC operations and a further Porter for the government.

1961, 26 August

King Mahendra inaugurates with his family and ministers the sales shop in the Tibet handicraft centre in Jawalakhel.

1961, October

The arrival of the Dhor Patan team under **H. Kipfer, M.D.** *Gross breaches of government rules.*

- the smuggling of hunting weapons
- the secret launching of a radio station in Dhor Patan without waiting for government permission
- secret reconnaissance flights to restricted border areas ("to search for refugees")

1961, November

The author appeals to the Swiss ambassador in New Delhi, **A. Cuttat**, for help in bringing the project head in Dhor Patan back to his senses.

The ambassador fails to support the author, however, allowing himself to be swayed by the SHAG/HELVETAS development aid workers, who have intrigued against the refugee programme from the beginning and, once the programme got off to a successful start, started directing their criticism against the author personally, in order to harm the programme and prove their point.

The author is given to understand by the Swiss ambassador that he should resign as director of the Tibetan programme, since his employment in the UN has been put at risk (not at all the case, as later inquiries with the UN representative in New Delhi prove).

On 26 November 1961 the Swiss ambassador informs the government of my *resignation as chief delegate, to take effect at the beginning of February 1962.* This takes

place a few days *before* the arrival in Kathmandu of a delegation of top ICRC officials, which is greatly amazed by the news.

1961, end of November

The arrival in Kathmandu of two leading officials from the ICRC headquarters in Geneva; they give orders *not to enlarge the carpet-knitting centre* but to *close* within months, since the entire production and sales operation violates ICRC statutes.

1962, beginning of January

The author's authority having been disavowed to the government, Dr. Kipfer, the project head in Dhor Patan, is encouraged to go behind his back to deal with the ICRC in Geneva through the author's secretary. The following additional infringements are committed by Dr. Kipfer:

- the secret evacuation of 350 refugees from Dhor Patan to the Terai
- the concealment of outbreaks of diphtheria

1962, middle of January

Investigation of the high-handed behaviour of the project head in Dhor Patan carried out *by the Home Ministry, heavy restrictions* placed upon all operations of the ICRC.

1962, end of January

The author appears before the ICRC in Geneva and demands the dismissal of the Dhor Patan project head on grounds of incompetency, and because his incorrigibility and disregard of government rules have resulted in heavy restrictions being placed on ICRC operations, thus putting the whole programme at risk.

The ICRC defends the Dhor Patan team leader. At the same time, a new chief ICRC delegate is selected.

1962, beginning of February

A representative of the ICRC from Geneva arrives with the author's successor in Kathmandu.

1962, end of February

Given that the new chief ICRC delegate refuses to acknowledge the impropriety of Dr. Kipfer's conduct, and the author's position in Nepal with regard to the Tibetan programme has become hopeless, the author gives the government notice of his intention to terminate his UN activities in Nepal in the middle of July 1962.

1962, middle of February

Return of the refugees who had been secretly evacuated to the Terai to Dhor Patan.

1962, March

The government's acceptance of the notice given for the middle of July.

1962, May

The liaison officer in Dhor Patan, **G. P. Sherma**, packs his bags, wishing to have nothing further to do with the high-handed Swiss there; his advice has not been sought, and he fears that further violations by Dr. Kipfer may harm his government career.

And indeed Dr. Kipfer commits further violations, leading to his being sacked by the author's successor, who has thus had the same bad experience with him.

1962, May

At the urging of his Nepalese friends, the author retracts his notification to the government.

1962, May

After barely three months the author's first successor is replaced by a new chief delegate, who again has had no previous experience in Nepal.

The new man's main concern, along with closing the out station in Jomosom, consists in the search for land for the resettlement of the Tibetans.

1962, June

Since the government's liaison officer has left Dhor Patan and the government is no longer able to exercise any control over events there, it orders the evacuation of the 350 refugees from Dhor Patan to an emergency camp in Pokhara. The refugees, however, refuse to leave Dhor Patan but must be forcibly removed by the police and marched to their destination in the hot lowlands (800m).

1962, end of June

The king's refusal to accept the author's retraction of his notification.

1962, July

The author's second successor, after only a two-month guest appearance, is replaced by successor number three, again someone with no previous experience in Nepal. It is only in October 1962, with the fourth successor, that a chief delegate with experience in foreign operations will assume the directorship of the ICRC in Nepal.

1962, 15 July

The end of my 12 years of activities in Nepal; return to Switzerland.

1962, 16 July

Farewell article in the English-language Kathmandu daily *The Commoner*. A small excerpt:

His valuable services to Tibetan refugees can never be forgotten.... Within record time he established a handicraft training center at Kathmandu which according to the distinguished visitors from abroad is the best ever organised for refugees anywhere. His Majesty the King personally visited this center at Jawalakhel and highly appreciated Hagen's services to refugees. Hagen has made himself so popular among the refugees that they refuse to believe that Hagen is in fact going to leave them for good. They regard him as their father.

1962, 17 July

"*Toni Hagen Expelled from Nepal.*" A wire service report from Nepal under this title makes the rounds of international (including Swiss) printed news media. The expulsion is explained as resulting from charges that Dr. Hagen delivered weapons to Tibetan insurgents fighting the Red Chinese occupiers, organized the insurgents, and conducted espionage against Red China. According to a report in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the Nepalese government declares that it received its information on the matter from "interested parties" (NZZ of 17 July 1962).

"*The ICRC's Dementi,*" NZZ, 17 July 1962:

The ICRC notes that, in accordance with instructions issued to all representatives of the institution, Dr. Hagen maintained the *strictest neutrality* during the prosecution of his duties.

1962, 20 July

The Swiss daily "Die Tat" reports, on the basis of "informed sources," that Toni Hagen was not expelled from Nepal for the reasons named in the press but on account of his "recklessness." He had, so the claim, developed very close ties to the Congress Party, which King Mahendra overthrew, and it was because of his "recklessness" that the king wished to get rid of the "intolerable" Toni Hagen.

The "informed sources" were the Swiss development aid workers in SHAG/HELVETAS.

22 years later: 1984, 5 June

On the occasion of the high decoration that the author received from King Birendra in the Royal Nepal Academy in Kathmandu on this day (22 years later), **A. Thakur**, the chief of protocol in 1962, formally apologizes for what had occurred during those earlier years. He states that the official rehabilitation brought about by this decoration is long overdue. He stresses the fact that the above-mentioned "interested parties" who intrigued against the author were exclusively Swiss. "They were all Swiss," he confirms.

The Courageous and Magnanimous Stance of the Government

Tibetan Refugees Spill Over into the Northern Mountain Valleys of Nepal

In the year 1950 the People's Republic of China began to occupy Tibet. The slow, gradual suppression of Tibet commenced. Military infiltration likewise proceeded step by step. At first only the large cities were occupied. The border with Nepal remained for the most part open and was only loosely controlled, and the traditional salt trade between Tibet and Nepal was allowed to continue for the time being undisturbed.

Gradually, however, the alien occupiers began tightening the screws. In March 1959 the oppressed population let loose its frustrations with riots in Lhasa. The latter were bloodily crushed, and a large flood of refugees to India (approximately 120,000) and Nepal (approximately 30,000) got under way. The **Dalai Lama**, too, succeeded in reaching India safely, in a dramatic flight accompanied by a small retinue. The Indian government generously granted him asylum in Dharamsala—where he is still living 34 years later—and even allowed him to form a Tibetan government in exile.

In Nepal, the first places that the Tibetan refugees poured into were the *northern mountain valleys*, particularly Khumbu, the homeland of the Sherpas, and Thakkhola and Mustang. News from the other high-lying valleys (Dolpo, Walungchung) was at first sparse, due to their remoteness and isolation.

Little by little the *desitute Tibetan refugees* moved on in larger number to *Kathmandu* and Pokhara, congregating particularly around the *Buddhist shrine of Bodnath*, which many Tibetans already knew from earlier pilgrimages. Bodnath also acted like a magnet for many refugees because there they aroused the sympathy of the many tourists. Begging caught on.

A large number of refugees, around 10,000 according to later estimates, in the beginning found *shelter with relatives and Sherpas* in the northern mountain valleys. It soon became clear, however, that most of them were in great straits and, if left to their fate, would one day represent a major economic and, more importantly, political danger for the small and impoverished country of Nepal.

Towards the end of December 1959 the well-known American Jesuit **Father M. D. Moran** together with the legendary **Boris Lissanevich** and the present author formed a local *Nepalese Tibetan Refugee Committee*, later popularly called the Father Moran Committee. Afterwards several ladies associated with foreign embassies and development programmes also joined on. The first several thousand dollars collected locally were used to distribute food items in and around Bodnath.

This had the undesired effect of attracting more needy. During my later absence from Nepal in search abroad of money for the integration programme, local Swiss became engaged in the same charitable activity, drawing on the first 40,000-franc donation received from the ICRC.

My Confidence in the Tibetans

On 2 January 1960, with the Tibetan refugees in Nepal already being discussed in all circles, I had a first talk on the subject with **Prime Minister B. P. Koirala** and **Home Minister Surya Prasad Upadhyaya**. It was clear to me that emergency and survival relief aid was necessary, but that it wouldn't solve the problem in the long run. More important was that the refugees be integrated into the economic life of Nepal. Messrs. Koirala and Upadhyaya were fully at one with me on this issue. They assured me that Nepal would grant asylum to the refugees and asked me to set up a suitable programme.

This was difficult for me to do, since I had no background in dealing with Tibetans and did not even know their language. I knew only Tibetans from Nepal's northern valleys, from the salt caravans, and from the Sherpas, who are of Tibetan origin, with both religious and cultural bonds to Tibetan Lamaism. I knew and valued the craft products, such as carpets, that were increasingly being offered for sale by refugees in Kathmandu. I was impressed by the faithfully followed domestic pursuits of the Sherpas, testimony to a tradition of extraordinary artisanship. I was also impressed by the business acumen of the Sherpas and Manangis, both of Tibetan ethnicity.

Most of all, however, I was deeply impressed by the Tibetan culture, in which religion based on a philosophy of tolerance, non-violence, and respect for all living creatures is woven into the fabric of daily life with a harmony all of its own. This was true also of the Nepalese mountain peoples. I came to see in this harmony the source of what I was already calling the Himalayan people's "serenity of soul," and

4. The memorandum that got the carpet industry going in Nepal in 1960. On 8 January 1960 Toni Hagen submitted a memorandum to the government for the resettlement and integration of the Tibetan refugees. Carpet-weaving and carpet-knitting were an important part of the programme.

Toni Hagen

8 January 1960

Your Excellency,

Referring to the discussion we have had on 2nd January regarding the Tibetan Refugees in Nepal I should like to confirm my proposals as follows:

- 1) The Problem. Although it is (due to lack of communication and transport) difficult to assess the exact number of Tibetan Refugees in Nepal, it is estimated that between 20000 and 30000 might have crossed the border into Nepal. By reasons of their accustomed environment they are so far crowded in the northern valleys, and only a small portion has come down to Kathmandu. The scope of the problem might be illustrated by the fact that according to the informations of my Sherpas the Tibetan refugees outnumber the local Sherpa population in the Khumbu two to one. That means there must be about 4000 refugees in the Khumbu Valley alone. We might reasonably assume a similar severe situation in the other northern valleys, into which main trade routes lead from Tibet: Walungchung, Trisuli, Nubri, Thakkhola, Dolpo, Simikot. There is no need to mention that it is as well in the interest of H. M. Government of Nepal to do something about the refugees. Otherwise unrest and troubles will be inevitable and might thus create a very delicate situation for the country.
- 2) The proposed programme. An appropriate programme to solve the problems has: clearly two parts, namely
 - a) emergency relief projects in the northern valleys,
 - b) integration of the refugees into the economy of the country.

The emergency relief programme ought to be only a transitional measure until the integration into the economy becomes effective. It would include supply of food to the northern valleys and erecting of medical outposts in those areas. The construction of small landing strips and the use of STOL aircrafts is recommended, since otherwise the tremendous transport problems might render such operations prohibitively expensive or altogether impossible. Use of Tibetan Refugees for road construction might also be envisaged as an emergency programme. . But the main aim of any refugee programme ought to be the integration into the economy of the country. No charity or welfare programme should be carried out for extended periods, since this is no solution, and besides, in the long run very expensive. There are two possibilities for the integration:

- (a) resettlement for agriculture
- (b) vocational training, especially carpet weaving

For agricultural resettlement, by reasons of climate and general environments, altitudes above 2500 m should be envisaged.

My personal knowledge of the country from my geological survey indicates that first priority should be given to the areas west of the Uttar Ganga, reaching from Dhor Patan to Jumla and the Rara lake. The population pattern in this area is quite different from other areas, since the Nepali hill tribes, which otherwise have populated medium altitudes between the Tibetan races in the north and the Indo-Aryan races in the south, are missing in western Nepal. Consequently, the medium altitudes (between 2500 and 3000 meters) are rather thinly populated in western Nepal. And the Brahmins, living at higher altitudes there than anywhere in Nepal have not adapted to the high altitudes, not in agriculture nor in the habits and clothing. On the other hand, the highland of western Nepal is much less rugged than the Himalayas proper, and extended mountain pastures and pine forests can be found. The landscape reminds very much to that one in the Swiss Alps. Potatoes are grown and wheat and barley. Animal husbandry would also be feasible.

The area in question would also have the advantage, that it is separated by the main Himalayan range from Tibetan border which fact might be of importance from political standpoint.

In eastern Nepal the Solu area, which is populated by Sherpas, might be feasible for resettlement. (for example the mountain range of Chialso). However it has to be said, that in general, the medium altitudes in eastern Nepal are more densely populated than in western Nepal. But it would be simply impossible to transfer all the refugees from eastern Nepal to western Nepal.

To begin with, the following specific projects are suggested:

- a) food supply and medical outposts in the Khumbu and in the Thakkhola (with construction of landing strips)
- b) Road construction in the Kathmandu valley
- c) vocational training in Kathmandu, especially carpet weaving
- d) agricultural resettlement in Dhor Patan

If H.M. Government of Nepal would basically agree to such a programme, I would then try to interest Swiss organisations and find donors for such a project. I would be grateful to have a reply before I leave for Switzerland end of March.

Yours sincerely

Toni Hagen.

(Toni Hagen)

to H.E. Surya Prasad Upadhy
Honbl. Home Minister
H.M. Government of Nepal
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu

5. The highly commendable humanitarian attitude towards the Tibetan refugees displayed by King Mahendra and the government of Nepal under B.P. Koirala. With the historic document dated 21 February 1960 shown here, the Nepalese government agreed to the whole programme and offered the Tibetan refugees unconditional asylum. At the request of the government, the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva accepted sponsorship of the programme as well as the appointment of Toni Hagen as chief delegate and programme director. The snowball effect that the project gave rise to has produced more jobs than any other development project in Nepal, more than 200,000. Many poor Nepalese, more than ten times the number of Tibetan refugees, have benefited from the project. Today the approximately 60 million U.S. dollars in hard currency revenues earned from the carpet industry exceed those from tourism.



KATHMANDU,
NEPAL.

February 21, 1960.

Dear Mr. Hagen,

I write to thank you for your Memoir regarding the Tibetan Refugees, dated January 8, 1960 addressed to His Excellency the Home Minister.

His Majesty's Government have found your schemes quite interesting and helpful for the solution of the Refugee problem.

You are therefore advised to contact the concerned organizations there and explore the possibility of raising appreciable fund to finance the various projects outlined in your letter under reply.

Yours sincerely,

Secretary.

what the tourists, particularly trekkers, found so fascinating about them. My eight years of experience with them provided me the assurance that the integration of the calm, peaceful, and hard-working Tibetans into Nepalese culture would be a success.

The Nepalese Boat Was Not Full!

By 8 January 1960 I had already submitted *the outline of my programme* to the government; I reproduce it here in facsimile.

This document contained everything that would later be carried out, both as regards the relief aid in the northern valleys and the integration programme, particularly the part of it concerned with carpet-knitting.

On *20 February 1960* the government of Nepal gave its official approval to my programme.

In the above letter, *no restrictions are set to the number of refugees to be granted asylum*. This was not an oversight on the part of the government but done intentionally. Its sole concern was to have the local Nepalese population incorporated into the future programme in order to allow them also to share in ongoing developments and to prevent any jealousies and possible animosities from surfacing.

Indeed isolated rumours and even newspaper reports were already appearing about clashes with the local population. The cogs of Peking's propaganda machine were turning.

This courageous and magnanimous attitude on the part of the Nepalese government made a deep personal impression on me. I recalled, knowing it for the outrage it was, the infamous slogan "The boat is full," with which Switzerland justified sending back thousands of Jews to certain death in Hitler's Germany during the last world war.

In the meantime a number of foreign organizations and charities had offered aid to the government of Nepal for the Tibetan refugees—humanitarian aid exclusively, without any thought being given to integration. Even though the government desperately needed this aid, it turned aside all help from foreign aid organizations and insisted for political reasons that a neutral Swiss organization assume the task. For me, the **International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva** was the only acceptable organization of this sort. I explained the nature of the ICRC's activities to the government.

The government asked me to approach such authorities as could potentially provide financial backing during my upcoming vacation in Switzerland.

Adversaries Create a Stir

Discrimination of the Tibetan Refugees

To my great surprise, my integration plan met with the resistance of development aid workers (with the exception of the cheese producers) active in Kathmandu on behalf of the Schweizerische Hilfswerk für aussereuropäische Gebiete (*SHAG*, later *HELVETAS*). They claimed that the Tibetans were not suited for regular work; the latter had had no reason to flee, having been freed by the Chinese from slavery. My reference to the two reports of the respected International Commission of Jurists in 1959 and 1962 was shrugged off as disinformation.

At the time, all socialist countries tended to be glorified by certain ideologues of the development community as exemplars and "models for development" for the Third World.

The discrimination of the Tibetan refugees by Swiss development aid workers and later by Swiss development aid organizations would later impede the integration programme.

On behalf of the government, I held talks in Bern, during my vacation, with *federal authorities* (DftZ, Dienst für technische Zusammenarbeit; today the DEH, Direktion für Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und humanitäre Hilfe) and with the *Swiss Aid Service* (Schweizer Auslandhilfe). Contrary to my expectations, the reactions were completely negative. The *SHAG/HELVETAS* development aid workers in Kathmandu had been at work. Nevertheless, the Swiss Aid Service demanded that the *SHAG* team leader in Kathmandu formulate an official position vis-à-vis my integration proposals.

All this notwithstanding, following a visit I later paid to the *ICRC* in Geneva, the latter approved a credit of 40,000 francs for emergency aid.

The report that the SHAG team leader **Froesch** was requested to prepare (dated 1 May 1960) is based primarily on statements by **Peter Aufschnaiter**, who had lived in Tibet for seven years together with Heinrich Harrer, and contains, among other things, the following observations:

I can understand why the Tibetan monks fled from the Chinese, for they would have been rounded up by them to do road work. I do not understand, though, why those who are not monks have fled for, with the possible exception of the large landowners, nothing would have happened to them in Tibet. The workers and farmers are said to be, if anything, better off under the Chinese than previously under the monks. The percentage of farmers and workers among the refugees is extremely low, if not null. Those who have fled with the monks are generally large landowners, merchants, officials and, in the main, very poor people who had no means of support in Tibet. These people were doubtless completely led astray and encouraged to flee by the monks, and so brought low. Tibetan monks must not be compared with monks of a European monastic order.... Tibetan monks are recruited overwhelmingly from among charlatans.... Moreover, the territory [for resettlement] has, according to various government officials, not even been released.

Following this devastating judgment, the *ICRC itself became suspicious of my integration plans* and demanded that a review be undertaken in Kathmandu by the SHAG executive board member **Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann**.

The report in question, issued in July 1960, likewise contained a *completely negative* opinion of my integration plan, as the following citation shows:

The distribution of foodstuffs has run into insurmountable difficulties arising from the transport over long distances. Integration into the labour market in a country that is itself suffering from uncounted numbers of unemployed will be almost impossible. A further point to note is that a large number of refugees are lamas, monks, and landowners, who have never done physical labour in their life, since religion and custom keeps them from doing so.... In a joint discussion with the ICRC, in which Dr. Hagen and the author of this report (after her return) along with several representatives of the Year of the Refugee took part, the conclusion was reached that many sources of funds will become available once an acceptable modus operandi is worked out.

Commentary

The "acceptable modus operandi" had already been submitted to the government on 8 January 1960 and approved by the latter on 21 February 1960. In the Kägi report itself, however, my name is mentioned only in passing, even though at the time I was the official chief delegate of the ICRC for the integration programme.

The Kägi report abounds in distortions and untruths. The "review," for which two months were allotted, obviously did not clarify any questions but merely served as a sounding board for preconceived political opinions. The People's Republic of China at the time stood in high favour among ideologues of the development community as a "model for development."

An Ill-Advised and Dangerous Proposal by the ICRC

Towards the end of the two-month "review" in Kathmandu, and during my absence, a representative of the ICRC arrived there from Geneva. The SHAG executive board member Kägi and other Swiss active in the country prejudiced him against my integration programme. The ICRC representative proposed to the government that a national Red Cross be founded to administer the emergency aid to the Tibetan refugees. By this means he hoped to be able to extract the ICRC from my "impossible" integration programme.

Frau Kägi greeted his "energetic appeal to the Nepalese government to do something finally for the Tibetan refugees." This appeal showed little sign of a true understanding of the situation and was indicative instead of Helvetian arrogance. Its rationale was difficult to fathom, and it was totally ill-advised in view of the fact that impoverished and overpopulated Nepal had granted exile to the refugees in unlimited numbers.

A representative of the ICRC central office should have known, if anyone, how dangerous it is to task national Red Cross committees with relief efforts in politically sensitive situations. In most countries of the Third World, national Red Cross committees are a political arm of the government and not, as one might expect on the basis of Western Red Cross committees, independent. The very raison d'être of the ICRC arises out of this fact.

Fortunately the Nepalese government reacted promptly, insisting firstly on the integration plan and secondly on the delegation of responsibility for it to the ICRC.

"Lords of Poverty"

It is, of course, futile to speculate after the fact about the reasons for SHAG's anti-Tibetan stance. Apart from ideological reasons, SHAG may at the time have

been engaging in power politics. **Matzinger** writes about the "monopolistic role" that SHAG claimed for itself in matters of private development aid on page 167 of his dissertation, "The Beginnings of Swiss Development Aid 1948-1961." This stance had its roots in the founding of the Swiss Foundation for Technical Development Aid (today called *SWISSCONTACT*). Matzinger writes:

From the votes for the SHAG president it was seen that SHAG regarded the foundation as being in principle incompetent to carry out [projects].... The conflict in the end boiled down to the question of who had invented the "new" form of technical aid, the training workshops. SHAG based its claims on its "pioneer achievement" of training workshops in Kathmandu.

Matzinger states further, on page 168, that SHAG constantly insisted that it was the "older and more firmly established organization"; the "minutes of meetings at times give one the impression that what was being recorded was *the bartering in an Oriental bazar.*"

In Graham Hancock's book *Lords of Poverty* (1989), the functionaries of the large international development aid organizations are taken to task on the basis of numerous case studies. These latter had less to do with aid to the poor than with the advancement of power and personal careers by means of aid. The above-mentioned "bartering in an Oriental bazar" veritably cries out for comparison with the "lords of poverty."

A Successful Start in Spite of Switzerland

Unswayed by the intrigues against the integration programme, and at the behest of the government, I contacted Swiss federal authorities (at the time the Agency for Technical Cooperation, DftZ) and the Swiss Aid Service to seek financial contributions during my vacation back home in April 1960. The negative reaction of the Swiss in Nepal had obviously filtered back to Switzerland. Still, as a result of a subsequent visit to the *ICRC* in Geneva, the latter body extended credit in the amount of 40,000 francs for emergency aid.

The Swiss organizations having turned down the request for financial support of the integration programme, I went to Geneva in May 1960 to see **Ambassador August Lindt**, at the time the *UN high commissioner for refugees*. His reaction was swift and clear: "They must of course be helped." The UN, however, had declared the Tibetan question to be an "internal affair of the Chinese," and thus the Tibetans who fled were not officially recognized as refugees. For this reason Ambassador Lindt was unable at the time to divert UN aid funds to the programme. He hoped, however, to be able to mobilize sources that had offered him funds which had not yet been transferred to UN coffers. While we were still in the middle of discussing the refugee situation, Ambassador Lindt picked up the receiver of his telephone and got promises from the British Council of Churches (120,000 frs.), the Australian National Committee for World Refugee Year (160,000 frs.), and the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (300,000 frs.). These three contributions were transferred to the ICRC for use by the integration programme for Tibetans in Nepal.

Swiss hesitation to provide financial assistance (apart from the ICRC itself) would continue up to the summer of 1961.

By then I had succeeded, using personal connections, in mobilizing some additional 600,000 francs, 450,000 francs alone from *MISEREOR*/Indo-German Social Service, through the good offices of the latter's director, the Swiss **Jesuit**

father Felix Plattner. Further, the *Thyssen Foundation* committed itself to providing 70,000 francs, and the American *Tolstoi Foundation*, the *American Emergency Committee for Tibetan Refugees*, and other organizations added approximately 200,000 francs. Even the *Swiss Red Cross* joined the bandwagon with 100,000 francs, though this sum included funds for the foster parent programme already in operation. The following document, a letter of mine to the president of the Confederation, **F. T. Wahlen**, contains information on the financial contributions:

Kathmandu
29 July 1961

Dear Mr. President:

I herewith take the liberty of sending to you, enclosed, one photocopy each of an Indian and a Nepalese newspaper report.

Both reports are unfortunately accurate: the situation in the northern valleys of Nepal is desperate. This is confirmed in our latest surveys: in Khumbu 3,920 Tibetan refugees are starving (compared with a local Sherpa population of 2,200), and the corresponding figures in Thakkhola are 5,275 refugees (as against approximately 4,000 local inhabitants).

The consequence of this is that tensions are rising, and so too the political risks for Nepal. The situation is naturally exploited with a vengeance by the Communists. For example, they provide their local agents with abundant funds for use in buying up the already scanty food supplies in order to artificially magnify the effects of the famine, and thus the political unrest.

There is still another more significant aspect, however: in the final analysis, the Tibetans are waging their desperate battle for the free world. Their own country is probably lost to them for the present generation, and if we do not use the few remaining opportunities to help the remnants of the Tibetan people, then their magnificent culture is soon likely to decline.

You are aware, I am sure, that China has officially declared the Tibetan refugees, one and all, to be "war criminals." They do not fall under the UN mandate. The requests to extradite them, however, have been turned down by India and Nepal.

The refugee aid in Nepal is administered by the Refugee Committee, consisting of the defence minister, the secretaries of the foreign and home ministries, and myself. We are at complete liberty to act as we see fit in carrying out the programme. The task of the Refugee Committee has been defined by the defence minister as follows: "to give you broad moral support." We have *carte blanche*, for example, to fly our Red Cross aircraft "to any place within Nepalese territory at any time during daylight." This boundless

trust has upon occasion been voiced to me personally. But then I have been working for Switzerland's good name continuously now for the past ten years, particularly for its "positive neutrality," its exceptional status, and its humanitarian mission in the world.

It is for this reason that the International Committee of the Red Cross was the sole organization entrusted with aiding the refugees in Nepal. The refugee programme is sailing solely under the Swiss flag. All delegates, experts, and specialists are Swiss.

You can see what "positive neutrality" looks like, from the vantage point here, on the basis of the following list of financial contributions made to the International Committee of the Red Cross for the programme in Nepal:

Contributions to the International Committee of the Red Cross for
Refugee Aid in Nepal

	Contributors	SFr.
1	British Council of Churches	120,000.-
2	Australian National Committee for World Refugee Year	160,000.-
3	Swiss Red Cross (including the current foster parent programme)	100,000.-
4	American Red Cross	21,000.-
5	British Red Cross	3,000.-
6	Red Cross of Liechtenstein	2,000.-
7	Indo-German Social Service, Aachen	450,000.-
8	Thyssen Concern	70,000.-
9	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief	300,000.-
10	Nepalese Tibetan Refugee Committee (Father Moran)	16,000.-
11	Government of India	5,000.-
12	Indian Red Cross (medicines)	5,000.-

13	American Emergency Committee for Tibetan Refugees	90,000.-
14	Miscellaneous cash contributions (private sources)	10,000.-
	Total	1,352,000.-

Toni Hagen
Kathmandu

I returned to Nepal in May 1960 with assurances from Ambassador Lindt. The first matter of business was to stop the distribution of free food that had begun in Bodnath during my absence with the ICRC credit of 40,000 francs. Nothing is more harmful for development than such well-intentioned charities that require nothing from their beneficiaries. This action had the effect of a magnet on the Tibetan refugees and thus eventuated in their being concentrated in one of the most frequently visited tourist spots. The government wanted the refugees and beggars to be as minimally a part of the city scene as possible. For this reason it desired that a well-planned and orderly transfer be undertaken, step by step, from the overfilled high mountain valleys to such integration centres as Kathmandu, Chialsa, and Dhor Patan.

Green Light from Both Sides

I had finally won the complete trust of the government, which backed my integration programme without reserve. It wished to entrust management of it, in accordance with my proposal, to the ICRC. The government wanted *me to take on the job of heading up operations* and officially informed the ICRC of this through Nepal's later consul-general in Switzerland, **Otto Wenger, M.D.** Dr. Wenger (still later a member of the Swiss parliament) performed a very meritorious service in the 1960s as president of the Association for Homes for Tibetans, which resettled 1,000 Tibetans in Switzerland.

In the meantime, through the mediatory efforts of the Nepalese ambassador at the UN, **Rishikesh Shah**, and with the personal intervention of *UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld*, I had been deputed by the UN to the **ICRC**, thus retaining my UN salary. This gave me the necessary independence to direct the integration programme.

The *ICRC in Geneva* thereupon finally gave the *go-ahead for the programme* and appointed me to be its *chief delegate in Nepal*.

In order to provide as broad a base of support in the *government* as possible for the newly created programme, Prime Minister B. P. Koirala formed the *National Refugee Committee*, consisting of the defence minister, the secretaries of the foreign and home ministries, and myself. Colonel Khatri had previously been appointed secretary of the Foreign Ministry.

The Beginnings of the Training Centre in Jawalakhel in Patan 1960

Difficult Beginnings in a Tent Camp

In conceiving the integration programme, there were two firm principles I stood by: First, all able-bodied refugees had to work, and secondly, they would be remunerated for their work in cash. However, the weaving of cloth and carpets, the ultimate goal, required a fairly long initial phase.

Fortunately the first ICRC colleagues from Switzerland soon arrived, and they put their hand to the task with great devotion: **Dr. Jürg Bär** and **Regina Ruppacher**.

Spinning wool, the first step in the production of carpets, was a skill that practically everyone knew, or that could be learned by beginners within a short period. Since most of the wool had formerly been imported from Tibet (Nepalese wool served only the local needs of the mountain population), I instructed my **Sherpa Aila** to buy up all the wool obtainable on the market.

Tibetan refugees were hired and put to work spinning wool where the present-day Tibetan handicraft centre *in the Jawalakhel section of Patan* is located, right near our residence. Monetary remuneration worked like a magnet, but this time the effect was intentional, in contrast to the earlier distribution of free food in Bodnath. A *tent camp* sprung up. In some cases the refugees brought their own tents, and in others the Nepalese army provided them.

As soon as wool was available, the wives of Tibetan farmers and nomads began to *weave their traditional colourfully designed bands of wool*.

A number of small looms, on which the traditional naturally dyed 30-centimetre-wide woollen cloth was produced, were purchased on the local market. Production got going. Several Nepalese houses were rented to provide working space.

Through **Heidi Schulthess**, wife of the legendary Swiss cheese dairy pioneer Werner, an entire *family of professional carpet-knitters* named **Mingma** was found among the refugees. The family was immediately hired and began to weave carpets and also to train the handicraft to other Tibetans. In the **Mingma family**, we would later realize, we had come across a gold mine, with respect both to its professional and teaching capabilities. Heidi Schulthess was the first head of the carpet-knitting workshop.

After the opening of the ICRC office and the start, more particularly, of the *cash-for-work programme*, the *tent camp in Jawalakhel, having spontaneously come into being*, grew apace. In the beginning, however, things were unorganized; water and drainage facilities were lacking. The most urgent problem was to replace the tents by houses before the onset of the monsoon, which would begin in a few months, and to institute hygienic measures. The refugees' state of health upon arrival varied, but it quickly deteriorated as temperatures increased. Their earlier proverbial blithe spirits gave way increasingly to melancholy and apathy. The greatest need was for gainful employment and participation in consolidating the new enterprises.

A first *rudimentary statistical survey* of the refugees showed a *broad spectrum of all social levels of the population*: the former upper class, lamas of various grades, farmers, herdsmen, traders, nomads, casual labourers, tramps, and beggars. Earlier statements of certain development helpers that only the upper class, lamas, and other "work-shy elements" had fled were completely contradicted. We thus came to the same conclusion as the surveys made by the Indian Red Cross in its training centre at Dalhousie.

With my Swiss background, I was expecting certain social problems to arise from this chequered mix. Just imagine Swiss refugees of a wide variety of social origins having to live packed in with one another in a camp and being forced to earn their livelihood themselves by submitting to a planned regimen of labour, all for the same daily wages, no matter whether they were formerly bank directors, pastors, merchants, farmers, casual labourers, or tramps. As we shall see later, these apprehensions were not borne out at all.

Many of the refugees arrived in Nepal *without any resources* other than what they were able to carry on their own persons, particularly those who came far from the Nepalese border. Others, who had fled in time or lived near the border, managed to bring along their animals, household goods, jewellery, and carpets. The refugees' state of health was correspondingly diverse. There were emaciated and sick persons along with healthy ones. One and all, though, had brought along their prayer wheels, religious amulets, sacred statues, costly thangkas (canvas paintings), old manuscripts, and the like. Little by little, in their abject need, they began to sell these holy objects. Luckily there were not yet that many tourists in Nepal; otherwise a run on what is sacred to Tibetans could not have been prevented. I myself bought a few

such valuables, though I did so reluctantly, realizing how hard and saddening it was for their owners to part with them. In order to keep the sacred objects in the hands of the indigent refugees, I set up a kind of pawnshop. The refugees entrusted their objects to the ICRC for safekeeping, receiving cash credit for them at their market value rate. Later they could reclaim their valuables by repayment of the same amount. Happily, the pawnshop could be closed down after only a few months, when the Tibetans began receiving a regular income through the cash-for-work programme.

A further concern of mine was to show the Tibetans our esteem for their traditions by encouraging them to keep alive their songs and folk dances. This was such a popular activity that functions were held two to three times a week in the centre in Jawalakhel. Some refugees had brought their musical instruments, particularly drums. Foreigners also frequently took part in the dancing. Such occasions gave the refugees a large moral boost.

Temporary Cash-for-Work Programme in Road Construction, 1960

Given the lack of job openings, the number of people employed in the tent camp in Jawalakhel was rising too slowly, so I looked around for other temporary solutions. I made contact with the army, which was employed in *road construction* south of Kathmandu (Tika Bhairav Road). **Colonel Padma Bahadur Khatri** of the engineer corps was in charge of construction work. He immediately agreed, and several hundred Tibetans were temporarily taken on for pay as helpers. Despite reports by some Swiss to the contrary, Colonel Khatri praised the Tibetans as being very *energetic, reliable, and peaceful workers*.

My *close friendship* with Colonel Khatri dates from that time. Shortly afterwards he was promoted to general, then to the post of secretary in the Foreign Ministry, and later went on to an outstanding career as a highly regarded official of great integrity through all the various changes in government: the Nepalese ambassador in Washington and at the UN in New York, a minister in Nepal, and later called out of retirement to become a minister after three incumbents had been dismissed from the government on charges of smuggling Tibetan carpets out of India to Nepal and reexporting them as "genuine Tibetan carpets." My friendship with General Khatri lasted up to his death in 1989. I met him a few months before the end, and he was already then a man with the mark of death on him.

Building the Infrastructure with Full Refugee Participation, 1960

Houses Built on Our Own

I engaged a Nepalese construction foreman to instruct how to build houses in a purely Nepalese style with only Tibetan workers. They were to be the *simplest and least expensive type of Nepalese house*, that is, consisting of storey and roof frames of bamboo poles, walls of plaited bamboo and clay, and a roof of straw. At first a dozen such small houses were erected for families to live in. Open shelters were built for the weaving of traditional cloth and bands of material. The carpet-knitting workshop for the time being remained in rented Nepalese brick houses.

The Tibetan workers proved to be very deft and energetic. Under Nepalese guidance, they learned to set up the bamboo frames and scaffolding, dig earth, and make the earth of the right consistency by adding water. Engaged in such constructive pursuits, the refugees—including children, who also enjoyed in taking part—soon found their spirits rising. They began to sing songs while working.

When construction work was just getting under way, I hired a *Nepalese carpenter* to produce *window frames, doorframes, and doors* together with the Tibetans. The latter, particularly the Khampas, showed extreme aptitude for such work. After a few weeks of training, the Tibetans were able to do the necessary carpentry themselves. Now frames were fashioned from solid timber instead of bamboo—a change from the previous custom.

The *price per house* was around *120 francs*, 80% of which covered the Tibetans' wages.

Furniture and Frames for the Carpet-Knitting Workshop—Built on Our Own

The houses having been constructed, we shifted the focus of teaching and carpentry and joinery products to *simple furniture*, and in a very short period had trained some ten joiners. In time the Tibetan joiners would be making all the *furniture* for the ever expanding ICRC programme: such things as office furniture, furniture for the dispensary, for the schools, for the out stations, and so forth. We and other foreign aid workers also ordered furniture for our residences.

More particularly, however, the Tibetan joiners prepared by themselves all the *knitting looms* for the *carpet-knitting workshop*, on the pattern of a frame brought by our master weaver from Tibet. In due course, given the growing and diversified demand for carpets, all manner of frames were produced.

To Each His Own Interior Decoration

All employees happily moved into their houses before the beginning of the monsoon. The houses were completely empty, and interior decoration was left up entirely to the refugees. We were repeatedly astounded at how simply they set up house with sleeping facilities of clay or wood, and naturally the hearth as the centre of family life. Naturally, too, there was no house that didn't have a picture of the Dalai Lama. Soon they were also decorating their houses with flowers planted in old tin cans. Not a few people laid out flower gardens in front of their houses.

I had no problem whatsoever as far as internal operations were concerned. The Tibetans assumed personal responsibility and organized everything by themselves. They formed an association headed by a spokesman. Later the two lamas sent by the Dalai Lama assumed this function.

Ground Water Wells Built on Our Own

Top priority was given to the supply of clean drinking water and the construction of latrines, both coupled with a heightened awareness of the need for hygiene. I hired a Nepalese well digger. He set up a training centre exclusively for Tibetan workers and dug an approximately 12-metre-deep ground water well. The energetic Tibetans excavated the hole and laid the bricks within a very short time. An Indian hand pump obtainable on the local market was installed, and soon there was a flow of clean water. The well was consecrated by several lamas according to Tibetan ritual, with prayers and the burning of incense.

Clean water alone, though, is not enough if awareness has not also been heightened, something that has still hardly taken place in the Third World after 30 years of development aid. In an evaluation of rural drinking water projects in Cameroon (1989), I was forced to conclude that, after such projects had been running for a quarter of a century, not a few people still preferred to get their drinking water from a dirty puddle behind their houses than go the 200 metres to the nearest tap.

The ICRC Dispensary

At the same time as construction of the training centre was getting under way, we rented an uninhabited and somewhat decrepit villa belonging to a Rana (Colonel Nirp Jang Rana, the education minister in the transitional government 1951/52). In the first storey we set up the ICRC office, and on the ground floor the dispensary.

Nurse Lina Hofer performed a pioneer labour. According to our principle of participation and self-responsibility, we recruited *all auxiliary personnel from among*

Tibetan refugees and trained them by the learn-by-doing method. Registration of patients and bookkeeping were in the hands of Tibetans. Tibetan women served as *assistants* to Nurse Hofer. The elder wife of the maharaja of Mustang offered her services as a volunteer to help in the dispensary.

We obtained *medicines* from the Swiss pharmaceutical industry and its firms in India. Somehow we managed to keep from being flooded with sample doses from all over the world—"made in the Tower of Babel"—, each sufficient to treat 0.25 of a patient (the customary practice in humanitarian aid). The Swiss pharmaceutical firms sent us only the basic medicines we asked for, and in large quantities. Even the much needed vitamin preparations were made available to us in the amounts required.

The chief complaints were *rashes and infections, suppurating abscesses and furuncles, and intestinal diseases*. These were caused on the one hand by *malnutrition*, and on the other by *mosquito bites* that were later scratched with dirty fingernails and allowed to become *the breeding ground of infection*.

Another contributing factor was the heavy, dirty, sweat-encrusted, Tibetan *woollen clothing* that the refugees had brought with them from their plateau. Tibetans are unfamiliar with our system of washable clothes that are changed from time to time. Their clothes are worn day and night, summer and winter, until they fall as rags from the body.

The Tibetans also suffered horribly from *lice*. It was obvious in such a situation that therapeutic measures (delousing) would only be temporarily effective but not a permanent solution. Training in hygiene was thus one of Lina Hofer's important tasks, undertaken in cooperation with the rest of the personnel in the training centre.

A Tailor Shop of Our Own—New Refittings

Replacing the heavy Tibetan woollen clothing, which was inappropriate for the hot climate, with lighter attire was one important step in proper hygiene. As usual in such situations, well-meaning benefactors from Europe and the United States sent us a flood of clothes made of Western material and tailored to Western tastes, along with shoes to match.

There are few things geared to destroy the cultural identity of tradition-bound peoples than replacing customary clothing with Western brands. Thus we sold these donated items in Kathmandu—where there was no longer any hope of curbing westernization and deracination—and bought cheap Indian cotton materials from the proceeds.

We found several *tailors* among the refugees, acquired simple hand- and foot-operated sewing machines for them, and instructed them to make lightweight

Tibetan-style cotton clothes. Even the colours of the cloth were selected with care. The Tibetan tailors worked in their own dwellings; no special tailor workshop was set up.

The refitting that took place after successful delousing and bathing sessions turned into a large festival, particularly for the children.

Specific Health Problems and Risks for the Tibetans

In contrast to the Nepalese, the Tibetans had hardly ever come into contact with normal tropical disease vectors on their high plateau, with its healthy climate and clean water. Their bodies thus were unable to develop any *natural resistance*, not to mention immunity. Even among the Nepalese, incidentally, such resistance is far from being as great as is often held to be the case among people from the Third World. One may recall the old myth of the "Hunsa peoples, who know no disease." Given the huge rate of infant mortality and low life expectancy (24 years in Nepal in 1950), a *natural selection* occurred up to the introduction of modern medicine in the Third World: only the healthiest and strongest survived.

Neither natural selection nor the development of a certain degree of immunity was operative among the Tibetans on the high plateau. They were highly susceptible to all tropical infectious diseases, such as dysentery, to name but one. Children's diseases like mumps, which for us run their course without long-term complications, had very debilitating effects upon Tibetans, leading in some cases to death.

The worst of it, though, was that for many people we in the training centre in Jawalakhel had simply arrived too late with our hygienic and medicinal procedures. The recruiting of a qualified doctor by the ICRC also took some time, so that the man finally chosen, **Dr. George Hartmann**, came only after the monsoon in 1960. *We lost approximately 11% of all people in the centre to infectious diseases in the first monsoon (1960)*, particularly to gastro-intestinal ailments. There was a death nearly every day for three months. The daily lamentations and trumpet blasts issuing from the mourning processions on their way to nearby cremation sites along the river penetrated bones down to the marrow. At the beginning of each new day we cringed in fear of how many it would be this time. In one especially tragic case, the father and mother of a family of five small children died within an interval of only a few weeks.

The *dispensary*, under the devoted supervision of Nurse **Lina Hofer** of the Swiss Red Cross, was alone with its problems and had its hands full. It was often informed too late about the threatening condition of the sick. A very close cooperative venture was started up with the *American Shanti Bhavan mission hospital* and its medical superintendent, **Dr. Edgar Miller**. Lina Hofer was allowed to refer all seriously ill patients to the hospital free of charge.

Dangerous Meat Preservation Techniques

We were alerted to another source of danger by a *penetrating smell of decaying flesh* in the training centre. This source was soon pinpointed: *Tibetan supplies of meat*. On the plateau of their former homeland with its very dry air, Tibetans had been accustomed to storing meat for months after slaughter. Their preservation technique corresponded to those used for air-dried meat in the Alps (Bündner meat) or for Appenzeller *Mostbröcken*. The same treatment of meat in the hot, moist monsoon climate of Kathmandu, however, reduced their meat supplies to a state of decay within at most two or three days. We thus traced the reason for a number of serious cases of stomach disorder, none of which luckily had fatal consequences.

Dangerous Wool

Under these trying circumstances an additional health risk unexpectedly surfaced. My **Sherpa Aila** was responsible for the purchase of wool from Tibet—exactly where from and by what means, I hadn't managed to get out of him. In any case, the grapevine was working, and the functionaries of the state Sino-Tibetan Trading Corporation, a monopoly, were evidently not put off by the prospect of additional income. When the shipment of wool from Tibet was delivered to the training centre at Jawalakhel, several balls of wool drew attention because of their particularly large weight. Aila had the balls opened before paying, and large stones fell out. Part of the wool on the inside had totally decayed and was completely useless.

Some time later several mysterious deaths occurred, despite the fact that the sick had been admitted to Shanti Bhavan Hospital. There, during the post-mortem, the reason was discovered: *anthrax*. I immediately telegraphed to Geneva and asked for a shipment of the appropriate vaccine. The ICRC, however, rejected the idea, stating that anthrax was much too dangerous and that the training centre would have to be closed. I did no such thing, of course, and soon we received vaccine through the good offices of the UNDP representative in New Delhi, **James Keen**.

For our part, we took necessary prophylactic measures, disinfecting the wool upon arrival and having all Tibetans who worked with the wool disinfect their hands. After that we had no more fatal cases of anthrax.

Production Starts Up—Jawalakhel Becomes a Tourist Attraction

Training and production in the Jawalakhel centre was by now in full swing. A Swiss woman from the International Civil Service, **Elisabeth Neuenschwander**, whom I had immediately hired after getting to know her by chance in New Delhi, was adept at turning traditional semi-finished Tibetan products (woven woollen

material and bands of dyed wool) into blankets, tablecloths, chair coverings, bedspreads, satchels, handbags, jackets, and skirts—all with great fantasy and taste. She taught our tailors the tricks of the trade. The same tailor who had previously made cotton clothes for the Tibetan refugees henceforth produced products for sale.

A Gompa in Switzerland?

The ravages of the later Chinese Cultural Revolution in Tibet are well known: of the 7,000 original monasteries, more than 6,000 were completely destroyed. Many lamas were murdered, and the rest were put into concentration camps, where they underwent reindoctrination, with many of them dying as a result of the torture inflicted by the Chinese. The International Commission of Jurists spoke of attempted genocide against the people and their culture.

Western Tibetologists understandably seized the opportunity they now had, in pursuit of their research, to enter into unhampered dialogue with lamas who had fled.

Against this background, I had already in 1960 broached the idea of constructing a Tibetan monastery in Switzerland with members of the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC), particularly with the mountaineer Dr. **Hans Grimm** in Wädenswil.

The **Dalai Lama**, attuned to the needs of the hour, had properly instructed refugee lamas to exploit every opportunity and to accept any job allowing them to earn their own keep. Such lamas could no longer count on living in a monastic community supported by Tibetans.

Quite a few monastic communities succeeded in escaping unscathed from the Chinese. I was early on paid a visit by the **abbot** of the *famed monastery of Tashi Khyil* (Amdo), the largest monastic university of Tibet, containing numerous faculties. One of the latter was devoted to the study of *Tibetan medicine*. The abbot asked me for support for his approximately dozen monks. He did not want alms, however. They had been given a good offer from a Nepalese to rent a house with a small garden on the Sheopuri chain of hills north of Kathmandu. He believed that they could earn a modest living themselves by planting maize and other crops, especially medicinal herbs. He was very happy when I paid him the first year's rent of a few hundred Nepalese rupees.

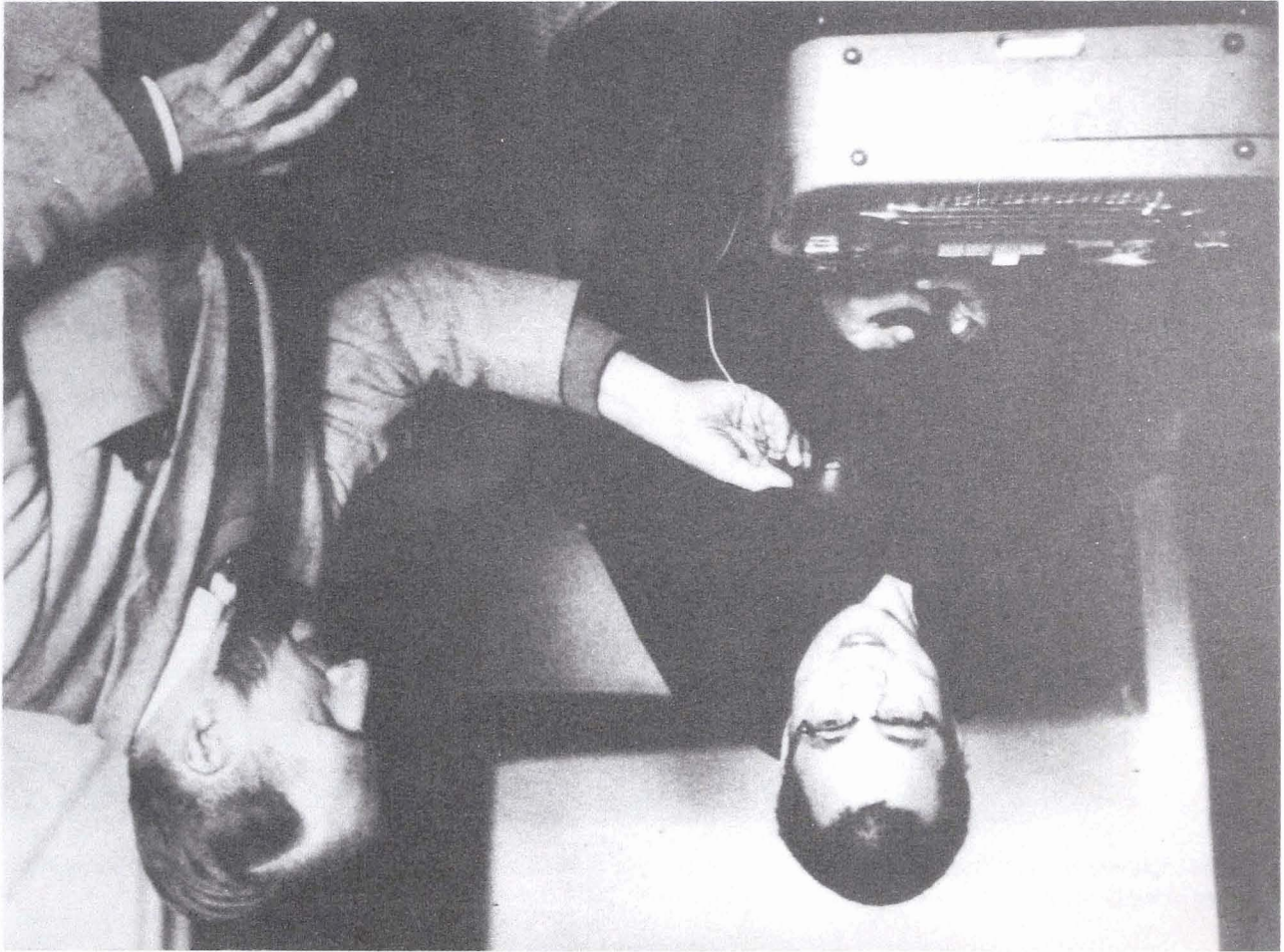
This community of monks had just settled down in their new location when the renowned **Tibetologist David Snellgrove** arrived on one of his regular visits. He was the best of informants, as during that period he was travelling through the northern high lying valleys of Nepal. One of his main accomplishments was having given the lie to rumours about clashes between Nepalese and the Tibetan refugees. He confided to me that he wanted to take the abbot, one of Tibet's leading scholars, along with him to the University of London to help in research work. I tried to dissuade him, saying that the existence of the community of monks would be threatened. I requested that, if he went ahead with his plans, he should take the whole community with him to England. For financial reasons, however, he could obviously not do that.

This strengthened my resolve to turn the idea of building a *gompa* in Switzerland into reality.



6. The beginnings of the Nepalese carpet industry, in Jawalakhel in 1960. The Tibetan master weaver Mingma with his family in the first rented Nepalese-style house.

7. Toni Hagen visiting the Dalai Lama in his Indian exile in Dharamsala, October 1960. The purpose of the visit was to inform the Dalai Lama of the extremely generous and humanitarian attitude of the government of Nepal towards the Tibetan refugees in Nepal. Toni Hagen also asked the Dalai Lama to address the refugees in Nepal and to urge them under all circumstances to obey the government and not to cause any trouble. The picture shows the taping of the Dalai Lama's message. The tape was later flown by helicopter to the refugee camps in the northern valleys and played to the refugees. Unfortunately the Khampas in the Mustang area did not heed the Dalai Lama's words. Toni Hagen repeatedly warned the Khampas, in vain, not to embarrass the government of Nepal and thereby jeopardize the whole relief operation.



8. The report of David Snellgrove on the situation of the Tibetan Refugees in the northern part of Nepal, 1960.

REPORT BY D. SNELLGROVE

In Pokhara there are a large number of Tibetans, mainly Khambas, and said to be 500. I saw several large camps, where they just seem to stay. It is said that they are in an aggressive mood, threatening to find food for themselves, if the 'government' does not assist them. They are certainly secretive, and would only tell me that they were on pilgrimage, which is rather absurd in the present circumstances. On our 7 days journey between Pokhara and Tukucha -

(a) We met one or two small parties of Tibetans coming down, who explained quite frankly that food was so expensive in the north, that they were hoping for cheaper supplies in Pokhara or elsewhere. There refugees were quite different in their attitude from the larger parties which have been passing up from Pokhara. We helped them with money out of the funds which you gave us.

(b) We caught up with small parties of stragglers, who belonged to the larger parties, of which we have heard so much (but never seen except in Pokhara, for clearly they would be travelling ahead of us at least at the same speed as ourselves). These stragglers were suffering from dysentery or neglected wounds. There would be one sick man with two, three or four companions, who were staying with him. We assisted them out of our own medical supplies and with a little of your money, but we soon realized that this money was of little use to them. We were twice approached by Tibetans (Khambas), who begged us to sell them food and waved five rupee notes at us. The reasons for their difficulties appear below.

(c) We heard a great deal from the Nepalese (Magar and Gurung) villagers of the large parties of Khambas, who had passed through, demanding food, and terrorizing the local inhabitants. Two days before we arrived in Ulleri for example there had been a violent scrap between the villagers and a 'hundred' Khambas. They had asked for

food, and when refused, had broken into the houses trying to steal it. I asked how many people had been hurt and was told that one man had been hit with a stone! So how much can one believe of these stories of fierce Khambas who attack harmless villagers with sticks and swords? There are local scraps and doubtless cases of theft, but my sympathy is with these hunted desperate Tibetans. They cannot speak to the villagers. It is certain that they are regarded with hostility (not surprising in view of all the stories against them), and they are probably cheated, for the shop-keepers all along the route charge prices as high as they dare.

In Tukucha itself we visited two lamas of repute living peaceably and penuriously. We gave Rs.100 to an old Sa-kya-pa lama of 78 years and his entourage of 14. (This evoked of course local gossip about our intentions, for nothing can be done discreetly in this part of the world.

Thus Tibetans in these areas fall generally into two categories:

1. those who have settled down quietly making the best of present circumstances.
2. those who wander forelornly up (and to a less extent down) looking for better conditions.

As for reports of armed (with what except knives and sticks?) bands on their way up to fight the Chinese, I have no first hand information and myself find only suspicious the secretiveness of the parties in Pokhara. One can really believe nothing one hears. We were told for example that no Tibetan can stay longer than 3 days in Tukucha. Not only is there no sign of any enforcement of such an enactment, but Tibetans mix in so easily with Nepalese Tibetans (bhotias if you will), that no problem is felt to exist with the few who have taken up home in these parts. In this village of Sangdak everyone speaks Tibetan anyway.

*My First Visit to the Dalai Lama
in Dharamsala, October 1960*

Discussion of the Situation with the Dalai Lama—Point by Point

Given the surge of rumours about clashes between Tibetans and Nepalese, the refugees' resulting sense of insecurity, and—not least—the delicate political situation arising from the dangerous concentration of Tibetans in the northern valleys, there was an urgent need to discuss the situation with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala and to seek his advice.

All the rumours of disturbances had been laid to rest by the internationally renowned Tibetologist **David Snellgrove**. Uncertainty caused by Chinese propaganda nevertheless remained. The following points needed to be discussed with the Dalai Lama:

1. The Dalai Lama should be urged to name a representative in Kathmandu as a spokesman for the Tibetan refugees and as an adviser to the integration programme.
2. I planned to record on tape an address by the Dalai Lama to the refugees in Nepal. He would be asked to stress the generous hospitality that Nepal had extended to the refugees: the latter had been effectively supported, and the government of Nepal had offered them a new homeland; they should show patience when things did not immediately work out; the laws and regulations of the host country should under all circumstances be respected and obeyed.
3. I would ask the Dalai Lama to send two suitable high lamas to the carpet centre in Jawalakhel in order to minister to the religious and cultural needs of the growing Tibetan community.

4. On the basis of what had happened to the monastic community of the former monastery of Tashi Khyil, I would ask the Dalai Lama his opinion about the creation of a *gompa* in Switzerland.
5. I was told that Tibetan refugees had, on their own initiative, opened a training centre to teach carpet-knitting skills in Dalhousie, a former summer residence of the English in the foothills of the Himalaya. I expected to gain important insights for the programme in Nepal from an inspection tour of it.

Thus I went to Dharamsala in October 1960. My impressions are presented in the following report I wrote at the time (an article from the journal of the Swiss Red Cross of December 1960 titled "Tibetan Refugees at the Foot of the Himalaya: Excerpts from a Report of a Delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Toni Hagen").

Instructive Visit to the Refugee Centre in Dalhousie

On 25 October 1960, having come from New Delhi on the night express, I arrived in the Indian town of Pathankot at the foot of the Himalaya not far from the border with Kashmir; the secretary and the chauffeur of the Dalai Lama were waiting for me there. We drove in a new jeep past various military checkpoints to the former English summer residence Dalhousie, where the *Indian Red Cross* had set up a centre for weaving, knitting and carpet production staffed by Tibetan refugees. The camp's director, a high lama, received me with the hearty affection of an old friend. Spirits were buoyant in the weaving centre, where approximately sixty Tibetan refugees are employed in making carpets. They *themselves produced the primitive looms*.

The Indian superintendent of the camp talked enthusiastically about these refugees: they are the best people one can imagine—energetic, loyal, honest, and extremely cheerful. The whole operation got started only six months ago with the help of three specialists. The plan was to take the carpets to Delhi for sale, but up to now they have all been purchased in the centre itself by visitors. In a *shoemakers' workshop*, around fifty refugees produce Western-style shoes for *their own and other refugee camps*. Even though only a few trained shoemakers were present in the beginning, the quality of the shoes is widely praised. These *weavers and shoemakers were formerly lamas, officials, traders, farmers, yak herdsman, or one of any number of other callings*. Now they sit together peacefully, work energetically, and have managed to preserve their high spirits in these unfamiliar surroundings.

The camp also has a *tailor shop*. Furthermore, some Tibetans discovered growing nearby the plant species used in Tibet for making paper. They have now started to *manufacture Tibetan handmade paper*; there is a great demand for it in Delhi in the

form of greeting cards and the like. Primitive *soap boilers* produce soap for camp consumption. The *refugees themselves* see to *camp upkeep, administration, and bookkeeping*. Within a short time this operation will be self-sustaining.

At 17:00 the clang of a cowbell brought from Tibet signalled the end of work. As things were being tied up, a kind of yodel arose, which the Tibetans used to urge on their yak herds in their former homeland, and I thought sadly of the erstwhile unrestricted life on the high plains they have now lost. The intensive tour of this well-managed camp provided useful stimulation for the resettlement programme in Nepal.

The Trip to Dharamsala to See the Dalai Lama

Thanks to a special pass from the Indian military authorities, the chauffeur of the Dalai Lama was able to drive me the six hours it took at night to go from Dalhousie down to the Dehra Dun valley and up to Dharamsala, the residence in exile of the Dalai Lama. Some of the villages that appeared from out of the dark recalled similar ones in Switzerland; in between we were engulfed in virgin forest. Finally, high above, the first lights shone from Dharamsala, a town laid out lengthwise and containing English country houses nestled against the slopes in thin patches of forest. We stopped in front of an imposing government rest house, where officials of the Dalai Lama received me and where I spent the remainder of the night.

It was only the next day—a magnificent morning—that I realized how lovely the surroundings of Dharamsala are. It is situated approximately a thousand metres above sea level directly overlooking the Gangetic plain. Lower Dharamsala consists of a small bazar. From there a fine asphalted road winds in steep serpentine curves uphill through stands of pine, rhododendron, and cedar. At the very top, on the mountain crest, the white Tibetan prayer flags flutter over a group of buildings; there is where the Dalai Lama lives. The military dominates the street scene; military vehicles are everywhere, either parked or cruising around. Dharamsala seems to be one big army camp.

On the way up we all of a sudden found ourselves confronted by a group of Tibetan children, boys and girls from six to ten years of age. How cheerful, smart, and friendly they looked! In talking with them, I indeed found them to be captivating. The small group was going to the village school further below, having been sent from the nursery centre that shelters them. Their parents were doing road work in the Kulu valley in the Himalaya.

In a Children's Tibetan Refugee Camp

One of the nursery centres has been set up in old military barracks and English summer cottages; it houses 190 children who range in age from two to ten years. Some of the children are orphans, and others have been placed there by their parents, who live in work camps. The centre is *very primitively* furnished but is *sparklingly clean*. It is *managed* by a *Tibetan*, an *English man* and a *French woman* from the *International Volunteer Service* have come to help him. They are delighted with the children who, despite trying conditions, are easily controllable and amazingly cheerful. They are the best children they have ever looked after, they say glowingly. Unfortunately there is absolutely no *doctoral care*, no *nurses*, and often no *medicine*. The Red Cross could perform a beneficial service here, and this should also be a concern of Switzerland. On my return trip I talked about this to the Swiss ambassador in New Delhi, **Alfred Cuttat**. He approached Prime Minister **Nehru** personally, and the latter gave the go-ahead for a medical mission of the Swiss Red Cross in Dharamsala.

With the Dalai Lama

A picturesque stone path leads through a thin forest up to the residence of the Dalai Lama; the residence itself stands out boldly against a steep cliff with a magnificent view onto the plain of the Ganges, and the rock wall shoots up almost vertically directly behind. We pass the final military checkpoint a short distance before reaching the forecourt. Everywhere there are flowers; the buildings and gardens are very well kept up. Two high lamas receive me in the forecourt. Every time I meet Tibetans for the first time, it seems as if I am in the presence of long-time friends. I am led into a reception room; lacquered furniture, thick Tibetan carpets. In one corner there is a small altar with the Buddha; before it a votive lamp is burning. Hardly have I taken a seat when I am asked in to see the Dalai Lama. I am led outside and around through a second reception room. All of a sudden I am standing in front of the Dalai Lama... I was not at all prepared for this. I ponder uncertainly whether I should greet him with the Indian greeting, but he is already approaching me and stretching out his hand. He is wearing the red robes of a monk. Having greeted me, he asks me to take a seat. A few seconds pass in silence; I hesitate to speak the first words. Now he begins—through his interpreter Sonam—to greet me and to thank me for coming. Other high lamas are in the room; one is transcribing our conversation. During the conversation and the discussion of my list of points, the Dalai Lama sits in a relaxed manner in an armchair, his head slightly tilted forward. We reach agreement on all points. Then I ask him to say something to his fellow countrymen on tape. After the recording I have the text translated. In

it the refugees in Nepal are urged to follow all Nepalese laws and also the rules of the ICRC; further, not to stir up unrest with Nepalese but rather practise patience if aid is not quick in coming. He assures them that everyone will be helped.

The Dalai Lama on the Idea of the Gompa

He is very enthusiastic about the idea of a *gompa* in Switzerland. He assures me that he wants to carefully select the lamas himself, namely ones who not only know Tibetan culture thoroughly but are also able to transmit it. Such a meeting place between the West and East would fulfil one of his most cherished desires. It would also be worthwhile to create a Tibetan atmosphere around the *gompa* in the foreign country by, for instance, settling several Tibetan families nearby, particularly people with manual skills. Those versed in applied arts—carpet-knitters, for example—would also contribute towards ensuring a typical Tibetan atmosphere... The Dalai Lama weighs his words carefully before he speaks. Now and then a smile passes over his face; one could describe his expression as one of earnest exaltation. His narrow, sensitive hands accompany his speech. Once in a while he lowers his gaze questioningly to my face. He brings up the matter of stipendiaries. In my opinion, I remark, they will not be able for the present—I cannot bring it upon myself to say "ever"—to return to Tibet. He sees my hesitation and says very decisively that one should not lose faith in the truth and in the development of mankind. It would indeed be wrong to set the narrow limits of a single human generation. Tibet is probably lost for our generation, but the task at hand is to save as much of the culture as possible for later generations. Today there is hardly one culture left that can save itself by shutting itself off from outside contact. On the contrary, it's important that even old cultures keep up with progress to a certain extent. The Tibetan people can survive only if it trains modern specialists and technicians. To help it to do so is the whole idea of having stipendiaries in technical schools and universities in the West. No religious training is necessary abroad, given that Tibetans probably enjoy the highest level of such training of any culture in the world. What they lack is modern technical training.

One compelling topic is the future of the Tibetans. The Dalai Lama is of the firm opinion that the Tibetan people is destined to be strewn throughout the whole of the non-Communist world and to create everywhere small islands of Tibetan culture in order to save as much of its foundations for a time that is more favourable to cultures. A large number of those who pass on the culture—all those left behind in Tibet—were tragically being lost. *It is the fate of those remaining to enter into a vital relationship with the world. Gompas will serve this purpose better than individual lamas dispersed here and there.*

Following a brief cultural and philosophical tour d'horizon, he says, "I see the finger of destiny and the current drift of events pointing to Tibetans being dispersed over all the earth."

Then, returning to the idea of a *gompa in Switzerland*, he notes buoyantly, "I have always dreamed of a meeting place between East and West, and I would be very grateful to the Swiss people if they gave substance to it by building a *gompa*."

I put a final question to the Dalai Lama in this connection: How would he react if one of his lamas should convert to Christianity and be baptized, as a result of contacts with the monastery of Einsiedeln, for example? The Dalai Lama smiled and said that this would not affect him at all. Buddhism is not a dogma but a way—one among others—to find the truth. If some of his monks, having intensively studied Christian philosophy and teachings, should come to the conviction that Christianity was nearer to the truth than Buddhism, or that the Christian way was a better way of finding the truth, he saw no reason not to convert officially to Christianity. He notes that one of his chief secretaries is a baptized Catholic—this to add force to his words.

Last Scenes and the Trip Home to Kathmandu

After our talk the Dalai Lama invites me to dine with him. We go into the adjoining room. There there is a large table, as in a diplomatic mission—no pictures of the Buddha or temple furnishings—, an utterly simple room with a single picture in black and gold. I sit to the right of my congenial host. A servant brings the food: mixed vegetables, beans, curried tomatoes, a large bowl of salad. I motion to the servant to serve the Dalai Lama first, but the latter laughs and waves off the idea. After the meal we stroll up and down the lovely terrace that provides a distant view of the Gangetic plain and talk about the children's camps, the absence of doctors, and the lack of nurses, and always return to the education of the younger generation, a concern close to his heart. Then it is time to leave him.

Overcome by the deep impression that the Dalai Lama has made on me, I begin the jeep ride to Dehra Dun and then the trip by night train to Delhi. The flight to Kathmandu the next morning is, as always, a moving experience. Soon the Himalaya appears: first Nanda Devi in India, in whose foothills the Dalai Lama lives out his exile, then, one after the other, Api, Saipal, Khanjiroba, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna, and Manaslu. And far beyond, the Tibetan plateau; I am overcome by sadness in thinking of the Tibetans and their lost homeland. How familiar, though, are all these peaks! I feel as if I was flying to my own homeland.

Back to Reality in Kathmandu

China Demands the Extradition of the Tibetan Refugees

Harsh reality was quick to catch up with me after the dreamlike days in Dharamsala. In November 1960 a campaign against the Tibetan refugees got under way in Nepalese newspapers sympathetic to China. Jealousy was stirred up among the people of Nepal. As previously noted, these reports were disproved by the Tibetologist David Snellgrove, who had been travelling through the areas in question.

More inflammable were reports of a *concentration of militant Khampas in the Mustang region*. The latter carried out regular armed incursions into Tibet and harassed the Chinese occupational forces with their sudden attacks.

The leaders of the Khampas, Wangdi and Teshi, visited me in Kathmandu, and I cautioned them in forceful terms against staging armed attacks from Nepalese territory; he might put the entire aid programme at risk. Despite their request for humanitarian aid, I was forced to deny it to them as long as their Khampas were armed. I had the tape of the Dalai Lama's admonishings played for them. These appeared to make a great impression, but later Wangdi unfortunately failed to heed them. Their violent craving for freedom made some of the Khampas blind to all warnings.

Under these conditions it was only a matter of time before the wielders of power in Peking began to be heard from. Indeed General Khatri was soon informing me of a *strong protest launched by the government in Peking against the settlement of Tibetans in Nepal*. In its protest, Peking gave the Nepalese government to understand that there were no "Tibetan refugees." By resolution of the UN General Assembly, the Tibetan question was made an internal matter for the Chinese to resolve, and accordingly the so-called Tibetan refugees were "Chinese bandits and war criminals"

who, by international law, should be extradited to China for reindoctrination in order to make "useful members of human society" out of them.

General Khatri put my worries to rest, assuring me in the name of the government that no Tibetan would be deported.

Panic among the Refugees

The refugees in the training centre in Jawalakhel repeatedly called attention to the fact that there were traitors working for the Chinese among them. Some were even secretly pointed out to me. They were very easy to distinguish from the others by reason of their deviant behaviour. Their task, however, obviously did not consist in spying but simply in creating unrest and uncertainty. They even threatened openly that the Chinese would invade Nepal and would then settle accounts with the refugees.

This had the intended effect: One morning dozens of refugees did *not show up for work* in the Jawalakhel training centre. They had fled overnight with bag and baggage to India, seeking security from the Chinese. The entire carpet-knitting programme was in danger. After several weeks, though, they returned to us in Kathmandu, having been through hell: in India, the able-bodied adults had been sent to the Kulu valley for road construction; the children had received food from their parents at the construction sites, but there was no medical care and no schools, and the people were entirely dependent upon themselves. They had rounded up their children as best they could and put them into children's camps in and around Dharamsala. The parents died like flies during the road work in the hot Kulu valley, a place that acquired sinister connotations for Tibetans.

Tibetans for Switzerland?

The danger of a Chinese invasion was small, even if in 1961 China actually did temporarily invade the North-East Frontier Provinces of India, inflicting a humiliating military defeat upon the latter. Nevertheless, I again thought about the idea of resettling Tibetans in Switzerland, having discussed it there with mountain climbing friends as early as the spring of 1960.

It was due to these incidents and the worries I had about the Tibetans that the idea of resettling Tibetans in Switzerland had occurred to me. Switzerland at the time was suffering from an acute shortage of labour and had 600,000 foreign workers (nowadays called "guest workers"), and I thought that daily contact with cheerful foreigners and with a foreign culture could only be of benefit to the Swiss. I had visions of the resettlement areas being depopulated mountain valleys, where Tibetans would find conditions similar to those in their lost homeland. This

supposition later proved to be totally off the mark: the Tibetans desired above all to be employed in small-scale handicraft and industrial workshops and did not want to live in the isolation of the mountain valleys.

In thinking about the resettlement of Tibetans in Switzerland, I recalled the ideas expressed by the Dalai Lama in connection with my proposal, made several weeks earlier during my visit in Dharamsala, of erecting a *gompa* in Switzerland. He had also explicitly stated his desire to have a community of lay Tibetans resettled around the *gompa* in order to create a Tibetan atmosphere. Further, the Dalai Lama had stated his desire during the conversation that young Tibetans undergo technical, professional, and administrative training in Switzerland. A settlement of several thousand Tibetans there would be a suitable precondition for this. Now it was time to get down to talks.

I thrashed over the idea with my friend General Khatri, the secretary in the Foreign Ministry. He welcomed my proposal as a means of easing the burden on Nepal and said that his government would support the plan and complete as quickly and as unbureaucratically as possible the formalities necessary for the refugees' departure.

I naturally also sought out the opinion of the Dalai Lama without delay. He came back with a positive answer.

The Alarming Situation in the Northern High Valleys

Large Concentrations of Refugees

By the end of November 1960 we knew which were the refugees' main escape routes from Tibet to Nepal. Particularly large numbers converged along the earlier main trade routes in *Thakkhola* and in *Khumbu*. Refugees had collected, however, in all the other high-lying valleys accessible by pass crossings from Tibet, such as Simikot in the far west, Dolpo, the Buri Gandaki valley, the Trisuli valley, the Arun valley, and in Walungchung in the far east.

At the beginning of December one could read, under headlines in the Nepalese newspapers, that a sheep could be purchased in Khumbu for two rupees, at the time about 1.30 Swiss francs. Khumbu is the homeland of the Sherpas. It lies at the foot of Mt. Everest. Like all the other northern valleys of Nepal, Khumbu had for some time now been overflowing with refugees. The Sherpa population in Khumbu numbered 2,200, and according to the above-mentioned newspaper reports some 6,000 refugees had found their way there. They had made the trek over Nangpa La (5,741m), which was heavily used for trading. Many of the Tibetans had recently left their former homeland with large herds of yaks and sheep. In Kathmandu this news was received at first with incredulity, but Sir Edmund Hillary, who had a base camp in Khumbu for his "Yeti expedition," brought me confirmation. During the winter period no grass whatsoever grows in the Khumbu valley above 3,600 metres, in what is sterile enough soil as it is. The refugees thus slaughtered their precious animals by the hundreds in order to save at least a portion of the meat. Nevertheless, according to Hillary, countless carcasses of animals that had starved to death before they could be slaughtered were lying along the route from Thami to Namche Bazar.

Airplanes Requested

The situation was so alarming that immediate aid measures were called for. What to do, though? The trek from Kathmandu to Khumbu took 16 days. I calculated the transport costs for 600 kilogrammes from Kathmandu to Khumbu: 20 porters needed 16 days and cost 1,920 rupees, one Pilatus Porter needed 60 minutes and cost 840 rupees.

It was clear that we would have to have two Pilatus Porters in order to cover the refugees' short-term supply needs in the high-lying valleys. Landing strips would also have to be constructed. From my earlier expeditions I had a fair idea of where suitable terrain existed in Khumbu and in Thakkhola. The valley of Dhor Patan with its large alluvial plain would, by its very nature, present no problems.

An immediate reconnaissance flight by helicopter thus appeared to be a matter of urgency. An American helicopter had already been in Nepal for some time to transport material needed for setting up a comprehensive telecommunications system. As always in such situations, the Americans proved to be very helpful, and thus we quickly agreed that, with no thought to cost, I should fly to Khumbu in the helicopter, which had a special motor for high-altitude flights, to check out the situation there personally and to take whatever measures were necessary. USAID put the helicopter at our disposal free of charge for all later flights too, as a contribution to refugee aid.

There follows below an abbreviated version of the account of my helicopter flight, as it appeared in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.

"THE PLIGHT OF REFUGEES NEAR EVEREST"

(Article by the Author That Appeared in the NZZ No. 664 of 24 February 1961)

Preparations for the Helicopter Flight to Khumbu

It is the first time that a helicopter is flying to the Himalaya and that an aircraft is landing at the foot of Everest. There are a host of technical problems. For example, the helicopter's range is not sufficient to allow it to fly from Kathmandu to Everest without a stop in between. One week in advance, therefore, I need to send six of my tried and true porters to *Jiri* with eleven cans containing twenty litres of fuel each. There, at the *experimental farm* of the Swiss **Gian Monsch**, we can expect to find a secure base of support. Further, since the Kathmandu Valley is regularly fogged in in the morning, we have decided to fly to *Jiri* the evening before and to attempt the remaining leg of the journey early the next day. It is only the weather that causes us some concern. My experience has been that it always rains in Kathmandu on New Year's Day, signalling the beginning of the winter monsoon and

the onset of the cold season in the Himalaya. Another question mark is the north-west storm-force winds that now and then, when the skies are clear, sweep over the Himalaya southward through its valleys. A small aircraft that gets caught in such winds has no chance to make any headway. However, such winds can be detected from afar on the basis of snow clouds swept from the high peaks.

The Flight over Memory-Filled Sites

Having carefully checked all weather indications, we decide, despite some cloudiness, to fly to Jiri in the afternoon of 29 December 1960. Excited and happy, I squeeze into the helicopter's lone passenger seat. For the first time in my life I experience the feeling of complete weightlessness during the gentle vertical take-off. Then the craft tips slightly forward, and soon the landing pad, which is located in the middle of the parliamentary palace complex, is disappearing behind us along with the waving crowd. The view from the cabin is magnificent. The Plexiglas extends frontally down to our feet, so that the perpendicular line of sight is almost completely unobstructed. We enjoy a novel view of the beautiful old Newar cities Thimi and Badgaon from a low altitude. Their enclosed layout recalls the town of Stein on the Rhein seen from Hohenklingen Castle. A little later, with a few metres to spare, we fly over the crest of Mahadeo Pokhara, where I had camped with my family several years before. The pilot, **Niels Grimskog**, a Swede, is flying intentionally low, in order to take advantage of the anabatic winds on the western slopes of each consecutive valley. I can feel in my stomach how quickly we are lifted up along the long slope of the mountain without the 260-horsepower motor having to work any harder. We curve elegantly over the crest and head for the next mountain chain, where the same tactics are applied again. Thus we gain the necessary altitude in steps. The pilot has chosen this flight pattern not only for the fun of it but also to conserve fuel and to extend our range. The entire region is full of memories for me: down below along the Sun Kosi River, still hidden in blue shadows, lies Dolalghat, where in 1952 my tent, having been insufficiently secured in the sands of the riverbank, blew away from on top of me during a storm; to the left, the heights of *Kharidhunga* with its deposits of soapstone (*khari* = soap, *dhunga* = stone) and its meagre traces of iron ore, which once set the Nepalese to dreaming about rich mineral treasures—dreams that quickly dissipated. Sailing brings back memories of wonderful crest trails. From the air, the mountain ridges with their thin stands of tall fir in the middle of alpine pastures are something out of *Heidi*. For me, though, that lovely region is associated with memories of a wretched case of dysentery...

Stopover in Jiri at Gian Monsch's

The first sign of pioneering activities to appear in the valley is the retaining wall built by Gian Monsch. This native Bündner christened it the "Chinese Wall." In laying out a landing strip for a Pilatus Porter aircraft atop a bold mountain ridge, he was forced, it seems, to erect the largest retaining wall Nepal has ever seen; he did not wish to divert his valuable land in the valley to other purposes. We make our way leisurely, a few metres off the ground, down the landing strip, which is nearing completion, and I am able to convince myself that it is more than sufficiently long and wide for a Pilatus Porter. It comes as a surprise in this mountain valley to be suddenly confronted with the large experimental station that Gian Monsch has set up. Numerous large and solid edifices fashioned from neatly cut rubble are picturesquely grouped about one another down in the valley: stables, silos, haylofts, utility buildings. The entire floor of the valley, once useless swampland, has been drained; dense grass and newly introduced species of fodder plants now grow there.

We dart down with frightening speed, straight towards the farm, pulling up only a few metres above the ground and setting down gently right next to the main building. Gian Monsch's crossbred buffaloes—magnificent animals—disperse. A crowd moves up from all sides. The large Tibetan watchdog is also quickly at our side. Three blond children, the very picture of health, rush up and greet me amiably in the Bündner dialect. Gian Monsch is totally at a loss for words when we tell him that the flight from Kathmandu took only 47 minutes, compared with six days on foot. **Nurse Judith Baumgartner**, who began her activities here only a few months ago, having opened the first clinic within a radius of about one hundred kilometres, proudly shows us her "*hospital*," a locally constructed bamboo hut in which she has admitted 19 patients—only the worst cases. Her "consulting room" is in a tent she obtained from one Himalayan expedition. She is enthusiastic about her work, praises the friendly and cheerful mountain folk, and has only one single wish: more personnel. The numbers of people seeking help from far and wide is so great that many have to be turned back. She brings out her "pride and joy," a Nepalese whose head is almost totally covered with bandages. The fellow, who can still manage a grin, also has one arm in a sling and is fitted out in assorted other dressings and plasters. He had been attacked in the forest two days earlier by a leopard. His hand had been bitten to the bone, and his scalp almost completely loosened from his skull. His head had obviously landed up in the leopard's jaws, since the animal had inflicted two deep wounds upon his mandible. Severely injured, the man nevertheless managed to plunge his *khukuri*, the Nepalese bush knife, into its maw, thereby killing it. Gian Monsch shows me the skin; it must have been a truly respectable representative of its species.

By now people from the surrounding hills are flocking down to see the prodigy firsthand. Thanks to the watchdog and also to a Tibetan refugee hired by Gian Monsch, they are kept at a safe and respectful distance. That evening one might have thought that one had been set down in the kitchen of a Bündner farmer. Frau Monsch has furnished it simply but true to type. A fire is crackling merrily in the large chimney, radiating a pleasant warmth. We are at 2,000 metres, and the temperature now sinks below zero. Honest-to-goodness fried potatoes are served up on the wooden table. To go along with them there are Nepalese *mulas* (a kind of radish), cheese, bread and butter, milk, and coffee. The Bündner dialect reminds me particularly of home. The only thing missing to add the final Bündner touch to the kitchen is the Veltliner, the wine from the Valtellina. Both parties have naturally much to talk about, for the Swiss live here in an isolated outpost. These pioneers with their simple style of life and their high spirits are probably better suited to carry the ideals of technical assistance into this mountainous territory than many of the foreign experts, who have to be pried from their warm nests in Kathmandu. Late in the evening the door opens, and the watchman asks whether there is enough water for the night. Then he continues his patrol about the house and the helicopter. He goes his rounds untiringly, with alert eye; his steps over the stone path echo one by one out into the night. "He's that kind of man," says Gian Monsch, when late at night we finally crawl into our sleeping bags. "He'll stay on patrol the whole night; a man if ever there was one—reliable and tireless—, such as I've hardly found even among the Sherpas."

On to Khumbu

The sun has hardly risen when we take off the next morning in the helicopter and quickly gain altitude. Now, instead of the mechanic, Gian Monsch is sitting next to me. I want him along as an agricultural expert. The helicopter has only one passenger seat. Gian Monsch and I must share it. In addition, we have two cans of fuel attached to the railing outside. Since we're not carrying any other load, however, we can manage this extra weight. Still, we're squeezed in a bit tight, all the more so for being buckled in with a single safety belt. It's good that the wind is so calm this morning; passing through air turbulence causes a feeling of being about to be thrown out of the cabin.

Again we ascend in steps through a prevailing westerly wind. The *cheese factory* started by Phulari Sahb, **Hans Fröhlich's** name transliterated into Nepali by the Sherpas, is situated scenically on the forested summit of *Thodung*—a solid construction such as one seldom comes across. To the right, on the crest above Thode, I recognize the romantic alpine pasture where I spent a lonely Christmas in the field in 1954. South of *Chyangma Pass* there beckons the *tent camp* of **Erwin**

Schneider, the compiler of the first modern Everest map. His men are waving a trigonometric signal. Lack of time and fuel unfortunately keep us from setting down there even briefly. Likewise we are forced to watch *Pike* (4,100m) pass by on our right, where **Josef Dubach** has built another *cheese factory*.

We are now flying high over the heart of *Solu*, the Sherpas' southern region of settlement. The stately, whitewashed houses lie scattered about on all the slopes. Their fields, in contrast to those in the Midlands, are only in rare cases terraced. Above them are spread out large pastures dotted with thin stands of timber. One is reminded of a Jura landscape. *Chiwong Gompa*, the religious centre of the Solu Sherpas, is situated like an eyrie on the edge of a vertical cliff. Greatly helped on by anabatic winds, we are steadily gaining altitude, and soon the *Pharak*, the river flowing through the *Dudh Kosi* valley, looms up ahead to direct us towards Khumbu. Everest continues to be obstructed by the *Kangtega chain*. I keep my eyes peeled for signs of a north-wester, but the smoke from the Sherpa village of *Chaunrikarka*, which we are now flying over, rises vertically into the sky. I recognize the house of my **Sherpa Sonam**, where I had once been hospitably received as the guest of honour at his daughter's wedding. He has no idea that his former "haggimsahb" is soaring northwards over him in the strange-looking bird. The transverse gorge of the *Dudh Kosi*, which I had once passed through on foot as a geologist, sends a shudder down my back. The altimeter shows 4,800 metres when *Namche Bazar* comes into view far below. The massive south face of *Lhotse* appears in the east. We veer off towards the *Khumbu glacier*. *Tengpoche*, the religious and cultural centre of the *Khumbu Sherpas*, lies picturesquely on a spur. From the air we see for the first time how the entire complex is laid out, with the temple in the middle and the cells of the monks surrounding it. All the lamas rush outside and wave to us as we pay our respects by a single circling of the shrine.

Reconnaissance for the Planned Landing Strip at Mingbo, 4,600m

We are rapidly approaching the proud pointed peak of *Ama Dablam* (6,856m), and the large glacier basins of the *Khumbu* and the *Imja* rivers open out in front of us. I have scarcely time, though, to become engrossed in this new geological perspective on the Everest group, for I have already spotted a moraine valley at the foot of *Ama Dablam* suitable for a landing strip. In this small valley we simultaneously catch sight of the yellow tents at the *base camp of the Hillary expedition*, whose goal it is to make the first ascent of *Ama Dablam*. All is quiet there now. We land so quickly in the middle of the tents that the mountaineers apparently have no time to slip into their clothes. They crawl blearily out of the tents and have a hard time getting over the totally unexpected visit. It is 7:30 Nepalese time, and the flight has taken 70 minutes, in comparison with the eight or nine days needed

when walking from Jiri to Khumbu. The altimeter registers 4,600 metres, and when I slip out of the cabin I am pleasantly surprised by the mild weather. The thermometer shows only -7° , whereas experience has taught me to expect around -20° . **Dr. Piu**, the head of the expedition, immediately confirms that the temperature is extraordinarily high due to a depression. I find that I am getting by astonishingly well in the thin air. A few minutes later the sun rises behind *Ama Dablam*, and soon it is comfortably warm. I myself can barely believe that I have made it so effortlessly to the middle of Khumbu, whereas four years ago I had to put up with the most strenuous of conditions to conduct my work. I rapidly discuss with the expedition members the construction of a landing strip for our Pilatus Porter aircraft and give the necessary instructions. The plot is to be marked with stones, and I ask Dr. Piu to hire twenty to thirty Sherpas from the neighbouring village of Khumjung. They should be told to have the plot cleared of stones and bushes and to flatten out its least smooth parts by a fixed date 14 days later. I will be returning on that day by helicopter to look over the field and pay the Sherpas their wages.

Future coordination with the expedition regarding refugee aid is also sketched out.

Among the Exiles in Thami

The helicopter lifts off jauntily from the morainic flats and heads on to the large Sherpa village of Khumjung in the valley above Namche. Here we see for the first time *tents belonging to refugee nomads*. The valley floor around *Thami*, which we fly over a few minutes later, is completely overlaid with such tents. At our first approach the refugees disperse and take cover. A well-trained company of soldiers during an alert couldn't have done it any better; their experience with the Chinese air force must have taught them a thing or two.

We touch down in the middle of the tents. The Tibetans approach hesitatingly. Only when I tell them that I have been sent by the government of Nepal and by the Dalai Lama to help them do they start crowding around. They must number about 1,000. We have a terrible time keeping them away from the fragile railing of the helicopter; Tibetans marvel at everything new, not only with their eyes but also with their fingers. Soon we are surrounded by a curious and friendly-looking throng of refugees. By having them sit down, we are more or less able to stem the rush towards the aircraft. Soon a number of lamas are making their way through the crowd. I deliver my *letter of introduction* from **Lopsang Gelek**, the *representative of the Dalai Lama in Nepal*.

The Moving Reaction to the Voice of the Dalai Lama

Then I get out my tape recorder and play the tape of the Dalai Lama's address to his countrymen in Nepal—the one I recorded in Dharamsala. They listen to the Dalai Lama's voice spellbound. Afterwards they heap honours upon me. The customary white scarves (*kathas*) are brought and hung around my neck in large numbers. They do the same with the helicopter. For them it is heaven-sent, something sacred. A wooden pot of *chang* (beer) with butter on its rim is placed on the helicopter; then the scarves are tied wherever there's room for them. They sprinkle the craft with the *chang* in order to consecrate it in the manner proper for any vehicle that is used to convey a message from the Dalai Lama. Gian Monsch and I look on, our own emotions stirred. They are stirred all the more when the Tibetans form a ring around the helicopter and break into devotional song and dance. A gay folk festival gets under way on the broad valley floor. Gian Monsch and I are asked to sit down on a Tibetan carpet. Tibetan tea is served, and finally our hosts flood us with gifts in the form of slaughtered goats. I hesitate to accept them, knowing that they are probably their last bits of property. Once their supply of meat is consumed, they'll literally be on the brink of destitution. Refusal to accept, however, would be impolite. Since there is no room in the cabin of the helicopter, we tie the lone goat we finally do take to the railing outside. We would have liked to stay longer among these congenial people, but the *Tibetan leader of the Khumbu refugee group, Thubten Nima*, is down below in Namche. When I ask for my letter of introduction back, which is addressed to him, I am told that a runner had immediately set off to Namche with the important document. It usually takes more than an hour to reach there.

The Horrible Condition of the Refugees

We take our leave from these poor but inwardly joyful people in Thami and fly to *Namche*. A few minutes later we land on the terrace where all expeditions have previously set up camp above the village. Several minutes pass before the townsfolk can run to where we are. A number of refugees are the first to arrive, followed by the commander of the Nepalese border post, a captain, who is out of breath. He sputters out something about "being under arrest." I laugh in his face, telling him that the situation is too serious to be wasting time on jokes. Soon **Thubten Nima**, the *leader of the refugee group in Khumbu*, a strapping, impressive figure, arrives on the scene. He has the letter from **Lopsang Gelek** in his hand and knows what we're here for. He introduces his staff to me: two secretaries and a clerk, three Tibetans who likewise have an intelligent, cultured air about them. The greetings over, we all sit down on the ground of the alpine meadow. Opening a leather portfolio that he

carries under his arm, the Tibetan clerk takes out his official papers, a traditional Tibetan writing utensil, and a precious inkpot. A field office is set up. During the discussions that follow, which go on for more than two hours, the clerk notes down everything with the greatest of accuracy. Thubten Nima also provides exact answers to my countless questions. After his initial troublemaking, the Nepalese captain now proves to be useful as an interpreter. He becomes very friendly and willing to help.

The alarming reports on the situation in Khumbu are unfortunately confirmed. Upwards of 6,000 refugees are said to have flooded over Nangpa La into Khumbu, some in recent months with their herds of yaks, sheep, and goats. At present more than 4,000 are purportedly living here. Their animals, finding nothing to eat in this late season of the year, have died in large numbers. In despair the Tibetans began slaughtering them in equally large numbers in order to salvage at least a part of the meat. The slaughtered animals are lying around everywhere out in the open to dry. The number killed has at times reached 100 a week. The majority of animals are now dead. The supply of meat is enough for three to four weeks; then starvation can be expected to set in. Most of the refugees are living in tents they have brought along with them, but many have also found places to stay in the homes of the Sherpas. The Sherpas, themselves on the verge of economic disaster, have received the still poorer Tibetans with open arms and taken them in.

The Refugees' Excellent Organization of Themselves

The Tibetans, be it said, are very well organized here. When they cross the border, they are registered by Tibetan posts and directed to the appropriate camp in Khumbu according to district of origin. Each camp thus contains groups from the same background, and each group has its seniormost member to oversee its affairs. Thubten Nima exercises authority over the whole of the Khumbu region. Such organization will naturally later simplify resettlement and integration into the Nepalese economy. A large portion of the refugees consists of farmers, who light up at the news that Nepal is planning to put land at their disposal to help them begin a new life in a new country.

Planning Future Action

The measures that have to be taken are now clear: the groups of refugees that still own animals must immediately be directed further south, where better pasture land is available. I have the Hongu and Inkhu valleys in mind, which I recall from previous expeditions. In order to keep the people going, food supplies will have to be flown from the Terai (where prices are cheap) to Khumbu when our own airplane arrives. Simultaneously, recruiting must be started for resettlement in the north-

western part of Nepal. The International Committee of the Red Cross will have to set up a *temporary station in Khumbu*; only in this way can the food supplies be managed, the recruiting be done, and the trust of the refugees be won by medical care. The friendly and cheerful spirit that the Tibetans radiate is in strange contrast to their desperately serious situation. The winter sun casts mild light onto the completely snowless landscape. Even the southern faces of Lhotse and Everest in the background have, exceptionally, nothing about them that might excite fear. We are sitting on the meadow and drinking Tibetan tea, but I miss in the face of Thubten Nima, who is fully aware of all his responsibilities, the cheer that the other refugees exude; his worries are deeply engraved into his expressive features. The local population, too, the Sherpas, can look forward to hard times. Up to now they have lived mainly from trade with Tibet and the export of yaks to that country. Both have stopped. The Sherpas are living from their reserves. The prices for salt and food, which now have to be brought in from Nepal's Midlands and from India, have quadrupled in the past two years. If measures are not quickly taken, Khumbu can be expected to become completely deserted, and the remarkable Sherpas, renowned throughout the world, run the risk of being completely dispersed and absorbed in the Nepalese Midlands, and thus of disappearing as a people.

Gian Monsch believes that Khumbu is a very suitable place to raise sheep. Going a step further, one could start up wool production and the attendant cottage industries, thus allowing the Sherpas to continue to live in their ancestral homeland. In any case, the Sherpas need as much help as the Tibetans from foreign organizations.

Departure and the Return Flight—Stopover on Pike

Deeply moved by what we have seen, we take our leave from Namche, setting off horizontally into the crystal-clear evening sky from our high vantage point. Leaving the Himalaya, we fly first towards the south-east in order that Gian Monsch can pass judgment on the pasture land I am familiar with from earlier. Unfortunately the supply of fuel is no longer enough to proceed any farther into the Inkhu valley; we must turn back to the west towards home. We head directly to *Pike*, where we quickly spot **Josef Dubach's** almost completed *cheese factory*. The helicopter is brought to rest not far from the construction site. Dubach comes running up. He had no inkling that the "haggimsahb" was flitting about. We don't have much time, only enough to ask him quickly about the refugee situation in Solu, the southern Sherpa region. He confirms that refugees have been moving in large numbers from the north to the south. Two days ago one Tibetan—alone, lost, and in despair—had passed by with two yaks and offered to sell both animals, once his pride, for a total of 15 Nepalese rupees, or nine Swiss francs. While Josef Dubach was still completing

the transaction and bringing the price up to a decent figure, one of the animals succumbed to hunger and exhaustion.

I am filled with pride that the Swiss cheese dairymen, farmers, and nurses in their out stations in Nepal form virtually the first and only "islands of development" in an otherwise almost untouched mountain region. They will now serve, too, as indispensable mainstays in the distribution of refugee aid.

The Return Flight as a "Rescue Mission"

The day had one other surprise in store for us. We head on quickly for Jiri to return Gian Monsch to his family and to take the flight mechanic back on board. **Nurse Judith Baumgartner**, however, has another problem patient, a nine-year-old boy whose hipbone was dislocated some time back. The joint has by now slipped upwards about 10 centimetres, and the boy's leg remains bent at an acute angle. They have been trying in Jiri with combined forces to set the limb, but to no avail; the injury is too old. Only an operation can save the boy from remaining a complete cripple to the end of his days. Nurse Judith's remonstrances with the boy's father to allow him to be taken to Kathmandu have no effect. Without further ado we set him on my knee and give the father to understand that he can pick him up in the hospital in the capital. The boy clings to me in terror as we head on to Kathmandu high over the now deep blue valleys. He is unused to the safety belt and tries to wriggle out of it. Helpless, he seeks my hands with his own and then calms down. The pilot agrees to set us down at my house in Ekanta Kuna. When he has spotted a nice green "meadow," I feel it incumbent upon me to tell him that it is the colonel's wife's vegetable garden—our landlord's, that is—and that she would not be pleased to see her carefully tended vegetables blown every which way by our helicopter. Right next to it, though, is a rice field where we can land properly, and soon people are streaming up and climbing over all the walls. The helicopter is naturally a sensation, all the more so for the strange loads attached to its outside. The onlookers are greatly astonished to see me first carefully lifting the crippled boy out of the cockpit. His delivery to the nearby Shanti Bhawan Hospital brings an end to the eventful and moving day. My friend **Dr. Edgar Miller** will soon operate on the boy and save him from lifelong lameness.

I still need a long time, however, to digest everything. How petty, in comparison with the tragic events I have witnessed today, do the "minor annoyances" of my fellow countrymen in far-off Europe seem to me! Let the Swiss people show that its energies are not only directed towards controlling the price of petrol; may it be a vigorous provider of aid to the Tibetan people, both in material and, more importantly, in spiritual terms, as in the construction of the *gompa*; may its soul be worthy of their soul.

Relief Flights in the Himalaya

Making Regions Accessible by Landing Strips

With similar dramatic reports on the situation of the refugees having come in from other high mountain valleys, and the two Pilatus Porter STOL aircraft approved by the ICRC due to arrive in January 1961, we had to make haste to construct the necessary landing strips in order to be able to set up out stations and deliver supplies to them.

The *Pilatus Porter STOL aircraft* had proved their worth in the *Alps* to the "glacier pilots." They had passed their *trial run* in the Himalaya, too, *during the Swiss Dhaulagiri expedition of 1960*. For this expedition, a Pilatus Porter fitted out with skis made regular glacier landings, delivering supplies up to an elevation of 5,800 metres.

The government was justifiably anxious that the out stations start operating as quickly as possible in order to prevent large numbers of refugees from descending in desperation into the valleys and becoming concentrated, in particular, in the Kathmandu Valley. Begging and despairing refugees could easily be misled into creating political unrest, which could put the entire integration programme at risk.

From my thorough knowledge of the country, I had a fair idea of where the required landing strips could be built. Following the very productive reconnaissance flight to Khumbu, similar flights were undertaken with the helicopter to all pertinent areas. The *American helicopter*, under its experienced pilot, **Niels Grimskog**, was put at our constant disposal, whenever needed. (I would run across Captain Grimskog again ten years later, in 1972, when he was a helicopter pilot during the UN aid operation in Bangladesh.)

Landing strips were laid out in Jiri (halfway between Kathmandu and Khumbu), Mingbo (Khumbu), Chialsa (Solu), Jomosom (Thakkhola), and Dhor Patan.

Once trekking tourism caught on, the landing strip at Jomosom was built up into a full-fledged airfield for regular commercial traffic. Mingbo was too remote to attract tourists, but once the Pilatus Porter had proven itself, the government again built an airfield for such craft in Syangboche, above Namche Bazar. Dhor Patan is nowadays occasionally a tourist destination.

There were problems with constructing the landing strips and afterwards regulating air traffic because *none of the sites had radio facilities*. Communication in the preparatory and construction phases was carried out exclusively by means of *post runners*. The "bush telephone" also functioned astonishingly well, one reason for this being that there were people all over I knew from my expeditions, including practically all the Sherpas that took part in them, each of whom kept in close contact with my Sherpa Aila. The latter passed on all the information my way.

In the following I shall describe the practicalities of opening up high mountain valleys to STOL aircraft.

Crash-landing in Jiri

The landing strip in Jiri proved to be the first to be inaugurated. **Captain Böhm** piloted, and the aircraft was full of ICRC and other personnel slated to go to Jiri. I sat next to Captain Böhm, and grand weather made for a routine flight. The pilot made the approach to the landing strip on the "Chinese Wall" from below. I noticed that we were flying very low but did not trust myself to say anything to the pilot, one of Switzerland's best. All too often such criticism during other flights (not on Pilatus Porters) had been met with scepticism of my knowledge of flying.

Captain Böhm realized at the last moment that we were too low. He gave full throttle in order to clear the approximately metre-and-a-half-steep embankment at the approach end of the landing strip, but it was too late. We rammed into it, and the airplane somersaulted some ten metres and landed on its nose. It skidded along the runway another 20 metres or so on its nose, and for a moment it seemed as if it would flip over. Then the whole landscape went around in a circle, or so it seemed, and we were enclosed in a thick cloud of dust. The airplane finally came to a standstill on its belly, still on the airstrip, and a penetrating smell of fuel came over us. The passengers were utterly calm, but the captain cried, "Everyone out immediately!" The door was stuck on my side and I couldn't exit. On the other side, though, the deplaning went ahead quickly and in a disciplined manner. Once the cloud of dust had settled, we saw the results: the wheels and landing gear were torn off (they lay way back at the beginning of the strip), and one wing was bent.

The pilot and the passengers were completely uninjured—not even a scratch.

I was deeply sorry for Captain Böhm, who was one of the best Pilatus Porter pilots around: extraordinarily cautious and circumspect when flying—a man of understatement.

Before we started the descent to Gian Monsch's experimental farm, we saw a helicopter from the Everest region passing high overhead in the direction of Kathmandu. The pilot obviously saw the wreck of our plane and immediately came down and landed. It was Captain Grimskog, who was taking Edmund Hillary to the capital. They inquired about possible injuries and offered us their full support. Happily none was needed. Finally they took me with them to Kathmandu. The other passengers, who had to return to Kathmandu on foot, a six-day hike, were glad that they had their so-called "WH equipment" with them. This was a cockpit abbreviation for "walk home equipment."

Despite the many adventures and mishaps, no person ever came to harm during our relief flights. It was a unique pioneering achievement on the part of our ICRC pilots.

Mingbo's Airstrip, at 4,600m the Highest in the World

Two weeks after my memorable first helicopter flight to Khumbu, I flew back to Mingbo in the same aircraft, again with Captain Niels Grimskog. Once again we had magnificent weather. Luckily we found the landing strip free of snow, and the mixed construction team of Tibetans and Sherpas were there to greet us, as planned. Only a few improvements needed to be made to the airstrip, and I paid the Sherpas and Tibetan refugees for their work, 10 Nepalese rupees per day (about 6 francs). A Sherpa who knew how to write had done a fine job of keeping accounts, noting the number of days each man worked. Altogether approximately *400 man-days* were spent, resulting in a *total cost of 4,000 Nepalese rupees* or around *2,700 francs*. Despite the fact that the daily wage was very good for Nepalese standards at the time, corresponding to the value of five sheep during the period of forced slaughter, it was still a very reasonably priced landing strip.

The Sherpas had brought along several wooden buckets of *chang*, and the completion of the airstrip was celebrated at 4,600 metres under bright skies against a peerless mountain backdrop. The airstrip was thus ready to be inaugurated by the landing of a Pilatus Porter.

Maiden Crash-landing in Mingbo

The pilots agreed among themselves that **Hermann Schreiber** should be the one to made this maiden flight. He was one of the most experienced glacier pilots in

Switzerland but also somewhat adventurous: he was always saying that he had to "check out" the air worthiness of the Pilatus Porter in a Himalayan context.

Under the best weather conditions imaginable we flew to Khumbu, heading directly towards Mingbo. From high up we saw the landing strip, which was well marked with rocks. I was a bit nervous when the pilot made motions to land immediately without first criss-crossing the airstrip from overhead. There was no windsock, but the smoke from the fire of a nearby alpine hut indicated the direction the wind was coming from—assuming a "windsock" so far off from the airstrip could be trusted when the prevailing local winds were so unpredictable.

The Mingbo landing strip had some unusual features: it could only be approached from one direction, namely from below, since there was a steep rocky slope at the other end. The strip was not horizontal but rose along the direction of approach, which was desirable, given that the Pilatus Porters of the time still had no reversible propellers to act as brakes. Further, the strip could not be approached straight on from below, as there was a small mountain ridge projecting across it from the left. The pilot had to curve around the spur and thus had no opportunity to retake to the air if he "missed the right turn." The landing strip could be compared to an aircraft carrier anchored in a narrow crater lake. This was the reason why I was nervous at my pilot's direct approach. What I feared occurred. The curve around the spur was far too broad (due to the thin air), and when we finally made it to the strip we were still some 20 metres from the ground, with half the strip already behind us. When the pilot realized the situation he was in and knew he couldn't pull back up, he abruptly set the airplane down on the strip. The impact was loud and hard, and the plane vibrated and rattled wildly as it rolled to a halt. We came to a stop just as the first large rocks appeared directly in front of the propeller.

We both deplaned, wiped off the cold sweat from above our eyebrows, and looked over what fate had brought us: the tail wheel had come off and lay halfway back down the strip. This was not the only consequence of the strong impact, though. The vertical shaft of the rudder had been forced upwards out of the lower bearing. It now hung unsteadily from the upper bearing and from the control cable. (It was a structural defect of the first models of the aircraft that the tail wheel was connected directly to the rudder bearing. This defect was corrected on later models, on which the wheel was attached to a separate swing fork joint.)

We set down to work immediately. Several Sherpas showed up and helped us. To replace the rear wheel, we made a wooden runner and attached it with wire as firmly as possible. Hermann Schreiber climbed up on the stabilizing surface of the rudder and tried to beat the shaft back into place with a large piece of wood, without success. We gave up all thought of returning that day.

I thought of my wife in Kathmandu, in whose eyes we must have simply "disappeared" on the flight to the Everest region and who must have been very worried.

By now it was evening, and we descended some 200 metres in elevation to a number of alpine huts where the English Ama Dablam expedition had kept its supplies. All the mountaineers were away. When night set in, though, they arrived. It was touching what pains they took to care for us two crash survivors. They prepared us an excellent dinner and provided us with sleeping bags for the cold night. Leaving us the next morning, they wished us a good trip home. Mere chance led me to ask them when they thought they would climb Ama Dablam. Almost against their will they confessed that they had climbed it the day before. It had been the first ascent of the famed mountain. English understatement!

After a tolerably good night we found ourselves the next morning, at some 4,400 metres, enshrouded in thick fog. We hastened up to the landing strip, expecting the other Pilatus Porter to arrive looking for us. Indeed it wasn't long before we heard the sound of an engine; the entire region was obviously being searched. Had we been in our damaged airplane, we could have made radio contact with the search craft. We weren't in time, though, and the sound of the engine faded and finally disappeared. They turned back to Kathmandu empty-handed before we could reach our plane.

Once we did reach the plane we finished up the repair work as best we could. The wooden runner was set in place. We tried our best to attach the shaft of the rudder with leather straps, our belts, straps from our backpacks, and wires, having cut holes for them in the stabilizing surface.

Then everything in the cabin that wasn't nailed down firmly was removed in order to lessen the weight. With the help of the Sherpas present, the airplane was turned to face down the runway so that it could start on the declivity. The pilot would attempt the daring return flight alone. Rocks were laid under the front wheels so that the tail would immediately be raised at full throttle, before it had a chance to be dragged along the bumpy field. In this way the pilot was actually able to take off. The rudder evidently functioned, for the pilot succeeded in making a wide curve around the fateful spur and to descend into the depths beyond. As long as the plane was still in view, in any case, he did not lose the rudder.

There lay ahead a few hours of worrying whether he would really make it to Kathmandu with the makeshift repairs. Luckily the air was perfectly calm.

I waited in a sunny spot but was unable to enjoy the grandiose high mountain panorama afforded by the Everest group. A few hours later I heard the sound of an engine, and the other Pilatus Porter appeared in the sky. The pilot first criss-crossed the runway at a suitable height and then set down to a perfect landing. It was **Captain Böhm**, the test pilot of the Pilatus plant.

Back in Kathmandu, Hermann Schreiber did not have to worry about not being kidded about his "test flight" of the airplane. He was naturally very downhearted. **Captain Emil Wick** tried to revive his spirits with his inimitable humour. He patted him reassuringly on his shoulder, saying, "A landing may be viewed as successful when all the debris from the airplane is lined up nicely down the middle of the runway, or when the pilot can exit on his own power from the wreckage."

In spite of this first mishap (or because of it?), Hermann Schreiber turned into one of the most experienced pilots for Mingbo. He regularly flew food supplies there from Biratnagar in the Terai. In order to exploit the capacity of the airplane to the limit, flights were made with a full cargo bay, but the first sacks were thrown overboard to reduce weight and take pressure off the landing gear when touching down. These flights were particularly hard on the aircraft, starting as they did in the tropic heat of the Terai and, only 40 minutes later, witnessing air whistling through the fuselage at an icy -10° to -20° when the hatch was opened for the ejection of goods.

Jomosom, Out Station for Thakkhola

A first reconnaissance flight confirmed the existence of large tent camps of refugees in the region of Manang and around Tukuche, Jomosom, and points north. This flight also drew attention to the special problems that flying in the Himalaya involves, namely the extraordinary air turbulence. We had for the flight two pilots on board so that I could provide them with a first geographical orientation. **Hermann Schreiber** piloted, and **Captain Emil Wick** and my wife sat on the rear seats. I occupied the copilot's seat.

Our flight was delayed in getting off. Under perfect weather conditions we flew up the *Marsyandi valley beyond Annapurna* and by way of *Tilicho Pass* reached *Thakkhola*, the large transverse valley between Annapurna and Dhaulagiri that extends 100 kilometres north to Mustang. The view from 5,000 metres towards Mustang in the north was grand. Large tent camps were visible around the old caravan town of Tukuche and places north of it.

Hermann Schreiber insisted upon getting a glimpse of the wreck of the Pilatus Porter that had crashed under mysterious circumstances at 5,800 metres when taking off during the Swiss Dhaulagiri expedition of 1960. My objections to the useless idea were to no avail. One of my fears was the air turbulence that might arise. Indeed we were rocked with such force over Tukuche that the pilot had doubts himself. The wings began to creak, and our aircraft to flutter like leaves in the fall. Hermann Schreiber looked around anxiously towards Captain Wick. The latter said sovereignly, "Cut the engine and let the plane glide down with the wind. The wind won't blow into the ground but will turn back up in time, and the same thing will

happen to our plane." As indeed it did after some anxious minutes. Happy to have escaped the infernal turbulence, we flew back down the valley and on to Kathmandu by way of Pokhara.

Shortly afterwards, still before the landing strip was built, we opened an ICRC out station in Jomosom with one doctor. Soon we were receiving from Jomosom ghastly pictures of diseased and emaciated refugees. Those able to be so were employed in the weaving of wool for pay. Other work connected with the camp was also assigned to them. The valley floor at Jomosom was well suited for laying out a landing strip. The personnel of the out station planned it themselves and had it constructed by Tibetan refugees. When it came time for the strip to be opened up to regular Pilatus Porter flights, one large boulder had to be removed at the end of it. The large hole could not be filled in the same day due to the onset of evening. When the first Pilatus Porter landed the next morning, the pilot saw the hole too late. He steered over it so that it passed right between the front wheels, but the rear wheel was torn off.

With the rise in tourism, the landing strip at Jomosom was reinforced, and nowadays even two-motor planes can land there. Air traffic is relatively heavy.

Pokhara served as the base for aid flights to Jomosom. We set up an ICRC supply depot there completely under Tibetan management. The aid material was flown to Pokhara by a Royal Nepal Airlines DC3, since still no road existed linking Kathmandu with Pokhara or Bhairava with Pokhara.

The flight from Pokhara through the Kali Gandaki gorge between Annapurna and Dhaulagiri is probably the most magnificent of its kind that the Himalaya has to offer. The flights presented no problems, as long as they ended by eleven o'clock in the morning, before the heavy mountain winds and turbulences set in.

I myself experienced only one adventure on the Jomosom flight. During takeoff from Jomosom for the return flight with **Captain Wick** I heard the cracking of metal. Captain Wick showed not the least reaction, and so I thought that there was no need to worry. For the landing in Pokhara, though, I noticed that Captain Wick made the approach in a wide arc and a long head-on descent. Seeing my astonished look, he said only that the weather was so nice that day that we should see something of Pokhara. I asked the captain, however, about the cracking sound at takeoff. He let out that the steering cable for the rudder had broken when the plane had left the ground and that he had had to fly to Pokhara without it. Turning around in Jomosom would have been much too dangerous.

Difficult Reconnaissance of Dhor Patan

An *agricultural settlement* was planned in the mountain valley of *Dhor Patan* at 3,000 metres. I sent my porters who knew the valley from my former expeditions

from Kathmandu there on foot towards the end of December. They needed about 16 days. They were told to wait there until I arrived by helicopter. We would then lay out a landing strip, which they would have to clear of rocks, bushes, and other obstacles.

When the time came, I flew with the American helicopter under **Captain Niels Grimskog** from Kathmandu to Pokhara, where we filled up with fuel and affixed four additional cans of fuel to the railing. After Pokhara the weather turned increasingly bad. We had great trouble crossing the low pass separating the Bari Gad and Dhor Patan valleys, since it was completely fogged in. We circled around a bit, and the fog lifted just enough to get through.

The Dhor Patan valley was covered with a sizeable layer of snow. As we approached the group of houses, my porters came running out and waved to us. Landing in the deep snow was not unproblematic. Captain Grimskog feared that the helicopter might tilt into an unseen hole, and its rotor come in contact with the ground and be damaged. He hovered about a metre over the ground and asked me to get out and stamp out a firm landing spot in the snow under the helicopter. When I had done this, he set down safely. The rest of the programme had to be postponed, though: faced with the blanket of snow, we were in no position to mark out a landing strip. I paid the porters and sent them back home.

We set off on the return leg of the journey in exceedingly poor weather and were glad to make it safely out of the Dhor Patan valley, which opens out westwards only into a remote wilderness.

What with all the circling and other delays along the way, our supply of air fuel in the tanks was low. We kept our eyes open for a suitable landing place. There were few such places, however, in the very rugged terrain of the Kali Gandaki valley. We were forced to land near Sikha on the northern side of Ulleri Pass in order not to risk a sudden stall. Finally we found a small platform on a ridge, a threshing floor for farmers. The wind made for a dangerous landing. Again the pilot let the helicopter hover about one metre over the ground and had me get out to provide a counterweight on the runners against the rising wind. I quickly got a few farmers who in the meantime had joined us to stand on the runners along with me to weigh down the helicopter. Captain Grimskog filled the tanks from the cans, and we were highly relieved when soon after we were again cruising through the air.

Following our landing in Pokhara, Captain Grimskog confessed to me that it had been one of the most dangerous situations he had ever faced.

When the landing strip was later built, flying to Dhor Patan became no problem. Once again, though, there was a mishap. During takeoff one time, the aircraft had trouble leaving the ground behind. It reached the snow that lay on the final third of the strip and flipped over frontwards.

Direction Finders in the Haze

Flying to landing sites in the Terai during the premonsoon season, that is, in the months of May and June, occasionally caused problems for the pilots. During this period the region from the Terai to the Midlands is often covered in a thick haze up to at least 3,000 metres, leaving the sun to appear as a red ball in the midday sky that casts no shadows. Visibility is only a few hundred metres.

Given that the airstrips outside of Kathmandu had no radio facilities, we often had to follow our instincts in navigating. Now and then we lost our bearings and had to determine our location according to bush pilot tactics: dropping down low into the Terai and looking out for train tracks. Luckily there were numerous railheads along the Indo-Nepalese border. We flew along the railway line until a station appeared, whose name we read as we passed by.

One time, though, we found a landing site as if by accident. The concrete runway gave us pause, but we landed nevertheless. Soon a guard came running up, and we asked the name of the airport. The man said in broken English, "This no Nepal, this India." Hearing that, Captain Wick loosened the throttle, and we disappeared across the runway into the haze.

It was an old military airfield, probably dating to the last world war and apparently called back into service during the brief Indo-Chinese border war of 1961.

A Sightseeing Tour of Annapurna with Baron von Thyssen

In February 1961 we were paid a visit by Baron von Thyssen and his wife. He was quite taken by the Tibetans and their carpet-knitting, and immediately wrote a check for 10,000 francs and held out the prospect of a further 70,000 francs from the Thyssen Foundation. By way of thanks, I invited him and his wife to join me on a flight with the Pilatus Porter around Annapurna.

The tour was blessed by marvelous weather, and the baron was very impressed by the Himalayan range. I told him of the cartographic work currently being undertaken by **Erwin Schneider**, adding that the true job of researching the Nepal Himalaya was still waiting to be done. Shortly thereafter Baron von Thyssen generously mobilized the resources of the Thyssen Foundation to finance what came to be called the *Research Scheme Nepal Himalaya*, the largest research undertaking in Nepal's history, involving cartographic endeavours and research in all fields of natural science and the humanities. Later the German Research Council continued the financing. The scientific publications that have come out of this are enough to fill a library of Himalayan studies by themselves.

*Emergency Relief and Job Creation
at Out Stations*

Unique Privileges

We received our two Pilatus Porter aircraft at the beginning of 1961, and the provisioning of the out stations posed no logistical problems up to the monsoon period. The supply flights undertaken by our pilots became routine.

I enjoyed an unparalleled relationship of trust with the government. This had particularly favourable consequences for our supply flights. We had *carte blanche* to fly over the whole country, land at all airfields and landing strips and on all open fields, and to construct whatever landing strips we needed—and this without any outside control, including passenger and freight checks. Our pilots were simply required to submit an oral report of their relief activities to the flight control authorities in Kathmandu at the end of each day.

Information received through the "bush telephone" indicated that, apart from the out stations of Khumbu and Thakkhola, there was no urgent need to set up any other such emergency aid centres further east, in the region of Kangchenjunga, or in the far west either. The area around Simikot was far too remote in any case and would have been hard to supply by means of a Pilatus Porter, given the latter's limited range.

Together with General **Khat**ri, the secretary in the Foreign Ministry, I made reconnaissance flights over the northern high valleys of Nepal, one each to Walungchung in the east and Jumla and Simikot in the west, in order to verify what had been told to us. We were unable to locate any tent camps of Tibetan refugees.

The Successful Settlement of Chialsa

Approximately 3,000 refugees shifted from Khumbu to Solu up to the fall of 1961. A very successful resettlement and integration project involving some of these refugees was launched in Chialsa in Solu. This Chialsa project was not financed by the ICRC but by the *Swiss Red Cross*. The latter also recruited the project director, **Kurt Egloff, M.D.** Whenever possible, he put the refugees to work under a cash-for-work scheme: farm labour, construction, and the spinning of wool. His major accomplishment, however, was to organize *the purchase and transfer of foodstuffs from surrounding valleys in Solu* with the aid of his refugees.

Solu exported its surpluses to Tibet before the Chinese occupation, when cross-border trade was still functioning. As a result of purchases made locally, the supplies from Kathmandu needed by the project were limited to tools, equipment, and medicines. Dr. Egloff thus did what was not, in spite of my instructions, being done in the Dhor Patan project, where no basic food goods from the surrounding valleys were bought in local markets. This not only caused several hundred thousand francs in unnecessary air transport costs but also had other fateful consequences.

Right at the beginning Dr. Egloff set up *weaving workshops to produce cloth and traditional bands of wool* and, as in the centre in Kathmandu, had the semi-finished products turned into marketable bags, blankets, covers, jackets, and other clothing articles, to name but a few. A *carpet-knitting workshop* was also established.

The *school* was attended by *300 children* and numerous adults. The teachers were paid through the Father Moran Committee. The whole operation was conducted harmoniously, with the full participation of the refugees.

A Well Organized Out Station in Jomosom

Jomosom had about *6,000 refugees* from the whole of Thakkhola to shelter. The station was at first under the direction of a Swiss doctor, who was replaced after a few months by another Swiss, **Regina Bruppacher**. The latter had the services of a **Nepalese physician, Dr. Shrestha**. For a time **Sister Maya** of the canton hospital in Basel also worked for the project. It was a *finely groomed team of five Sherpas, a Tibetan interpreter, and additional Tibetan auxiliary personnel*. A number of Sherpas were trained as medical assistants and in due course were able to treat injuries and give injections on their own. The dispensary in Jomosom handled roughly one hundred patients daily. Some Tibetans were in uncommonly bad health, and such cases were regularly evacuated to Kathmandu and admitted to Shanti Bhavan Hospital.

Four hundred refugees held down *regular jobs* in the *cash-for-work programme*, being engaged in the beginning in airstrip construction, improvement of access roads,

expansion of the dispensary's infrastructure, establishment of camps, and the like. The *spinning of wool* was an active pursuit from the first and quickly expanded in scope. The growing carpet-knitting workshop in Kathmandu was to a considerable degree dependent upon the wool spun in Jomosom. Without this wool, the supply aircraft would have been empty on their return trip.

Suitable refugees—that is to say, farmers—were selected for resettlement from Thakkhola to Dhor Patan.

1961: From Emergency Relief to Rehabilitation and Integration

The Expansion of the Training and Production Centre in Jawalakhel

Infrastructure and Schools

The infrastructure in the centre was further expanded in the second year to include more domestic dwellings, larger halls for the knitting of carpets and other items, an extra dye-works, an office for the whole operation, and a sales outlet.

The number of latrines was increased, and the intensive *basic education in hygiene and health* began to show results. There was no loss of life during the second monsoon period (1961), in contrast to the previous one (1960), when we lost 11 percent of the camp residents to tropical diseases.

Above all, however, *schools* were established at the urgent request of the refugees. Around *80 children* attended school. The children had an insatiable yearning to be taught. When the classes came to an end at four o'clock in the afternoon, they begged their teachers to continue lessons on into the evening. Another *70 adults* or so took part in evening courses. The following personnel were taken on as teachers:

- Miss **Yangsi**, a young Nepalese Sherpani
- Mr. **Cooch**, England, International Civil Service
- Mr. **Lobsang**, Tibetan assistant teacher
- Mr. **Tile**, Tibetan assistant teacher

The *teachers* were *paid through the local Father Moran Committee*. Now that the ICRC had taken over responsibility for the emergency aid, the Father Moran

Committee was glad to be able to target its comparatively meagre funds to selective needs rather than putting them into the large common coffers.

The students and adults wanted above all to learn English. I insisted, however, that they first learn the language of their host country.

A *kindergarten* was likewise established, and it also took on the role of a day-care centre, since all the adults were in one way or another part of the labour force. Children's songs were taught, the renditions of which would soon delight internationally renowned visitors.

The Carpet-Knitting Workshop in Kathmandu Grows

It was the Swiss **Heidi Schulthess** who had set up the knitting workshop together with the master weaver **Mingma**. The number of trainees was slow to rise. This worried me, since I knew that the ICRC would not continue the project that many years.

In the spring of 1960, after Heidi Schulthess returned to Switzerland on vacation, her fellow countrywoman **Regina Bruppacher** took over as head of the textile department. *Organizational responsibility* was largely turned over to the Tibetans themselves—for example, the job of supplying wool to the knitting workshop and needles, string, and other material to the tailors. This made operations much easier.

We made a point to exercise *no influence* upon *carpet patterns*. The weavers were called upon to knit the *same kinds of carpets* that they had produced in their homeland—that is, with the same *traditional patterns and colours*.

Problems arose with the *dyes*, since foreign purchasers always insisted upon fast colours, both when washed and exposed to light, a condition that couldn't be met by using the *synthetic dyes* imported from India. I got in touch with the firm of *Sandoz in Bombay*. It promptly sent an Indian *dye expert together with all the dyes* of the required quality we desired. This expert taught my Sherpa Aila, and soon thereafter the Tibetans themselves, how to prepare and use the wools and the dyes. It was important, when working with synthetic dyes, to achieve the traditional primary colours exactly. For years, at least up to my departure in July 1962, we obtained all the dyes from Sandoz free of charge. Later the trend in colours reversed itself, and the market began to accept the use of both natural dyes and synthetic dyes.

We opened a sales shop that was completely under Tibetan management. The centre quickly turned into a tourist attraction, and the demand for its products was also quick to grow, so much so that production could barely keep pace with it.

We had numerous people of international renown from the fields of politics, culture, and science visit us in the Tibetan handicraft centre in Jawalakhel, including

the present king and queen of Spain, Burma's President U Nu, Baron von Thyssen and his wife, the famed writer Han Suyin, the two great Tibetologists Giuseppe Tucci and David Snellgrove, the eminent ethnologist Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, statesmen, film stars, extravagant billionaires, and renowned mountaineers, to name but a few.

Wholesalers from Switzerland

One day a two-man buyer delegation from *Globus Switzerland* turned up and bought the *entire supply of carpets and other products*, the total value of which was approximately *100,000 francs*.

Globus later organized a Nepal/Tibet campaign in all of its larger outlets, which was a big success.

Back to Peace of Mind

The *Tibetan community* had an *executive committee*. *General meetings* took place in which all standing problems and tasks were discussed and worked out together. There was practically no trouble with discipline in the work place, since it was all *contract labour*. Payment was made in the knitting workshop on the basis of square metre knitted, with different rates applying to the different degrees of difficulty and the colour diversity of the pattern.

The Tibetans formed a *Tibetan "court"* among themselves to adjudicate disputes, which, needless to say, were very rare.

Suitable occasions continued to be sought to present Tibetan dances. Dance techniques and the accompanying music were perfected, and the costumes worn when dancing were also made.

Soon the centre manifested a certain degree of prosperity: traditional and expensive festival attire was either bought or else produced in the centre. The Tibetan festivals and holidays began to be celebrated again in due fashion, with pilgrimages being made in the festive clothing to the sacred sites of Svayambhunath and Bodnath.

The Tibetans bought back their *jewellery, amulets, and religious valuables* from the ICRC "*pawnbrokerage*." Their increased *purchasing power* encouraged the *Tibetan silver- and goldsmiths to take up their trade again*.

All of these developments had as a consequence that the refugees' lost *peace of mind returned* by the spring of 1961.



9. King Mahendra inaugurates the first sales shop for carpets in jawalakhel, 1961. The whole royal family is present, along with Foreign Minister Rishikesh Shah.

Another Exemplary Demonstration of Courage by King Mahendra

Production in the carpet training centre in Jawalakhel rapidly increased. The days when the makeshift sales store was still able to handle the rush of buyers—usually tourists and foreign diplomats and experts from the international organizations—were long gone. Thus we constructed a larger sales store at a new location in the training centre. Talks with my Nepalese friends encouraged me to invite **King Mahendra to inaugurate it**. He accepted the invitation immediately and came on *26 August 1961*, in the company not only of his entire family, including **Crown Prince Birendra**, the present king, but also with a number of ministers and representatives of the army. Among the ministers was the then finance minister, my friend **Rishikesh Shah**, who had persuaded UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld to depute me to the ICRC.

The eminent guests inspected the entire operation in the training centre in Jawalakhel and listened attentively to my remarks on the programme. The Tibetans had all donned their festive attire, and my *interpreter*, **Champa Porong**, presented to King Mahendra the scissors for cutting the ribbon at the entrance to the sales store while standing on a small, lovely carpet woven in the centre.

Afterwards tea and sweets were served inside, and conversation with the guests continued informally. Their attention was particularly drawn to the store's simple furnishings. They were astonished to learn that all of the furniture had been made by Tibetan joiners who had received training from a Nepalese master joiner in the centre.

This courageous gesture of acknowledgement on the part of King Mahendra and his ministers did much to calm the fears of the Tibetans.

Statutory Rules against Sensible Refugee Aid

In October 1961 my family came to Nepal for the second time, and my wife **Gertrud** assumed directorship of the centre in Jawalakhel, having already worked there in the spring of the same year. This would prove to be of decisive importance for the centre.

In *November 1961* a high-ranking two-man *delegation from the ICRC headquarters in Geneva* arrived in town. They had everything shown and explained to them in detail. All seemed to be in excellent order. Before leaving Kathmandu, however, they told me, "What you're doing here with the refugees is fine, but schooling, training, production, and sales are against the rules of the ICRC. The job of the ICRC, according to its statutes, is a purely humanitarian one, not development and activities of a commercial nature."

The delegates from Geneva instructed me not to expand *carpet production* any further but to *close* the production centre by the time of their next visit. I thought I hadn't heard the two men from Geneva properly. I was overcome with anger and threatened a scandal. The money donors mobilized by Ambassador Lindt and me had made their considerable contributions specifically with the integration programme in mind, and they had been approached along these lines, I explained. The ICRC could not simply bury the successfully initiated project and restrict itself to humanitarian aid, which offered no lasting solution to the refugee problem in Nepal.

Luckily my wife *Gertrud* was present during the visit of the guests from Geneva. She wiped the tears from her eyes and said with a calm voice, "Toni, now there is only one way out, and that's to expand the Tibetan centre and production so much that the ICRC won't have the courage during their next visit to close the centre."

Following the departure of the ICRC delegation we talked over the looming threat with our master weaver **Mingma**. We explained to him that we would not achieve our goal by adhering to the conventional method of training only a few Tibetans for several months. He should develop an *accelerated method of training*. This he did together with his daughter, training some ten trainees in one room at the same time. The trainees learned the art of knitting with only one colour—the basic technique of knitting, that is—by themselves. The only thing required was a quality control of the all-important firmness of weave by Master Mingma. Following this first stage the students received simple patterns of two or more colours. Mingma and his daughter first dictated to the ten trainees the number of knots that had to be joined with each colour. By comparing their work with the pattern, the trainees quickly learned how to count the number of knots themselves. Soon complicated patterns could be tackled, and after two months most of the trainees had mastered the production of such patterns. Thus the number of trained carpet-knitters—usually young Tibetan women—rose in two months from only 30 to more than 100 (which also brought about an increase in spinning), with production and turnover rising correspondingly.

Successful Lobby

I discussed the grave danger for the carpet project with the **American and with the British ambassadors, Mr. Stebbins and Mr. Leonard Scopes**, both of whom had been keeping close tabs on the growth of the project. It was agreed that they and their wives would be present in the centre during the next visit by the men from the ICRC, "as if by accident."

That time came at the end of *January 1962*. I picked up the ICRC officials from the airport in Kathmandu. I told them of the visit of the eminent guests, and we

drove directly to the centre in Jawalakhel. The two ambassadors and their wives praised the work of the ICRC in the most emphatic terms, saying that this was a model example of refugee aid. The two men from ICRC tilted their heads back proudly and declared, "Yes, the ICRC has always done a good job." And with that the project was saved.

The First Tibetans in Switzerland
- After Some Hardships

Chapter 27 recounts how the resettlement of Tibetans in Switzerland was already being discussed with Swiss mountaineer friends in the spring of 1960. Firm steps had to be taken in November of that year as a result of the uncertainty and panic aroused in the refugees by Chinese propaganda. From that time onward preparations were made both in Nepal and in Switzerland. In Switzerland, an initial circle of friends of Tibet had come together to support this campaign. Agreement was reached with Federal Minister F. T. Wahlen that a first group of some 30 Tibetans should be admitted to Switzerland on a trial basis. However, there was no formal organization, let alone money for transportation. Still, the *Swiss Red Cross* had decided to assume responsibility for looking after the Tibetans in Switzerland.

In April 1961 the selection of the first group of 25 was undertaken by my wife Gertrud in the craft centre in Jawalakhel in concert with the Dalai Lama. At my request, the Dalai Lama had personally picked two lamas, **Zatul Rimpoche** and **Wanggyal Rimpoche**, to accompany the first group to Switzerland to see to their spiritual needs. It was important that the first group meet with complete success. Lack of success would probably have spelled the end of the entire campaign. The list of emigrants was submitted to the government as per agreement.

In Nepal, an *agreement* was reached with the Foreign Ministry whereby the government would issue *provisional travel documents*. The agreement contained a paragraph according to which those Tibetans who couldn't get accustomed to the new life or didn't feel happy would be able to *return* to Nepal.

I had come to the same understanding with **Federal Minister Wahlen**, whose attitude towards the campaign was one of sympathy and encouragement.

An initial attempt to find a means to transport the Tibetans to Switzerland free of charge came to nought. I had told **Ambassador August Lindt**, the head of the

mission in Washington, about our problems. He paid a visit with me to the U.S. State Department to ask if the empty military aircraft flying from Vietnam to Europe and the United States might be used to transport Tibetans to Switzerland. (The Vietnam war was raging at the time.) The American response was negative.

The opportunity to take the first group of Tibetans to Switzerland free of charge came with the DC3 that flew the Dhor Patan team from Geneva to Nepal in October 1961 and was scheduled to fly back empty. When I went to the Foreign Ministry to get permission from General Khatri (the list had been in his office for months), he told me out of the blue that permission to leave the country could only be granted if the paragraph relating to the possible return to Nepal was *removed*. Prime Minister Tulsi Giri justified this by saying that the *intention of the Swiss* was clear: to train the Tibetan refugees in Switzerland to become *guerrillas* and to send them back to Nepal to take up the fight in Tibet against the Chinese occupation.

General Khatri himself found this explanation ridiculous, but he declared that no refugees could leave Nepal without the paragraph being deleted. I was expected to persuade the Swiss ambassador in New Delhi, who was also accredited in Nepal, to cut the paragraph. By now I thought I was well enough acquainted with the Tibetans to know that none of them, once in Switzerland, would ever desire to return to Nepal under the conditions currently prevailing there.

I sent a telegram to the Swiss ambassador in New Delhi, **Alfred Cuttat**. His response, however, was negative: he was unable to accommodate the Nepalese. By now we had forced the ICRC's empty DC3 to linger four days at the airport in Kathmandu. The whole programme was at risk. On the spur of the moment I decided to fly *to Switzerland with the next airplane*. Arriving at the Zurich airport, I telephoned Federal Minister Wahlen. He asked me to come to see him in Bern immediately. Once I explained the whole situation to him, he picked up his telephone and instructed the Swiss ambassador in New Delhi to delete the contentious paragraph and to inform the Foreign Ministry in Kathmandu of the matter without delay.

Later the Swiss ambassador in New Delhi complained to me for having gone to the federal minister, something he could have done himself!

But this was not the end of the story. While I was flying to Switzerland, *my family, including my three children, were on their way to Bombay* by ship. Instead of being met by me at the quay, they were handed a telegram, sent by me from Switzerland through the travel agent Thos. Cook, instructing them to wait for me in the Hotel Taj Mahal in Bombay. I wrote that I would be arriving with an Air India flight from Switzerland in two days' time. My wife was naturally at first very perplexed; she had had no idea that I had flown to Switzerland.

My family had brought along a VW bus from Switzerland, and we took a family tour in it under magnificent postmonsoon skies, driving from Bombay via Ajanta,

Agra, New Delhi, Amritsar, Chandigarh, and Dehra Dun to Dharamsala to see the Dalai Lama. My wife Gertrud was particularly delighted to meet the latter, having taken an active role in setting up the carpet-knitting workshop in Jawalakhel in the spring earlier that year and now being slated to take charge of it in November.

As we have seen, this would prove to be of decisive importance for the existence of the carpet programme.

There was no continuation of the VW bus trip from New Delhi to Kathmandu, however, since my presence in Nepal was urgently required to attend to the Dhor Patan team. The whole family, unfortunately, had to return to Kathmandu by plane. Our VW bus was later picked up in New Delhi by Father Moran.

The Farming Settlement of Dhor Patan

The Die is Cast for Dhor Patan

For the resettlement of refugees in Dhor Patan I wanted to recruit one of the two cheese producers from Switzerland Joseph Dubach or Werner Däpp. Both had wide experience in living and working with Sherpas and Nepalese in their alpine enterprises. SHAG/HELVETAS, however, did not want to release them from their duties.

The Swiss physician Dr. **H. Kipfer** and his wife visited me in Jawalakhel in the spring of 1961. Both were greatly impressed by the integration programme for the Tibetan refugees. During the course of several talks, particularly about the planned settlement in Dhor Patan, Dr. Kipfer expressed his desire to work for the project. A thoroughgoing exchange of views seemed to indicate that he was the right man for the job. We agreed that he should keep on the lookout, according to guidelines I had set, for suitable specialists in Switzerland, and that I would then propose his name to the ICRC for the post of project head in the settlement. That was the worst mistake I made in my life.

The first concrete request he put to me, apart from getting the ICRC to officially appoint him project head, was to obtain an import license for *hunting weapons* from the government of Nepal.

The very notion sent a shock through me. This was the last thing we needed in what for Nepal was a very delicate situation, particularly at a time when reports kept surfacing of armed Khampas conducting raids into occupied Tibetan border regions. I strongly encouraged Dr. Kipfer to give up the idea and sent a copy of my correspondence with him on the matter to the ICRC in Geneva.

Put on my guard by this plan, I requested not only a list of the recruited personnel but also a separate list of the material the Dhor Patan team intended to

bring with them. The ICRC was planning to charter a DC3 to transport the eleven-man team and its equipment. That a team of not less than *11 experts* was required for a settlement of at most 1,000 Tibetans—*one expert for every 90 refugees*, in other words—caused me no little wonder. (Later the number of refugees in Dhor Patan turned out to be only 350, resulting in one foreign expert for every 30 refugees).

After that I heard nothing more. The project head confined his dealings to the ICRC in Geneva.

The Fateful Smuggling of Arms

One beautiful day in October 1961 we went to the Kathmandu airport in longing anticipation of the arrival of the DC3 from Switzerland. The plane appeared on schedule high up in the air between the last of the monsoon clouds. The joyful greetings over, I was handed a list of the passengers and goods which the chief customs inspector at the airport used for clearance. My simple signature was enough to obviate any control on the part of the Nepalese.

All eleven Swiss were astounded at the rapid and totally unbureaucratic customs clearance. Reassured, I remarked to Dr. Kipfer, "Thank God, you didn't bring any hunting weapons along. Otherwise it wouldn't have gone so smoothly." The project head, in an undertone of unmistakable triumph over my anxiety, thereupon came back, "What would you say if I told you the weapons are with us?" I was greatly taken aback. What was I to do with the weapons? Confiscate them and keep them under lock and key in the ICRC bureau to ensure that they would not be used? Sooner or later the government was sure to learn of them through its own channels. The pro-Chinese lobby would spread the word that the Red Cross was harbouring a secret arms supply. The best solution would have been to destroy the weapons, but Dr. Kipfer vehemently opposed the idea.

I ordered the Dhor Patan team to take the weapons along with them to the project area and keep them locked up. Were they to be discovered, "hunting" would sound more plausible there than it would at ICRC headquarters in Kathmandu.

No matter what I decided to do, the arms smuggling incident would one day come to light. Should I report to the government that by mistake several hunting weapons had not been declared and that I wished officially to do so now?

I was in a very difficult situation and had no illusions but that enormous problems and complications might arise from it. This was all the more likely now that officials in the Home Ministry (the overseeing authority) from the previous Koirala government had in the meantime been replaced.

Helvetian Know-Alls

I was no less astounded to find in the DC3's consignment list 100 kilogrammes of fine flour and 100 kilogrammes of white sugar along with such farm equipment as shovels and hoes—all things that could have been obtained in Nepal without having to spend 14 francs per kilogramme of air freight from Switzerland.

In the meantime, the government had appointed a *liaison officer for Dhor Patan, the agricultural specialist G. P. Sherma*. His role was to provide aid and advice to the team of Swiss, to whom the country was new, and to act as their interpreter. At first, however, the project head *refused* to take the liaison officer along with them, making him stay behind in Kathmandu for two months.

Before his flight to Dhor Patan, I instructed the project head to seek out contact with the Nepalese inhabitants of the surrounding valleys and to lay the groundwork for *buying staple foods* (rice and millet) *locally*. The *valleys around Gurja and along the entire southern foot of Dhaulagiri* were known to be *regions producing surpluses of rice*. The farmers there exported their rice to Tibet before the Chinese occupation, when the bartering of rice and salt was still flourishing. They would have been happy, now that the trade with Tibet had come to a halt, to be able to sell their rice to the ICRC for a good price. Moreover, they would have gladly carried their rice to Dhor Patan for an additional welcomed fee. This would have been in line with the just demand by the Nepalese government to allow the local Nepalese population to take part in the project. Nowadays the incorporation of local inhabitants into refugee resettlement projects is recognized as a fundamental principle. In Chialsa, **Kurt Egloff, M.D.** had successfully organized local provisioning from the surrounding valleys and thus kept air freight costs to a minimum.

The refugees had still not arrived when the Swiss team reached Dhor Patan. Instead of investing his time in the aforementioned preparations, Dr. Kipfer spent it hunting and, more aggravatingly, writing letters to Geneva to complain about my lack of organizational ability, one sign of which was that the refugees had not yet arrived in Dhor Patan.

When the refugees did arrive, only three weeks late, Dr. Kipfer simply declared that there were no surpluses of staple foods in the surrounding valleys. In order to deal with the locals, though, he would have needed the services of his Nepalese liaison officer whom, from the beginning, he had not wanted to have around. This would have been a unique opportunity to increase the number of jobs and earning capacity of the local rural population—something the government urgently wished.

Thus, before the Tibetans even arrived in Dhor Patan, Dr. Kipfer in his overweening assurance had created an *island out in the middle of nowhere* for himself, cut off from any local contact.

Furthermore, he had countenanced the expenditure of *hundreds of thousands of francs in unnecessary air freight costs*, having as he did all of the staple foods be flown in from the Terai. In some cases this was the same rice that had been carried to the Terai on the backs of farmers from the valleys surrounding Dhor Patan.

The Adventurous Flight of Refugees from Kham to Dhor Patan

The refugees originally scheduled to be resettled in Dhor Patan were ones from Thakkhola. During the summer of 1961, however, a Khampa courier brought me a letter from his Khampa leader, who had been on the trail for over two months with an entire group of some 350 Khampas, particularly farmers and herdsmen with large numbers of livestock, travelling from East Tibet (Kham) in an effort to reach Thakkhola via Mustang. The "bush telephone" had obviously carried news of the resettlement project in Dhor Patan far into Tibet. I sent a message back with the same courier, proposing that the Khampas should contact the out station in Jomosom once they arrived in Thakkhola.

Amazingly, the courier did indeed reach the group of Khampas with my information. They had had to elude Chinese troops repeatedly during their journey and were unable to cross into Nepal at the Mustang border, whence a well-worn caravan route would have taken them south through the Himalaya without their having to negotiate any further passes. Instead they had had to make a detour west and enter Nepal over a high pass via Dolpo. By the time they arrived it was already the end of October. The route from Dolpo south was incomparably longer and more strenuous than the one from Mustang, in that it led over several high passes and through huge gorges with poorly maintained paths. In addition, the feared postmonsoon snowfalls set in, and it was November and the deep of the cold season before they arrived at Tarakot, at the bottom of the ascent to the 4,523-metre Jang La which, now snowed in, was the last pass before Dhor Patan.

A courier brought me news of this along with an account of their current situation. The Khampa leader reported *human and animal losses as a consequence of snow, cold, and hunger*. He *apologized* profusively for the delay. In the meantime I received nothing but complaints from the Dhor Patan project head, and criticism of my faulty organizational skills (the settlers still hadn't arrived), which had left him with nothing to do but fiddle around. Which indeed he did, as remarks above make clear.

The ICRC physician **Dr. George Hartmann**, himself a trained mountaineer, was sent off towards *Tarakot*, where he actually managed to find the Khampa group. The crossing of the high snow-covered pass to Dhor Patan (Jang La) was dramatic. One Tibetan, who now works for Padma in Zurich (a firm that produces medicaments from herbs), experienced the crossing as a six-year-old. He told me briefly of what

he had been through: of how, for example, his grandmother, in ascending through the deep snow, died simply from exhaustion.

Helvetian Incurribility

In December, when Dhor Patan also became snowed in and the supply flights could no longer be conducted as regularly as they had been, the faulty preparations in setting up the programme, particularly the *refusal to buy staple foods in the surrounding valleys*, began to take their toll. Even at that late date and in spite of the layer of snow, the Tibetans could have accomplished the transport with their animals. Contrary to my instructions, though, nothing happened. Instead Dr. Kipfer panicked.

In his fear of "starvation" (obviously more for himself than for the refugees), he began—despite the ban—to *shoot big game* in increasing numbers. I heard of this through the "bush telephone," and of course it also became known of in Kathmandu.

The Dhor Patan team had brought along a *radio set* for communications between Dhor Patan and Kathmandu. The application to the government for permission to operate it was under process, and the prospects of receiving it looked good. I ordered that the radio not be used under any circumstances until *permission* had been granted.

Dr. Kipfer used the radio, nevertheless, *behind my back* and in spite of objections from the Nepalese liaison officer, **G. P. Sherma**, who had by now tardily arrived. This, too, was naturally learned of in Kathmandu, and I was summoned to the Home Ministry to answer for it.

Finally Dr. Kipfer, having made a total muddle of things, and again behind my back, conducted *reconnaissance flights* with one of our aircraft in order "*to search for refugees and suitable resettlement sites*," since Dhor Patan, according to him, was unsuitable. That he looked for such sites far to the north, towards Mustang, and to the north-west, in the direction of Mugu and Simikot—in the border regions, that is—was not only wrong in purely practical terms but also *very explosive politically*. This activity, too, was reported to the government, and I was again summoned to the Home Ministry and taken to task.

A Vain Call for Help

Regarding these developments as of great threat to the whole project, I asked **A. Cuttat**, *the Swiss ambassador in New Delhi*, for help as early as November 1961 in getting Dr. Kipfer to obey government rules, given the sensitive political situation. The ambassador, however, letting himself be prejudiced against me by the project

head, conducted a further "examination of witnesses" among the very Swiss whose bias against the Tibetans had almost doomed the integration project before it could even get started. After their bias had been shown for what it was by the success of the carpet-knitting workshop, they began to direct the whole of their criticism and disapprobation against me personally.

The ambassador used threats to force me to capitulate, citing my supposed lack of organizational ability. The Nepalese government, he said, was completely against me, since I apparently no longer had any control over the ICRC programme and was in danger of losing my post in the UN. (The latter assertion was untrue, as I learned from my friend **James Keen**, at the time the UN representative for India and Nepal.)

On 26 November 1961 the Swiss ambassador to the government of Nepal announced my *resignation as the chief delegate of the ICRC* as of the beginning of February 1962, before a ICRC delegation was scheduled to arrive from Geneva. The latter was at first taken aback by this turn of events.

After the men from Geneva departed, Dr. Kipfer dealt directly with ICRC headquarters, by-passing me completely, even though I still occupied my post. Encouraged in his willful behaviour, he was soon committing further breaches of government regulations.

The Secret, Unapproved Evacuation of Refugees

At the beginning of January 1962 Dr. Kipfer decided to *transfer 350 refugees* (of a total of 750) to the Terai under the pretext of saving food supplies and flight time. I emphatically *warned* him not to do something so senseless, and the Nepalese liaison officer, **G. P. Sherma**, also urgently tried to dissuade him. When I realized that Dr. Kipfer had no intention of listening, I gave him strict orders not to go through with the evacuation. He disregarded all warnings, however, and went ahead with his plans *behind my back*. The agricultural engineer and forester accompanied the refugees to the Terai and were thus kept during these months from their actual duty, the planning of the resettlement in Dhor Patan.

The government was incensed at this *insubordination* and *arrogance* on the part of the Dhor Patan project head and held me, in my capacity as chief delegate of the ICRC mission, responsible together with the Nepalese liaison officer, **G. P. Sherma**.

Shortly before the long march into the Terai, cases of *diphtheria* began to be reported in Dhor Patan. Dr. Kipfer requested injection needles and serum. I sent him stainless steel needles obtainable in Kathmandu, where they were used in all the hospitals. These came back, though, on the next flight along with a demand that I send platinum needles which, apart from the cost factor, were not even available.

The outbreak of *diphtheria* was *concealed*, and a number of infected persons who took part in the march to the Terai evidently spread the contagion.

Investigation with Grave Consequences: Heavy Restrictions

The *Home Ministry* thereupon ordered an *investigation* into why the refugees had been evacuated from Dhor Patan to the Terai without permission and why the incidence of diphtheria had been kept hidden. When Dr. Kipfer realized the seriousness of the situation, he shifted the blame onto me and the Nepalese liaison officer. Due to faulty provisioning, the evacuation had been necessary to keep the poor refugees from starving, he said.

During this same period, reports on the *smuggling of weapons for the Khampas by the Red Cross* appeared in Nepalese newspapers. A connection was seen between this and the secret flights from Dhor Patan to the border regions.

Even though I had enjoyed an unequalled relationship of trust with the previous government, and this relationship had continued basically unchanged under the new one (King Mahendra had sent a message in August of the same year by inaugurating the sales store of the carpet centre in Jawalakhel), the trust was quickly eroded by the Dhor Patan project head's manifold breaches of conduct. Heavy restrictions were placed upon ICRC operations:

1. The rescinding of customs exemptions and other quasi-diplomatic delegation privileges (though not for humanitarian aid material for the refugees).
2. Exceptionally sharp checks on delegation members when entering or exiting the country.
3. The closing of border areas to ICRC personnel.
4. The rescinding of delegation members' former freedom of movement. A permit would now have to be issued for every trip.
5. The rescinding of *carte blanche* permits for Red Cross flights; a tedious approval procedure would be instituted for all flights.
6. The rescinding of the unobstructed transfer of goods. The contents of each Red Cross airplane were to be meticulously inspected. Captain Wick put it this way: "Each head of cabbage will have to be cut open for the officials to see that there's no hand grenade hidden inside it."
7. The closing of airstrips: Jomosom temporarily, Solu for a long time to come, and Khumbu forever.

Fate Runs its Course

At the end of January I travelled to the ICRC headquarters in Geneva (I still occupied the post of chief delegate) and reported Dr. Kipfer's recent misconduct and

the following investigation by the Home Ministry together with the *heavy restrictions* that resulted from it. I stressed the danger that the whole project, which had begun so successfully, was in and demanded the dismissal of the Dhor Patan team leader. At the same time, I proposed that the job of directing the Dhor Patan project be turned over to an outstanding Nepalese specialist, **B. G. Gurung**, who had been the very competent director of the Department of Agriculture in the previous Koirala government.

Dr. Kipfer's violations were brushed off. The evaluation of Ambassador Cuttat and those, of course, of the SHAG/HELVETAS development aid workers carried greater weight in Geneva.

At the beginning of February 1962 a Geneva representative of the ICRC arrived in Kathmandu with my successor, and I was appointed an "honorary delegate" of the ICRC for Nepal. Since Dr. Kipfer was continuing to act on his own and to make fatefully unsound decisions, I turned down the empty title.

At first I had hoped that my successor, a physician with previous ICRC experience in Europe but none in the Third World, would heed my advice. I soon realized, though, that he was falling in step with Dr. Kipfer's misguided ways. Under these circumstances I renewed my refusal to accept the title of honorary ICRC delegate in Nepal.

Closing Down the Out Station in Jomosom

With no reason offered, the out station in Jomosom was simply closed down: the money was cut off and the aid flights discontinued. In spite of ten desperate telegrams sent over the army's radio station (which we could use anytime) and three letters, no answer came from my successor. In the end, the Jomosom team of **Regina Bruppacher** and **Dr. Shrestha** tried to organize aid with 4,000 Nepalese rupees of their own money. When they realized, though, that Jomosom would be shut down, they were forced to dramatically abandon their refugees. Four hundred of the *poorest, sickest, and most undernourished refugees* were simply *handed over to their own fate*. Heartbreaking scenes occurred.

A further consequence was the *break in the supply of spun wool for the carpet-knitting workshop in Jawalakhel*, so that production had at times to be cut.

Regina Bruppacher and **Dr. Shrestha** waited one month in vain in Kathmandu for the opportunity to continue working for the Tibetans. Finally my second successor confirmed their dismissal from the ICRC on the grounds that there was "no" work for them to do.

These were the consequences of Dr. Kipfer's misconduct, which induced the ICRC to pull back from the politically explosive region of Thakkhola (on the route to Mustang).

My second successor was by now, nevertheless, hard at work. Totally unfamiliar with the country (and again a physician), he went about on foot in search of land where the refugees from "unsuitable" Dhor Patan might still be resettled.

The Dhor Patan Refugees' Trail of Sorrows—Act Two

G. P. Sherma, the man appointed liaison officer in Dhor Patan by the government, packed his bags in *March 1962*, unable to endure any longer the obstinate and incompetent project leader. He managed to remain a whole five weeks in Kathmandu before the government forced him to return to Dhor Patan. My successor was unable to read the signs on the wall, in spite of some friendly advice from me, and he showed no inclination to follow through on my proposal to accept into the Dhor Patan project the previous very capable director of the Department of Agriculture in the Koirala government, **G. B. Gurung**, in order not to abandon **G. P. Sherma** completely to the project head's devices. **G. B. Gurung** would have liked to have taken on this duty in January. Since I did not wish to be the scapegoat for the mistakes of the ICRC, I once again turned down the title of "honorary delegate."

My successor prided himself on his "good relations" with the new Home Ministry—in contrast to me—, though he was unable to achieve the lifting of even one single restriction.

Only two months later, in *April 1962*, my successor was forced to sack the *Dhor Patan team*, exactly half a year too late.

In one final stab, I suggested to my successor that the *experienced but jobless Jomosom team* be sent to Dhor Patan—to no avail.

On *15 May 1962* I repeated in writing my suggestion to hire onto the Dhor Patan project the cheese dairy pioneer **Joseph Dubach**, who was now free after five years of successful labours. At the same time, I pointed out to my successor the risks of recruiting an entirely new and inexperienced team from Switzerland when the monsoon was just upon us. All of my warnings and proposals were fruitless, however. He took on a new team of two inexperienced Swiss agriculturalists.

They were soon getting in each other's hair, and news of this presently reached Kathmandu via a Nepalese radio officer.

G. P. Sherma, the Nepalese liaison officer, had no desire under these circumstances to spend the monsoon all alone with the two new Swiss in their isolated location. He got the *Home Ministry* to order 350 of the 800 refugees to be evacuated to an *emergency camp* in subtropical Pokhara (800m).

For the refugees, who were just beginning to feel at home in the healthy high-lying valley of Dhor Patan, the hot lowlands were the last place they wanted to go

during the monsoon period, whose diseases made them panic. *Seven policemen* had to be flown to Dhor Patan *to force* the refugees to leave.

These were the same refugees who had reached Dhor Patan in November after a dramatic two-month-long flight that cost many lives, only to be evacuated to the Terai in January, due to the lack of preparation by the project head. From there they had to walk back to Dhor Patan in February, and now in July they were being reevacuated out.

At my urgent request (a letter of 14 May), my successor condescended at the last minute (and unfortunately after the evacuation) to invite **G. B. Gurung** to visit Dhor Patan. After his inspection, **Mr. Gurung** asked astonishedly *why the refugees had been moved*. Dhor Patan was, he said, ideal for Tibetans, both climatically and agriculturally, and there was *enough land available for many more people*. **Mr. Gurung** did not offer his further services, not wishing to compromise himself by working with the ICRC, which by now had acquired a very bad reputation; nor did the experiences of the other Nepalese working for the project encourage him to do so.

At the *end of May 1962*, after only three months in his post, my first successor was replaced by another completely inexperienced man, and then in *July* the ICRC sent *a second*. The latter had had experience with the ICRC in conducting humanitarian relief work, but he was totally new to Nepal. Only with the *third successor*, **H. Stalder**, who arrived in *October 1962*, was an ICRC chief delegate found with general experience in foreign countries (in his case in the private sector) and also with a heartfelt concern for the fate of the Tibetans.

A Great Success in the Resettlement of the Final Refugees in Dhor Patan

In the end, after many hurdles and distressing events, the final refugees were resettled with complete success. During a visit I paid to Dhor Patan in 1976 I found settlements with imposing houses, schools, a *gompa*, and a guesthouse. Numerous chickens were cackling around the houses. Pats of cow dung were piled up to dry—not as fuel, as elsewhere in Nepal, but for use as fertilizer. The fields were filled with buckwheat and potatoes; with this as a base, a very successful potato seed programme was started for Nepal by the Swiss development aid agency.

Without any foreign assistance, Nepalese women who had been trained in the carpet-knitting centre in Jawalakhel opened a carpet workshop of their own in Dhor Patan. To my surprise, when I asked them for their address they gave me some stationery and air mail envelopes containing the letterhead Dhor Patan Tibetan Carpet Trading Corporation. The most beautifully woven carpets I ever found in Nepal I found there, because they used unaltered traditional patterns and preserved the natural colour of the wool.

Inventive and smart in business ways that they were, the Tibetans had replenished their herds of pack animals and were carrying on a brisk transport service with them from Pokhara. They had also invested in a modern chicken farm near the same city.

On the whole, and in comparison with the surrounding valleys, the settlement of Dhor Patan had a markedly prosperous air to it.

A Sad Farewell

In February 1962 I had, under pressure from Swiss ambassador Cuttat, resigned the directorship of the Tibetan programme in Nepal. None of my successors in the ICRC had had any previous experience in the country and remained in their posts for only brief periods, being replaced every several months. It was only in November 1962 that a Swiss with managerial skills and a heart for Tibetans, **Max Stalder**, was found to take over the programme.

Due to the intrigues of the SHAG development aid workers, my position in Nepal had become very difficult. I was forced to stand by and watch helplessly as my successors made one wrong move after another; they were well on their way to damaging, and even destroying, the integration programme I had started. The Tibetans nevertheless kept coming to me with all their needs and concerns. They complained among other things of the "shabby" treatment they received from certain Swiss delegates. It was humiliating for me not to be able to help them any longer. Thus a feeling began to take hold of me that it was time to leave Nepal.

In February 1962 I submitted a letter to King Mahendra announcing my intention to cease my activities with the UN in Nepal as of 15 July 1962, at the end of the Nepalese fiscal year.

In the meantime, however, Dr. Kipfer, who represented the greatest threat to the Tibetan project, had been sacked by my successor. As a result, I nursed some hope that I might still be able to serve the project further in word and deed. My numerous Nepalese friends also encouraged me to retract my notification. This I did in May 1962. At the end of June, however, only one month before my notification was to go into effect, King Mahendra informed me that he could not honour my retraction.

Since February 1962, when I resigned the directorship of the Tibetan project, I had been devoting my energies once again to my main UN duties as director of

the Basic Survey Department. I made intensive use of the time up to July in, among other things, conducting further aerial surveys, planning related tasks, setting up a simple earth mechanics laboratory for use in road construction, and testing natural materials for the production of bricks. All this was done in close cooperation with the *bilateral aid from Israel* that was just beginning.

To send me off, *Field Marshal Kesher Shumsher*, the brother of the last maharaja, staged together with Boris a grand banquet in the legendary *Royal Hotel*. My many Nepalese friends turned up almost to the man, and for the higher governmental officials this required a firm display of civil courage. On 16 July 1962 a send-off article recounting my past achievement appeared in the Kathmandu English-language daily *The Commoner*.

Kathmandu, July 16

Dr. Toni Hagen is to leave Nepal soon, not on holiday but for his homeland Switzerland. When Hagen first came to Nepal in October 1950, this country knew little about itself, the high Mahabharat mountains and the evergreen Siwaliks with their mighty rivers, falls and fertile Terai were mysteries to its own countrymen. Now after 12 years of Hagen's stay in Nepal we have the key to the secrets of all these natural resources.

Toni Hagen can claim to be the most travelled non-Nepali in the great Himalayas. For full 12 years he has walked around all the giant peaks that allure the greatest of great mountaineers to visit Nepal. He has seen the origin of mighty rivers that flow south through Nepal. He has gauged and surveyed the power potentialities of Nepal's big falls and estimated details of their projection for use by the Nepal Government.

He is the first man to complete an aerial survey of Nepal for various projects. Hagen's report on geological survey of Nepal is his most credible job. He has completed it in about one thousand pages which is to be published by the Swiss Government in 5 volumes.

He established Nepal's first testing center for local building materials, and a laboratory established in cooperation with the National Construction Company is running very satisfactorily. A laboratory for soil mechanics now running quite smoothly is his yet another great service to Nepal. He was the author of the Karnali river project which, however, he has to leave unfinished and go home.

His book on Nepal is one of the best and most authentic books so far published about this Himalayan Kingdom and within a very little time of its publication it has proved to be a bestseller.

10. A portrait of Toni Hagen painted by Lain S. Bangdel, 1962.



His valuable services to Tibetan refugees can never be forgotten. It was through his tireless efforts that some of the refugees have now been rehabilitated in sound conditions in Nepal.

Within record time he established a handicraft training center at Kathmandu which according to the distinguished visitors from abroad is considered to be the best ever organised for the refugees anywhere else. His Majesty the King personally visited this center at Jawalakhel and highly appreciated Hagen's services to refugees. He has made himself so popular among the refugees that they refuse to believe that Hagen is in fact going to leave them for good. They regard him as their father.

It is highly unfortunate when Nepal needs sincere planners like Toni Hagen, he is to leave this land. The planning and modernisation of Kathmandu carried on by an UN expert will be based on aerial survey by Toni Hagen. A similar scheme is also undertaken by Hagen for Banepa.

Nepal found a true and sincere friend in Toni Hagen and his absence shall be greatly felt by many. His sincere and selfless services shall never be forgotten by the Nepalese and he shall ever be remembered here as one of the greatest friends of this Himalayan Kingdom.

I left Nepal on 17 July 1962 at the end of my extremely interesting and manifold activities in that wondrous country and among its engaging people. I look back appreciatively on those 12 years, during which I was much more often the recipient than the giver of so-called development aid. Lifelong friendships were made with Nepalese and Tibetans—which 40 years later are thriving as much as ever.

"The Expulsion of Toni Hagen from Nepal"

Once the trip back to Switzerland from Nepal was over, there was a surprise waiting for me. Arriving at the Zurich airport, I found a message from my wife Gertrud telling me to telephone her immediately. She asked me if the newspaper reports were correct according to which I had been expelled from Nepal. I quickly bought a copy of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*; in the 17 July 1962 edition there was indeed a UPI report from Kathmandu, dated 16 July, with the above title.

My wife also informed me during the telephone conversation that Federal Minister F. T. Wahlen had called her to tell me to go directly to Bern and meet him there. This I did and quickly set matters straight.

The ICRC brought out a true account of the facts in the same edition of the NZZ.

On 20 July a further "clarification" was printed in the Swiss daily *Die Tat* (no. 192), apparently originating from the same "informed sources" mentioned in the wire service report from Kathmandu—that is, from SHAG personnel.

Die Tat wrote, among other things:

As we have learned, the expulsion was for an act that had nothing to do with Hagen's activities for the Red Cross.... Rather, Hagen was replaced as chief delegate on 6 February 1962, and he is said to have been also dismissed as an honorary delegate a few days ago. The fact is that Hagen strongly backed the Congress government, which King Mahendra overthrew, and, banking on his undeniable achievements, apparently did not always conduct himself wholly circumspectly. Thus the king seems to have made use of a Chinese suspicion as the pretext to rid himself of someone who had become intolerable to him.

I myself was totally unable to make any comment on my "expulsion" while in Nepal (in spite of what was written in *Die Tat*), having learned about it only after reaching Switzerland. Thus I could offer no reasons for this "expulsion."

The Continuation of the Tibetan Programme in Nepal is Ensured

I did not let these intrigues affect my peace of mind, and even after my return to Switzerland my main interest was to see that the Tibetan projects continued to run to the point where they could be finally handed over to the Tibetans. The ICRC had for some time now let it be known that it could not continue the programme in Nepal indefinitely. Thus I took the opportunity during the talk I had with Federal Minister Wahlen, immediately after my arrival in Switzerland on 18 July, to ask him to arrange for the programme to be taken over later by the federal government. The federal minister immediately had a meeting set up between me and Ambassador A. Lindt, who in the meantime had assumed directorship of the government's public development aid agency in Bern (DftZ, Dienst für technische Zusammenarbeit, today the DEH). I asked him to continue supporting the Tibetan programme in Nepal once the ICRC pulled out of it.

Ambassador Lindt visited the projects at the end of March 1963, and already by the end of May an agreement was signed between the DftZ and the Nepalese government, stipulating the conditions for the transfer of responsibility and the continuation of the projects.

Afterwards the carpet-knitting workshops were put under Tibetan and Nepalese ownership and converted into private companies, and in Jawalakhel the Tibetan Carpet Trading Corporation was founded as a stock company in order to make marketing more efficient.

The DftZ revived my original idea of selling carpets on the open market and made a success out of it.

The last DftZ team leader, **Peter Arbenz**, left Nepal in September 1967.

The Evaluation of 1968

"A Not Truly Competent Man"

In 1967/68 an evaluation of the carpet-knitting project was carried out by **Dr. Rudolf Högger** of the DEH. The evaluation report bears the date 22 May 1968. On page 22 of it the following remark appears, of a piece with the critical attitude taken from the beginning towards the Tibetans who had been "freed from theocratic slavery by the Chinese":

Aid that brings about true lifesaving economic progress is possible only when repressive structures and value systems are done away with or fundamentally altered.

The evaluator had no field experience and did not know the Tibetans personally. The evaluation was conducted from his desk in Bern. *Dr. Kipfer*, the above repeatedly mentioned ill-fated director of the Dhor Patan project, served as his main informant.

On page 42, my activity is described as "forced reconnaissance": "Thus a clear-cut policy was lacking from the beginning."

Further, on page 48:

To be sure, the delegate of the ICRC in Nepal knew the land and its people from long years of experience, and he enjoyed many personal relationships. This all suggested a unique position of power but, in turn, did not really guarantee that he would be able to handle the refugee problem in a truly competent manner. The ICRC ended up in a dangerous and exclusive dependence on a not truly competent man.

In the fall of 1962 a representative of the DftZ was sent to Nepal to determine "how the ill-fated Tibetan programme could be concluded gracefully.... From his proposals there arose a large carpet project."

The fact is that the carpet-knitting workshop had been the main goal of the entire integration programme from the beginning, that is, from February 1960. In March 1962, when my wife Gertrud resigned as director of the knitting centre to return home, there were already one thousand employees working in it, one hundred of them trained knitters.

Globus Schweiz was able to sell carpets valued at approximately 100,000 Swiss francs in the summer of 1961. In March 1962 projected annual sales were already over 200,000 francs, and production was rising rapidly.

The above-mentioned evaluation led later to gross misinformation being spread (which has lasted up to the present day) in the form of brochures advertizing the sale of carpets stating that the ICRC activities were limited to purely "humanitarian aid." The following example is taken from an English-language brochure about the history of the project in Nepal published by the DftZ for a carpet exhibition in Washington in 1967:

Beginning in 1960 Tibetans began to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. After initial Red Cross aid the problem of finding occupations for the many refugees was attacked by, among other organisations, the Swiss Office of Technical Cooperation. In 1963 three centers for handweaving were established in Nepal.

A major Swiss importer of carpets, basing itself on information by the DEH, writes in one of its brochures:

When thousands of Tibetans came to Nepal at the beginning of the 1960s in search of a new home, the Red Cross did all that anybody could to lessen their great need. A happy turn of events did its part to help the Tibetans. The Swiss development aid agency had many years before invested a considerable part of its financial resources in the Himalayan state of Nepal. What could have been more obvious than the need to come to the aid of the Tibetans before they became a burden on their host country? But what could the Tibetans be employed to do? After many possibilities were considered and found impractical, it was decided to set up a production centre for handwoven carpets, but only, of course, after market studies had been carried out.

On 11 January 1963 a report appeared in the NZZ on "The Help for Tibetan Refugees in Nepal," written by its correspondent in New Delhi. Therein one finds the following comment, in complete contradiction to the statement above:

The ICRC has done much in the past two and one half years for the Tibetan refugees in Nepal. It set up a handicraft centre in Kathmandu, it conducted an agricultural resettlement project in Dhor Patan....

"Forced Reconnaissance"

The above cited evaluator, R. Högger, made public his thoughts on the Tibetan integration programme in a book that appeared in 1975 (Bern and Stuttgart: Paul Haupt) under the title *Die Schweiz in Nepal* (Switzerland in Nepal). The subtitle reads *Erfahrungen und Fragen aus der schweizerischen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit* (Experiences and Questions Arising out of Swiss Development Cooperation).

I shall quote a few brief lines from this book, which was brought out in the Swiss Foreign Affairs Society series. The Tibetan programme is described under the heading "Forced Reconnaissance."

A variety of information has come from the Swiss in Nepal over a period of years. One Swiss who served in the UN made inquiries on his own in the regions where refugees had collected.... It involved not long-term development work but the easing of acute need, and time constraints thus made careful managerial planning and a comprehensive campaign impossible. Finally the mountain of files that have been compiled on the Tibetan programme during the past decades still contains much too little information, or rather much too much trivial information, and it often passes over in silence what is essential.

What is said in this last excerpt is highly applicable to the section of the Högger book dealing with the Tibetan programme.

When the senior vice-director of DEH retired in 1992, he noted in an interview with the Swiss daily *Bund*: "...development aid is at times like a crime novel." This is indeed often so. The only question is, Who are the criminals and who the victims?!

Little Tibet in Switzerland

Chapters 26 and 27 contained an account of how the idea of establishing a *gompa* and resettling Tibetans in Switzerland arose after a slide show on Nepal held at the Hoher Rohn branch of the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC). On that occasion I naturally told of the poor conditions which the Tibetan people and the refugees in Nepal had to put up with. After the slide show we sat down together and talked. Among those present was **Dr. Hans Grimm**, a member of the successful Swiss Everest expedition. The idea of creating a home for Tibetan refugees and constructing a *gompa* in Switzerland arose spontaneously.

Those interested in the Tibetans' fate drew together, in a loosely knit group at first, in order to get the ball rolling. Among them were, in particular, the mountain climber and later member of the Swiss parliament **Ruedi Schatz**, who left this world, sadly, while still young, and the well-known Tibetologist **Blanche Christine Olschak**. In the autumn of the same year Hans Grimm and I brought our plan up for discussion at the meeting of SAC delegates in Winterthur. The reaction was good, and the entire SAC displayed sympathy with the idea of becoming the patron body for the campaign.

On 21 October 1960 the unforgettable **Lorenz Stucki**, at the time the editor-in-chief of *Weltwoche*, wrote a superbly gripping lead article titled "A Gompa for Switzerland." It, to a large extent, was what drew the mass of Swiss to the cause.

In the meantime I made contact with **Dr. Hans Haug**, general secretary of the Swiss Red Cross. Dr. Haug held out the prospect that his organization would issue a sweeping guarantee to the federal government and promise to look after the refugees in Switzerland.

I myself intended to found an association for the creation of a *gompa* in Switzerland. We succeeded in bringing the government of the canton of Schwyz, particularly in the person of its president, **Meinrad Schuler**, around to the idea of

building such a *gompa*. One patron put land at our disposal free of charge in Rothenthurm. After this I had to travel to Bolivia to take up a new post in the UN.

The Rothenthurm plan did not pan out, however, because the Catholic village priest did not want any "heathens" in his community.

Ruedi Schatz redefined priorities, and properly so, in stating that Tibetans should first be resettled in Switzerland to set the stage, as it were, for erecting a *gompa*. With this goal in mind, he founded the *Verein Tibetischer Heimstätten* (Association for Homes for Tibetans).

In the autumn of 1960 Ruedi Schatz, in his capacity as president of the association, submitted a written request to the Federal Council for entry visas for 1,000 Tibetans, Swiss Federal Foreign Minister Wahlen having previously provided visas to a group of 30 Tibetans as a kind of test case. One community, Waldstatt in the canton of Appenzell, magnanimously offered to receive the first arrivals, who came in February 1961.

The Association for Homes for Tibetans had only a very few members but, in the beginning, up to 140,000 patrons. After Ruedi Schatz, **Albert Egger**, the head of the successful Everest expedition, assumed the presidency of the alliance, and following him, a member of the national parliament, **Dr. Otto Wenger**, who directed it with great prudence until its dissolution in 1986.

Whereas the association functioned only as a money donor, the Swiss Red Cross had from the beginning assumed a support role. Later on the latter even bore a growing percentage of the aid costs, up to 80% after 1983.

Today more than 2,000 Tibetans live in Switzerland, some of them having joined their families subsequently, though most new additions have been by way of natural family growth.

The brothers **Henri** and **Jacques Kuhn**, owners of the hardware factory A.G. Rikon, made the offer to the Swiss Red Cross of accepting a group of Tibetan refugees in a ten-family unit they had built themselves and of employing them in their plant. Five families with a total of 22 members arrived in Rikon at the beginning of October 1964. The husband-and-wife team of **Susanne** and **Peter Lindegger** were the first wardens in Rikon for the Red Cross.

Peter Lindegger revived the idea of building a *gompa* and submitted it to the Kuhn family for their consideration. **Henri Kuhn** in particular showed great interest. On 24 November 1967 the Kuhn brothers set up the Tibet Institute Rikon Foundation, which they endowed with a capital of 100,000 francs. They also divested themselves of some of their own real estate to provide the necessary land. The foundation-laying ceremony took place on 29 July 1967, and on 28 September 1968 the building was solemnly inaugurated. Today the Tibetan community in the small village of Rikon numbers more than 80, not including the eight monks in the

Tibet Institute. In September 1993 the institute celebrated its 25th anniversary in the presence of the Dalai Lama.

Unfortunately Henri Kuhn was taken from this world before his time and did not have the opportunity to witness the great success and beneficial work of the institute. Frau Mathilde Kuhn and Jacques Kuhn, together with the foundation's small governing board, have since been directing the affairs of the institute with great circumspection and energy.

Both programmes, the resettlement of the Tibetans and the building of the *gompa*, have proved to be very successful and beneficial.

Thirty Years of the Tibetan Carpet Industry

An Unparalleled Snowball Effect

The carpet project begun in 1960 and handed over to the Tibetans in 1966 acquired an unparalleled snowball effect. The Tibetans trained in Jawalakhel became increasingly independent and opened hundreds of knitting workshops of their own. By 1990 around 110,000 jobs had been created, some five times the number of Tibetan refugees in Nepal. Recent reports now put the number at around 300,000, though according to my estimates this is too high. The Tibetans, born businessmen, have trained and hired Nepalese girls and older women. The foreign currency earnings from the carpet industry amounted in 1992/93 to 169 million U.S. dollars. This is three times the earnings from tourism, with its 61 million U.S. dollars per year. The carpet industry has thus, falling in behind agriculture, become the backbone of Nepal's economy.

The Nepalese Carpet Industry under Fire—Old and New Adversaries

In the spring of 1992 very critical reports bearing the following titles appeared in the press: "Carpet Cleansing Fouls Himalayan Waters" (*The Guardian*), "How 'Genuine' Tibetan Carpets Are Made in Nepal—Children's Fingers Much in Demand" (*Weltwoche*), or "From the Soft, Cheap Hands of Children" (*HELVETAS Partnerschaft* 129/1992).

Part of the criticism is certainly justified, but much of it goes beyond what is constructive. To the extent that no alternative can be offered to employing children for work that generates income among a broad spectrum of the population, the criticism is unfair.

The *impoverishment* of the rural population in the mountains of the Nepalese Midlands and with it the exodus from the countryside has increased in spite of (or more likely as a consequence of) the development aid that began in 1951. "The rich are becoming richer, the poor poorer" is an often heard saying. The Midlands, still a region of agricultural surpluses up to the 1950s, now produces at most two-thirds of its own annual needs. Poverty has increased, as can be seen from the seasonal or year-round migration, particularly among the young. The migration from the mountainous regions has increased from a yearly rate of 3.6% (1959) to 12% (1980), and since then has been rising swiftly.

Migration together with the attendant disintegration of rooted family and social ties is surely a greater evil than child labour in the carpet industry, however reprehensible the latter may be. The recently tapped source of income for Nepalese girls, namely as prostitutes in Indian metropolises, is also a questionable alternative for employment in the carpet industry. In this connection, it is completely wrong to cast sole blame for the evil practice just mentioned on the carpet industry, as HELVETAS does:

Young girls are lured from their villages with promises of being able to work in a carpet factory. Instead of landing up at a loom in Kathmandu, they are sold to brothels in Bombay, Calcutta, etc.

"Tibetan Carpet Barons"?

I still know many private carpet producers from the 1960s. Ties of friendship bind me with several of them. During my almost regular trips to Nepal, my meetings with the Tibetans have always been an occasion for joy on both sides.

It is not only "Tibetan carpet barons," as HELVETAS writes, who produce carpets. Some of the private concerns have remained small, and a fair number are just barely getting by. Others have become large-scale operations with hundreds of employees.

When I visited a large-scale entrepreneur named **Sonam** in 1990, I was not a little astonished to find in his modern building a completely computerized office with polyglot secretaries and fax connections to all over the world.

The social relationship between the carpet businessmen and their employees varies widely. Given the hard competition that currently exists, the marginal firms are naturally tempted to take on as cheap labour as possible, and that means children. It is the middle- and large-scale concerns that can afford to set social standards for themselves and put them into practice.

In the whole of the anti-carpet campaign in *The Guardian*, there are perceptible political undertones. The reporter writes of bloody protests, led by the "leftist

Marxist party," against the lack of clean drinking water. He has evidently made carpet washing the scapegoat for the lack of water in Kathmandu. A political slant is also recognizable in the HELVETAS article, in the comment on "Tibetan carpet barons who put their wealth on display in the form of golden Tibetan frippery and expensive Mitsubishi jeeps."

The Dangers and Limits of the Carpet Industry

Child labour, accounting for approximately 30% of all employees, is indeed widespread among carpet factories. This deplorable state of affairs, however, exists not only in the Nepalese carpet industry. It is, unfortunately, a human-rights crisis affecting the whole of the Third World and a consequence of the bitter poverty that has arisen among large lower-class segments of the population in spite of (or because of?) uncontrolled development aid.

There can be no great hope of eliminating child labour in the Third World without reducing the general level of poverty. Global accords and declarations relating to human rights will have little impact in themselves. As long as the international development aid agencies are unable to fight poverty among the poorest classes of populations more successfully, by means of income-generating projects, "committed" persons from rich nations have no right to demand that governments introduce wholesale bans on child labour.

Child labour must be seen in Nepal in its proper perspective. Of the approximately 250,000 employees, an estimated 30%—that is, around 75,000—are children. However, recent investigations have arrived at a smaller percentage of children. In any case, of the total population of 20 million people, at least a third, comprising about 6 million children (two children per five- to seven-member family), are involved in some kind of labour—for example, in agriculture, housekeeping, or the carrying of water or loads in general.

HELVETAS writes justifiably that "social antagonisms are exploding in the Kathmandu Valley." The carpet industry has nothing at all, however, to do with this. Rather, such antagonisms were instigated in the first instance by development aid. A boycott of Tibetan carpets from Nepal, as has been proposed by certain "green fundamentalists," would lead to the loss of a portion of the 250,000 jobs and only stir up social unrest all the more.

Damage to the environment has, nevertheless, been increasing with the huge expansion of the carpet industry and its concentration in the Kathmandu Valley: the *consumption of firewood* for *dye-works* has risen enormously and thus contributed to the deforestation around Kathmandu. Again, though, this degradation must be seen in relative terms. If only half of the inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley population of approximately one million follow the Nepalese average and use one kilogramme

of wood per capita per day to cook and warm themselves with in the winter (there is no "heating" in the normal sense of the word), then there would be a daily consumption of 500 tons of wood. Compared with this, and with the wood needed for firing the numerous brick kilns, the wood consumed in dyeing and washing carpets is negligible.

Of greater concern is the *pollution* of the *minor rivers* caused by non-degradable chemical dyes. Again, however, the harm done to the Bagmati River must be seen in relation to the effluents from other industrial operations. The pollution caused to the Bagmati from the boom in modern dwellings for the upper strata of the Nepalese population, from the numerous foreign diplomatic personnel and the countless development institutions with their experts and auxiliary staff, and from the many new hotels is incomparably greater. That they all consume correspondingly greater amounts of chemical detergents and other chemical products, and that there is no processing of waste products, only adds to the problem. In the HELVETAS article, however, no mention is made at all of the pollution of the Bagmati.

Moreover, the ground water that is suitable for human consumption is found at depths of over 70 metres. Surface pollution can affect ground water only down to that level. At an average depth of 70 metres there is an impermeable layer of clay protecting what lies below.

The Bagmati was never the clear "Himalayan water" that *The Guardian* describes, having for ages served the drainage needs of Kathmandu. During the dry period it is a paltry stream and thus able to endure very little strain as it is. The catchment area of the Bagmati is the Kathmandu Valley; its feeders do not arise in the Himalaya. It is thus unforgivably misleading on *The Guardian's* part to write, "Carpet cleansing fouls Himalayan waters."

The *drinking water supply* of the Kathmandu Valley is in fact in danger, but it has been so not only since the washing of carpets began. It is not fair to lay the blame for the precarious situation of the drinking water supply in the Kathmandu Valley at the door of the carpet industry. The drinking water supply could substantially be improved, by about 50%, simply by stopping the leakage in the piping system. According to official sources, the leakage is around 45%, while outside agencies put the figure at 60%.

Air pollution in the Kathmandu Valley is caused to only an insignificant extent by the firing of carpet dye-works. The inhabitants' many log fires and, more importantly, the brick kilns that have shot up like mushrooms must be termed the major sources of air pollution. To these may be added the overflow of motor traffic, none of it subject to emissions control.

The *cement factory in Kirtipur* has caused incomparably greater environmental damage than the carpet industry.

The brick kilns and the overall boom in the construction industry, consequences of development aid, have laid claim to large areas of the most valuable and fertile (and in some cases irrigable) farmland, thus greatly detracting from the unique natural beauty of the Valley, an essential and irreplaceable drawing card for tourism.

It is unfair and misleading to make the carpet industry responsible for this, as HELVETAS does:

So-called "shops," houses quickly and cheaply assembled from bricks and plain concrete, are literally shooting up out of the earth like mushrooms and cluttering up the once fertile Kathmandu Valley.

In fact, the volume of new construction assignable to the carpet industry constitutes only an insignificant fraction of the total boom since the 1960s. This boom was mainly caused and financed by development aid money.

The following claim made by HELVETAS is also misleading:

The low wages [in the carpet industry] also fetter local industry: two or three hundred thousand people who earn little consume just as little and generate no demand for local goods.

The only thing that need be added is that no wages at all create even less demand for goods.

The *negative* aspects of the carpet industry in the Kathmandu Valley should not be played down. It is a fact that the industry has got out of hand and *overstepped the bounds of what is quantitatively justifiable*. The dangers resulting from an economic recession in the customer countries cannot be denied, given the dependence on this industry. However, HELVETAS's criticism of the introduction of modern designs based on marketing studies to complement the traditional ones is wide of the mark and betrays a strange lack of insight into industrial ventures—the same lack of insight responsible for a great many failures in development aid.

Changes Called For in the Carpet Industry That Can Be Effectuated

Limiting damage to the environment is difficult but not impossible. A partial decentralization to regions outside the Kathmandu Valley would surely be one sensible step. This shift, however, would have to be to the hill regions and not, as some critics call for, to the Terai. The relocation to an industrial complex in the Terai would probably spell the end of the major portion of the Nepalese carpet industry. The main sufferers would be Nepalese workers.

As for dyes, laws should be enacted mandating the use of biodegradable substances. The modern chemical industry, now more attuned to environmental concerns, is already producing such dyes.

A successful pilot plant for carpet washing is running in Kokani. The methods applied are simple and cheap. The Swiss firm Sandoz, in the person of its expert Pawel, is collaborating with a pioneer Nepalese carpet firm, which is under the management of Sherma.

To ease energy demands, water should be heated increasingly by means of solar batteries. In decentralized production sites in the hills, electric energy should be generated either by electrovoltaic cells or small-scale hydroelectric stations. This is already what is being done in the carpet centre in Chialsa.

There must be a call for *quality control* that is based on all the above conditions, including the social factors, and that leads to the conferral of a *seal of approval*, such as MISEREOR and other institutions have introduced for Tibetan carpets from India. The standards adhered to by Max Havelaar coffee, which grants a seal of approval on the basis of just compensation to the coffee farmers and a qualitatively superior product, should become basic.

Such a seal of approval for carpets would single out as a target the exploitation of children and would guarantee the quality of the carpets. This would dampen the boom along with its environmentally negative side effects. Finally, consumer awareness should be heightened to the point where consumers are prepared to pay a somewhat higher price for carpets containing the seal of approval.

The association of carpet producers is thoroughly cognizant of the problems their industry faces. It is willing to join with the government in taking measures to limit damage. The association of producers would also be more than willing to cooperate in working out the conditions for granting the seal of approval and in conducting the associated control work.

The call by "*green fundamentalists*" for a boycott of Tibetan carpets produced in Nepal is totally misconceived, along with such sentiments as expressed in *The Guardian*: I am waiting for the day when owning a Tibetan carpet incurs the same disapproval in the west as wearing a leopard skin coat today.

To raise such a demand is to be irresponsible to the needs of the 250,000 employees in the carpet industry, as long as other jobs paying commensurate wages cannot be offered to them.

Propaganda and Facts

Oscar P. Pawel, who is in charge of the environment and pollution prevention section of Sandoz Switzerland, Basel, has investigated the sources and the degree of

pollution in the Bagmati's waters. The findings relating to *oxygen demand* (kilogrammes/day) needed to reduce the pollution of waste water for both the organic (biological) degradable waste (BOD) and anorganic (chemical) waste (COD) to an internationally acceptable maximum level are as follows:

BOD	municipal waste water	20,000 kg per day
	carpet washing	34 kg per pay
	% carpet washing	0.17%
COD	municipal waste water	60,000 kg per day
	carpet washing	200 kg per day
	% carpet washing	0.34%

The percentage of oxygen demand needed to degrade pollution is a measure of the pollution itself. It is thus seen that the pollution of the Bagmati resulting from the dyeing of wool and the washing of carpets is negligible compared with the pollution produced by the general population of Kathmandu.

Basic data:

population of Kathmandu	approximately 500,000 people
annual carpet production	approximately 1 million sq. metres
annual water demand for washing	150 litres (per carpet)

A Pioneer's Work

Laxman Shrestha, the owner of Soorya Carpet Industries, Kathmandu, has drawn the proper conclusions and, in cooperation with its European co-sponsors, the German importers Sabet & Sons and Sandoz Products of Switzerland, established an environmentally sound model for dyeing and carpet washing near Kakani, on the motor road to Trisuli about 25 kilometres outside of Kathmandu. With an investment of 114,000 U.S. dollars, a plant with a capacity to clean 500 square metres of carpet surface per day has been set up, using water from a small mountain stream. The waste water is repurified to an extent where it can be used for irrigation purposes. Many people in the Kathmandu Valley would be glad to have for their consumption drinking water of the quality of the Kakani plant—treated waste water.

The Soorya dyeing and washing plant in Kakani has a labour force of 160 (no children), most of them from nearby localities. Employees enjoy educational facilities and obtain free medical service, including transport to hospital. This service is also extended to the local villagers.

Based on his positive experiences in the labour-intensive washing plant in the hills outside of the Kathmandu Valley, Laxman Shrestha is at present building a new

carpet factory near Kharidunga on the road to Jiri, 100 kilometres east of Kathmandu. Along with the production plant, another carpet washing plant will be established nearby.

By his commendable pioneer efforts, Mr. Shrestha has led the way for others to gradually move at least a part of the carpet industry out of the Kathmandu Valley, to create job opportunities in the hills, and at the same time to protect the environment.

Thank You, ICRC

Without the courageous involvement of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1960, in an entirely new kind of international refugee aid:

The 20,000 Tibetan refugees in Nepal would not have found a new home; Nepal would not have had the most successful development project to date, with approximately 250,000 new jobs and annual foreign currency earnings of at least 70 million U.S. dollars; we would not have had any Tibetans in Switzerland to enrich our daily life; we would not have had the Tibet Institute in Rikon, which has established a reputation for itself internationally, nor would the Dalai Lama's representative for Europe have been stationed in Switzerland—an honour for our small alpine country.

For this I would like to express my deepest thanks to the ICRC.

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PART IV

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Nepal 1962-1992

*The Throne of the Gods
Does Not Keep Its Promises*

Where the gods live—there must also treasures be. The people who firmly believe in legendary and mythical traditions of the Himalaya imagine that it, as the throne of the gods, is rich in gold and precious stones. At one time Nepal actually had numerous small manually operated mines in which sundry utensils were produced for the local market. Nowadays such small labour-intensive enterprises are profitable only in remote regions that are protected by the lack of infrastructure from the much cheaper goods mass produced in India.

"Holy Wars" in the History of Earth Science

The formation of deposits of ore is the result of dozens, if not hundreds, of millions of years of tectonically minimally disturbed physical and chemical processes, the result of which is to concentrate certain minerals that occur practically everywhere in the earth's crust, but usually only in thin and evenly distributed amounts. *Block tectonics*, that is, simple upward and downward movement along faults, has sped up this process, as in the Andes.

In the case of the so-called nappe mountains, such as the Alps, much more complicated processes have been at work in their formation, the causes and actual details of which are only now being unravelled. In the genesis of nappe mountains, broad rock formations are first drawn deep into the earth (subduction), saturated with molten magma, and transformed under high pressures and temperatures (metamorphosis). In the second, very much younger phase of orogenesis, these transmuted formations are pressed upwards by horizontal and vertical forces, exuded, and—most decisively—moved hundreds of kilometres by horizontal thrust and

gravitation onto younger formations of rock. The *overthrust masses* are called *nappes*. As part of this orogenic process, the rocks of the nappe overlay are folded, rolled out, thoroughly rabbled, and broken apart. Even if large deposits of ore existed in the formations of what later become the nappes, they would largely be torn asunder during the above-mentioned process of mountain formation.

Whether a mountain range is rich in undisturbed and minable mineral deposits or large oil fields significantly depends, therefore, upon whether it exhibits a block or nappe structure. A false interpretation of geological surveys can have economically devastating consequences, as example, in the following section, of the pre-1968 National Petroleum Institute in Dehra Dun in North India shows.

Various Indian geologists along with A. Heim and A. Gansser had as early as 1939 determined the nappe structure of the Indian Himalaya. Their results, however, were far from being internationally accepted.

I myself, from my own experience in the Alps, was quite familiar with nappe structures when I first set foot on Himalayan soil in October 1950, and I knew where field studies should be concentrated. Already during my first expedition in 1951 I found confirmation of the suspected nappe structure. In 1954 I published the first profiles with such a structure running through the Himalaya from the Terai to the Tibetan border. At the end of my nine-year field work, one grand nappe structure for the whole of the Nepalese Himalaya stood arrayed before me. I was forced to shatter all hopes of rich underground treasures.

Later, though, false expectations of such treasures were constantly raised by foreign experts in the service of the UN or bilateral development aid projects. Japanese, American, and particularly Russian geologists vehemently rejected the notion that the Himalaya had a nappe structure, and proceeded along on the assumption of block tectonics. Supporters and opponents of continental drift, the theory of huge horizontal movements proposed in 1915 by the brilliant **Alfred Wegener**, were at loggerheads for decades and at times engaged in a battle that might almost be called a "holy war" within geology.

In 1967 American and English geologists declared a "revolution" in geology. By means of refined geophysical techniques and deep-sea borings, the drifting of continents and their division into plates (plate tectonics) was set on a firm footing. It would be years, however, before there was a breakthrough in the recognition of the nappe structure of the Himalaya.

In 1974 a special seminar was held in Nepal by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in order "finally" to clear up the uncertainty over the local geology and mineral deposits. The present author was not invited for fear that pet ideas might be bashed.

With 1.15 million U.S. dollars, the UNDP initiated a new Geological Survey Project for the period 1974-1977. After intensive field studies carried out by the

experienced Swiss geologist **Jovan Stöckli** as a member of the UNDP team, a publication written by him came out in 1979, summarizing the results. Concerning the complex of Kathmandu he comes to the following succinct conclusion: "A large thrust mass as originally conceived by Hagen."

What misguided geological interpretations can lead to will be demonstrated on the basis of the following example, the search for petroleum in India.

Fateful Nationalization in India—Looking for Petroleum in the Wrong Place

In 1960 India nationalized its petroleum industry. In furtherance of this aim, the National Petroleum Research Institute was established in Dehra Dun, financed by the United Nations Development Programme. At the request of the Indian government, the team of experts was recruited solely from the Soviet Union—a unique occurrence in the history of the UNDP. The Soviet Union made many promises, in particular that it would cede most of the profits, were petroleum to be found, to the Indian state, in contrast to the "oppressive capitalist multinationals."

The first phase of the project lasted from 1960 to 1963, and the second continued up to 1968, at a total cost of 6.5 million U.S. dollars. When, without any new discoveries having been made, a third phase was requested both by the Indian and Soviet governments, requiring an additional 3 million dollars, the UNDP ordered an independent evaluation. This was carried out in December 1968 by a three-man team (two oil experts, one Canadian and one English, under the direction of the present author) with the following results: no new finds of petroleum worth mentioning had been made since 1960, even though the Indian government had, on the advice of the Soviet experts, invested around 300 million U.S. dollars in exploring for oil above and beyond what the UNDP research centre in Dehra Dun was doing. In 1968 no fewer than 43 rigs were in operation, seven of which had been taken over from American oil multinationals during the nationalization process. India bought another 36 rigs from the Soviet Union. The Soviet equipment, however, suffered an extraordinary number of breakdowns.

Since no new finds were made, oil imports consumed 60 percent of India's foreign currency reserves, and approximately one-quarter of its petroleum needs had to be imported up into the 1980s.

The Red Neck Mission

When the evaluation team arrived at the headquarters of the UNDP in New Delhi in 1968, we naturally expected to meet the head of the project, **Prof. Emerenko**, for a preliminary discussion of how to plan the evaluation in common. We were not a little astounded, therefore, upon hearing that he was away in Dehra

Dun. The evaluation seemed to have lost a valuable day. I met many people I knew from my earlier activities in Nepal. I visited them all in their offices, and there were very happy reunions. In one office I unexpectedly caught sight of Prof. Emerenko, who quickly tried to escape through another door. I greeted him, however, and he embarrassedly said something about there being a "misunderstanding."

The geological content of our talk was meagre, but he soon demanded in no uncertain terms, "You must submit your report to me first."

I declared that there was no question of doing so. Our report would be going to the UNDP in New York, and from there it would be passed on, via the UNDP representative in New Delhi, to the Indian government. It was up to the Indian government to provide him with a copy.

An Indian UNDP colleague then showed us a newspaper article that had appeared that very day, containing the report that the Indian government had declared a Soviet seismologist from the institute in Dehra Dun *persona non grata* because of espionage activities and had told him to leave the country.

The chief Indian geologist of the institute in Dehra Dun, **Dr. Kohli**, was well known to me from the Geological Survey of India in Calcutta, where he had previously worked.

After a dinner together with him in the Hotel Ashoka, he asked to have a talk with us. He refused, though, to have it in my room, where listening devices might have been installed. Thus we went out into the dark park, and only when Dr. Kohli was sure that no one was following us did he lay bare his worries to us. He complained bitterly that the eight Soviet geologists knew nothing about the structure of the Himalaya and remained fixated on block tectonics. They therefore were concentrating their studies on the Siwalik chain and the Terai at the foot of the Himalaya—that is to say, in the wrong place. This explained the poor results of previous explorations.

During these years the computerization of the search for oil was getting under way, and the Americans got a jump of one generation on the Soviet Union. The obvious goal of the Soviet government, as far as the project financed by the UNDP was concerned, was to get hold of modern computer equipment and techniques exploitable for seismological purposes. Not only was the most modern of seismological equipment from the United States imported with UNDP money to further their aims, but also training fellowships in the United States were monopolized by the Soviet experts.

The mistrust that the Soviet experts showed towards the evaluation team was so great that they would not let us alone for one moment and "constantly breathed down our necks," as the English expert noted sarcastically, so that by the end of the mission we all had "red necks." We were soon calling ourselves in private the "red neck mission."

The Indian geologists asked the evaluation team to put an end to the project with the Soviet experts. This was indeed the eventual outcome. Our official report to the UNDP in New York, which was transmitted to the Indian government, was probably the shortest evaluation report that was ever sent to any government. Covering barely half a page, it stated that the foreign experts had trained their Indian colleagues so well that the latter were now able to run the institute in Dehra Dun by themselves.

Further recommendations were to relocate the oil explorations from the Siwaliks at the foot of the Himalaya to the south, particularly in the offshore areas west of Bombay (the so-called Bombay Highs), and to invite in large multinational oil corporations, the only ones with the know-how and financial capacity to carry out the difficult offshore drilling.

These recommendations were at first accepted by the Indian government only hesitantly, as they were thought to be inconsistent with its former policy. Finally, though, success was achieved in the region west of Bombay.

Professor **Emerenko** maintained his domineering attitude up to the end of our mission and repeatedly demanded of the evaluation team, "You must submit your report first to me"—which we naturally consistently refused to do.

When, during the final reception hosted by the Indian minister for oil and natural gas, Prof. Emerenko kept asking about our finds in the presence of many diplomats, I finally took the liberty to pose a question in return: "Where is the petroleum?" There was an awkward silence, and oil ceased to be a further topic of discussion.

The Insistent Pursuit of Misguided Ways

During his numerous visits to Nepal, Prof. Emerenko went on foisting his cherished ideas about oil upon the Nepalese government and tried to establish in Kathmandu an institute similar to the one in Dehra Dun, with the help of UNDP aid. "The only thing needed is the 'right' geologists," he said.

The representative of the UNDP played along with him, though. In his Country Programme for Nepal for the period 1976/80 he wrote as follows:

Today, no systematic mineral exploration work has been carried out in Nepal. In the last two decades a series of geological surveys and feasibility studies were conducted with bilateral assistance—USAID, India, USSR and the People's Republic of China.

Given that the Himalaya, like the Alps, exhibits a nappe structure, large deposits of minerals cannot be expected to exist. In the Himalaya, as in the Alps, ore is found

in many places, but these are only small deposits of not very valuable raw materials. They are not worth the trouble of being tapped, mined, and industrially processed.

The same applies to any reserves of oil. They can occur, if at all, only away from the nappe structures, that is, in the southern part of the country in the Terai, in the Indo-Nepalese border region. If they are there, they probably lie at great depths, under the kilometres-thick Siwalik formations. One can easily picture the political consequences of rich oil finds in this border region between two unequally matched neighbours. A trial of strength between India and Nepal has been under way now for three decades over the utilization of Nepalese water, and relations between the two countries has suffered much because of it.

In succumbing to foreign experts' pipe dreams, Nepal has continually let itself be misled into needlessly investing millions of rupees and expanding support institutions. As examples, one need only mention the dubious, scandal-ridden Oil Corporation and Coal Corporation.

The New Nepal Bureau of Mines

One of the most striking experiences of my visit to Nepal in 1993 was a trip to the Bureau of Mines. There I found a new generation of geologists, one thoroughly informed about modern advances in tectonics and in geological mapping. The nappe structure is now fully understood by them and firmly ingrained in their outlook—no a matter of course given the very complicated structures in the Himalaya. The geological and tectonic units established by me in 1959 have largely been adopted.

I hope that the specialists in the Nepal Bureau of Mines will be more consulted in future for major projects dealing with landslides, road construction, dams (engineering geology) and, most especially, hydrogeology, which will play an increasingly important role in the country's development.

The Swiss Alps: Even in 1900 No Throne of the Gods

During the Middle Ages sundry small ore deposits were mined in the Swiss Alps. Once modern mining, in its industrial and infrastructural exploitation of major deposits, came to operate much more cheaply in neighbouring countries, almost all mining enterprises in Switzerland had to be abandoned for economic reasons. The government of the canton of Graubünden still had visions of mining, however, even at the end of the 19th century, particularly in view of the nuggets of gold, some up to 125 grams, found in the Calanda range near Chur. In 1900 the government requested the famed **Albert Heim**, the doyen of alpine geologists, to give his considered opinion.

He wrote:

For all of the technical improvements in mining, transport, and smelting, there is no getting around one overriding fact: the good ores are unfavourably distributed and present in too meagre amounts to ever be capable of rational exploitation.

Frequent Trips Back to Nepal

First Visit after Six Years

Six years would pass before I again set foot on Nepalese soil after having left it in 1962. The global conference of UNDP representatives in developing countries held in New Delhi in 1968 gave me the opportunity to pay a short visit to neighbouring Nepal.

There were moving reunions with many of my friends. Towards the end of the same year I again had the opportunity to visit Nepal, this time in connection with the evaluation I was carrying out of the Indian National Petroleum Institute in Dehra Dun, as has been described in the previous chapter.

During the 1970s I was twice in Nepal to take part in interesting international seminars on rural development, this in connection with my teaching duties at the ETH in Zurich. In 1976 I also paid a visit to the Tibetan settlement in Dhor Patan and also naturally—a feature of all my stays in Nepal—the carpet industries in Kathmandu and in Hyangja near Pokhara.

My Last Visit in Khumbu, 1978

In 1978 I was again in Nepal, this time arriving from Bangladesh, where I was conducting an evaluation mission. Royal Nepal Airlines invited me to join a flight to Khumbu with Captain Wick on board a Pilatus Porter. The landing strip built in Mingbo in 1961 by the ICRC had long since gone out of operation. Instead there was a runway near Syangpoche (3,400m) above Namche Bazar to serve tourists. The Japanese owners of the Everest View Hotel, including some of the Japanese mountaineers I had met in 1953 in the Marsyandi gorge, had invited me to spend

several days in their splendidly located establishment. From there I had plans to walk to the monastery of Tengpoche. It would be my final visit to Khumbu.

Having landed on the airstrip of Syangpoche after a lovely flight with Captain Emil Wick on an equally lovely autumn day, I had a delightful surprise waiting for me. When I stepped out of the airplane, my old **Sherpa Tashi**, whom I had not seen since 1962, was there to greet me. The Japanese, being very attentive hosts, had arranged for this. Tashi lives in the nearby Sherpa village of Khumjung.

The first thing Tashi did was to greet his "haggimsahb" smartly with a "gudmanning" (good morning), and then he relieved me of my backpack as if it was the most natural thing in the world, and as if only a short time had passed (not the almost 20 years) since our last expedition. We walked together along the magnificent trail to the hotel, which is located in an unsurpassed setting within a thin forest of firs, enjoying a view onto the Everest group, Ama Dablam, and Kangtega.

I immensely enjoyed the stay in the Everest View Hotel and the comfort it afforded in comparison to the expeditions to Khumbu in 1955, when the cold at the Everest Base Camp at the end of that year had been formidable. How nice it was to be sitting now in the cosy warmth in front of the large picture window, sipping *chang*, and enjoying a sunset that turned Everest red.

The next day I walked with Tashi to Tengpoche Monastery (3,700m). Much had changed over the previous 20 years. Numerous tea shops had sprung up along where the path descended to the river, and on the other side where it reascended. Many of the older Sherpa shopkeepers were relatives of Tashi. Some of them remembered me from the 1950s or from the time the landing strip had been laid out at Mingbo. If they didn't, Tashi refreshed their memories.

Thus a stop at each tea shop was unavoidable. I enjoyed the Sherpa tea (very strong, dark, full of sugar and milk), while Tashi consumed the same volume of *raskhi* (distilled rice liquor).

In *Tengpoche* the abbot remembered me from earlier days, when he had been a half-grown child. He immediately invited me in for a friendly cup of tea.

Whereas I had practically the whole trail to myself on the early-morning walk from the hotel to Tengpoche, I met many trekkers and mountain climbers on the way back. All of their faces shone radiantly, and one could see how much they were enjoying the lovely surroundings. My Sherpa Tashi knew virtually all of their Sherpas, and they constantly struck up conversations between them.

Having previously read of the "garbage trail" to Everest, I was now pleasantly surprised. On the way from Namche Bazar to Tengpoche, in any case, I found hardly more refuse than I would have on a heavily trodden hiking route in the Swiss Alps. Hillary's campaign to establish holes for dumping waste was evidently working.

On Toni Hagen's Khukuri Trail, 1980-1989

A happy circumstance allowed me to take up trekking in Nepal again between 1980 and 1990. From the end of the 1970s the publishers Kümmerly und Frey A. G. in Bern, who had printed and brought out the three editions of my picture book (1960), began jointly with Swissair to organize trips led by authors to the country dealt with in their new picture books or new editions, after the latter appeared on the market.

Such a trip to Nepal was organized when the third edition of the picture book came out in 1980. To me it was obvious that we wouldn't simply be taking a trip to Nepal; I wanted to conduct a special senior citizens' trek, having become almost 30 years older myself by then.

The trekking would be to areas where the elevation would not be too high or the differences in elevation too great, and where the main travel routes were not too far away, in case of emergency. The route would follow elevated paths and offer constant views of the 8,000-metre peaks. The camping sites would likewise be on crests from which the incomparably lovely sunrises and sunsets could be enjoyed. I envisioned one or two camps being along small, warm streams affording the opportunity to swim and do laundry. At the same time, well-worn trekking routes would be avoided, for I wanted to show my friends Nepal as it had originally been and as I myself had experienced it. People would be able to forget their daily routine back home.

The trekking groups would be kept small, an average of 10 to 20 participants. Nepalese food would form the main items of consumption.

I quickly settled upon the trekking region that fulfilled all of these conditions: the area around the valley of Pokhara. This, in my opinion, is the region of Nepal containing the most scenic landscape. In addition, I knew all the paths, all the overlooks, all the camping sites.

My senior citizens' trek was such a success that it was repeated every one or two years up to 1989. All of the participants have become hooked on Nepal; some repeated the tour, and others began to do their own more demanding treks.

For me, too, it was a glorious, leisurely trek along the venerable and sacred stone paths dotted with *chautaras* (rest stops) in the shadow of lovely pipal trees. Our form of trekking was naturally a pure holiday for our Sherpas. The porters, too, had shorter daily routes than usual.

When we reached our campsite around 4 o'clock, the tea would soon be on the table, and we could enjoy the magnificent landscape and quickly forget how tired we were. The *khukuri rum* that we added to the tea did its part to relax us. It is produced from Nepalese sugarcane. At the beginning of the afternoon teatime we added a small drop of rum to the tea, but then as shadows lengthened the ratio of

tea to rum slowly and surely shifted around in favour of the latter. By the time we were ready to go to bed, or rather to crawl into our sleeping bags, the drink had usually turned into pure rum. Thus we were in constant high spirits in camp. We daily consumed at least one bottle of rum and sometimes almost two, and the Sherpas always had sufficient supplies on hand. Only once did we ever fall on hard times, when the rum temporarily ran out and the Sherpas guilelessly and almost convincingly said, "Bottle broken."

The trekking agency in Kathmandu that organized our tour called it, quite rightly, "senior executive trekking," not because we lived luxuriously but because the Sherpas and porters left nothing undone to make our trekking as pleasant as possible.

In time, though, our trekking came to be called, again rightly, "Toni Hagen's *khukuri* trail."

Our sirdar Sherpa Ang Temba was an old hand, having for years been in charge of various trekking organizations, which are here lumped together under the fictitious name Trekkerman Group. One evening, when we were sitting in front of our tents enjoying a lovely sunset, the Sherpa suddenly spoke up, "Sir, me not very much liking Trekkerman Group."

When I asked him why he answered drily, "In Trekkerman Group all saying bullshit."

After a few moments of silence he added, "Sir, me very much liking Toni Hagen group."

In response to my next question he answered, "Toni Hagen group very much eating, very much drinking, very much laughing."

The Trekkerman people he previously had dealings with rewarded him with bullshit and became nasty when they failed to be served the sausages and beer they were accustomed to at home, or when the weather was bad, or when they were suffering from the heat.

The Toni Hagen group, by contrast, lived exclusively on Nepalese products that were prepared in the Nepalese fashion, drank local *khukuri* rum, were gay, often laughed and sang, and didn't let their good spirits be dampened by bad weather or torrid climbs. Moreover, the Toni Hagen group maintained very personal, warm relations with the Sherpas and porters, as witnessed by the fact that contact has been kept up for years through letters.

The Referendum of 1980

In 1979 King Birendra started making preparations for a referendum. The Nepalese would be given the chance to decide for themselves whether they wished to retain the panchayat system decreed by King Mahendra or to change to a

democratic multiparty system. I wrote about this in my 1980 edition of my picture book as follows:

During the referendum campaign, complete freedom of opinion at public demonstrations, in press interviews and articles is said to have been guaranteed. On the other hand, the prohibition on the founding of associations, societies and organizations was still in force. The referendum was held on 2 May 1980. 54% of the 4.7 million voters favoured the present Panchayat system, while 46% of the votes were given to a constitution with political parties and an elected parliament. Bearing in mind that the campaign for the Panchayat enjoyed all official facilities, such as funding, the use of the government-controlled radio and local structures on the village level with landlords and moneylenders, King Birendra will have to reckon with the very large unhappy minority. Unrest will undoubtedly continue if no reforms are made and if the large minority will have no say in the government. It would be regrettable if B. P. Koirala, the fighter for human rights, were barred forever from participation in the government. The political alternatives are very limited in view of Nepal's all-too-powerful neighbours.

B. P. Koirala died, sadly, in 1982. Almost the entire population of Kathmandu took part in the procession to the sacred cremation site in Pashupatinath. King Birendra richly praised the sacrifices Koirala had made for Nepal. This led to speculations that he possibly had him in mind to lead a new government at some point in time. B. P. Koirala might have been able to prevent the bloodshed of 1992.

King Birendra seemed to have accepted my above cited criticism, for only three years later he bestowed a high honour on me.

1984: Citation by King Birendra

Background

In the year 1980 I presented my old friend **Dr. Mohan Sainju**, a former vice-chancellor of Tribhuvan University, with the new edition (1980) of my picture book about Nepal. The latter was a fully revised updating of the second edition of 1970 and dedicated more space to economic and ecological problems. Reference was made, among other things, to my earlier reports, particularly to my UN Report No. 1, which had been submitted to the government: *Observations on Certain Aspects of Economic and Social Development Problems in Nepal* (1959).

Dr. Sainju proceeded to dig out my old reports and the proposals that I had made to the government as the director of the Basic Survey Department.

During my next visit to Nepal, in 1982, Dr. Sainju asked me to make a copy of my new picture book available to King Birendra through him. **King Birendra** evidently studied my book thoroughly, and also my earlier above-mentioned reports.

In 1983 the governmental *Planning Commission*, under the chairmanship of **King Birendra**, conducted an internal study in search of an answer to the question of why the results of 30 years of development aid and the expenditure of 5 thousand million Swiss francs had been so disappointing. The *deputy chairman* of the Planning Commission, **Dr. Mohan Sainju**, had a copy of the study findings delivered to me for perusal and comment.

Then a long time passed before I heard anything further from Nepal. Finally in November 1983 I received a message from the palace in Kathmandu that King Birendra, during his upcoming trip to Washington, would be staying for one day, the first of December, in the Hotel International in Zurich, and that I was requested to be at Zurich's airport to greet him the day before.

It so happened that I was scheduled to host a slide show that evening on Nepal in the canton school in Trogen. I had King Birendra informed in the Hotel International that I would visit him in the forenoon of the following day, 1 December.

The next morning in the hotel I quickly ran into old friends and acquaintances in the king's entourage. I particularly recalled **Ambassador Binda Shah**, whom I had known since the beginning of the 1950s, then as Miss Binda Malla, in the secretariate of the Foreign Ministry. In 1952 her father had been the counterpart of the Swiss survey engineer Eugen Hauser. The extremely pretty, charming, and witty Miss Malla may well have been the reason why foreign mission functionaries showed up at the Foreign Office in greater numbers than could have been explained by mere official business.

Later, having married a Shah, she was the ambassador in Bangladesh, where again I had good contacts with her in 1972. She occupied other ambassadorial posts and often accompanied the king on his foreign trips. In the Hotel International she was one of the first people in the royal entourage to greet me, which she did in the following words: "You are our best ambassador—and you cost us nothing."

Soon King Birendra arrived, and we sat down in the back of the reception hall for a long talk. He told me that he had read my book and then put the question to me out of the blue, "Isn't it too late for my country?" I was so surprised that I was stumped for an answer. Finally I said, "It is late, but never too late, provided the political will for change is there."

We talked leisurely about a host of problems Nepal was facing, while his attendants gradually started to pace up and down impatiently in the lounge. A diverse sightseeing programme in town had been organized for the king by the consul-general on this, his free day.

Then I heard again nothing more from Nepal until April 1984, when a letter from my friend **Lain S. Bangdel**, at the time the vice-chancellor of the *Royal Nepal Academy*, reached me. We had enjoyed intimate ties since 1960. He is an artist and a poet, and has also done much to advance the cause of modern young Nepalese painters. His written works include *2500 Years of Nepali Art History*, which has become a standard text. For all of these activities he has received international recognition.

The letter from Lain Bangdel, dated 28 March 1984, contained the announcement that King Birendra had bestowed a high decoration upon me, and I was asked to name a date when I could come to Kathmandu to accept it. The order is called *Birendra Prajnalankar*. It is the highest decoration that is awarded to foreigners, having been received before me only by the famous Tibetologist **Giuseppe Tucci** and the equally famous ethnologist **Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf**.

"His Majesty expects you to speak out"

Thus I flew to Kathmandu at the beginning of June. I immediately contacted Lain Bangdel and Dr. Mohan Sainju. The programme for the day of the solemn conferral on 5 June was placed in my hands. Therein I found mention of a "speech by Toni Hagen." I asked Dr. Sainju what that meant—only a word of thanks for the honour and some small talk or a real speech with substance. Dr. Sainju answered, "His Majesty expects you to speak out." There was no need to tell me that twice.

Lain Bangdel then explained to me that the bestowal of the decoration in the Royal Nepal Academy would be a very significant act. All ministers and ministerial secretaries, all chief officials, all foreign ambassadors, and all representatives of international and bilateral development aid organizations would be invited. With the conferral of the decoration came lifelong honorary membership in the Royal Nepal Academy, a gratis visa for unlimited stays in Nepal, and permission to move about freely in the whole country, including such restricted areas as Mustang. (I now regret somewhat not having taken better advantage of these privileges.)

Further, I was eligible to receive a fixed lump sum of 5,000 Nepalese rupees, payable once a year, for each visit to Nepal. In return, I was expected to carry out further research in the country, hold lectures, and bring out further publications.

I immediately set to work preparing my speech, intending to distribute the text of it to all who attended the ceremonial occasion on 5 June. That I was able to finish it in only two days is due, above all, to the help I received from SATA (Swiss Association for Technical Assistance) in Patan in producing a fair copy of my manuscript, and from the director of the Ford Foundation in Nepal, **Dr. P. Cool**, in reading through it.

The Speech I Delivered during the Decoration Ceremony of 5 June 1984

The speech I gave on 5 June 1984 is reproduced here (in a slightly abbreviated version) and is still relevant even today:

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses,
Dear Nepalese Friends,
Dear Guests,

It is now 34 years since I entered Nepal for the first time. Naturally I am tempted to compare what progress has been made since the opening of the country for development, and what has resulted from foreign aid.

Certainly a lot of progress has been made: Nepal has now an infrastructure of transport and communication; large portions of the child population go to school and get a higher education. Health service (non-existent before) has been established. Excellent institutions have been built and a wealth of research and information (not existing in the fifties) is available. The progress which strikes me most is the fact that a new generation of young Nepalese has grown up, young people who know their country and are concerned with its problems.

I myself am most concerned about the ecological deterioration of the country which I have witnessed during the past 34 years, as deforestation, soil deterioration, and soil erosion. Directly linked with it is the decrease in food production. In 1950 the average farmer in the hills produced a slight surplus in food. At present he grows food for only about eight months; for the remaining four months of the year he has to earn some money through other activities in order to be able to buy the necessary food.

This development in Nepal has led to a steadily increasing poverty of the hill farmers and consequently to a three-fold increase of migration from the hills, that is, from 4% in 1950 to 12% in 1981. The yields in the hills are decreasing due to degradation of the over-exploited soils and due to soil erosion and lack of soil management. The latter, combined with the population growth, has led to a dramatic decrease in per capita food production. The Terai will for some years to come still produce a surplus before also possibly turning into a deficit area. Nepal as a whole is at present turning into a deficit country.

In addition to the forthcoming food crisis Nepal is already right now in a *rural energy crisis*. An average of 10 million metric tons of firewood are cut every year, while the annual growth is only about 2.5 million tons. There is no easy solution for this problem. Wrong prophets have for too long seen the solution in biogas, solar heating, electrovoltaic solar energy, windmills, small hydel projects etc. While all these alternative energy resources ought to be promoted as much as possible, they can never be a real substitute for bio-mass.

The western countries which produce most of the food surplus in the world have implemented an agrarian policy which stimulates the farmer to produce the optimum on his land. The result is, for example, the mountains of milk and butter in *Europe*. As everyone knows, this is also the result of equal access of the farmer to the resources and through price incentives for the farmers.

Only few developing countries have so far applied the same policy—and with striking success—, namely Taiwan, India and temporarily Niger (Africa). The People's Republic of China is learning fast with regard to the impact of incentives. Land reform alone (without incentives) will not do, as many examples have shown (Peru, Tanzania).

The agrarian policy of most developing countries is opposed to the requirements stated above. Prices of the products at farmgate are artificially kept low in the interest of urban people. The farmer finds the effort not worthwhile to produce any surplus. When he has the opportunity to earn some money as an unskilled labourer and buy the cheap food, he will not even till his soil to produce for his own consumption. This happens at present to a large degree in the Sahel countries, where at the same time as large starvation disasters occur about 50% of the arable land is not used and left to the animals for destruction of vegetation and soil.

The seemingly easy way to overcome temporarily the symptoms of this sad situation is food aid and food imports with food-for-work programmes.

The drawbacks of food-for-work programmes are:

- They produce no purchase power at the base and are therefore no stimulation of the local or regional economy.
- All the money spent for food-for-work with imported food goes back to the donor (production, transport, vehicles, fuel) and renders such programmes very expensive compared with the impact.
Transport costs sometimes are 10 times higher than the value of the product at the receivers' end.
- Food-for-work makes the receiver dependent, reduces the sense of responsibility and initiative. Development at the base is rather hampered than promoted.
- Food-for-work does not reduce or even eliminate poverty, the main ill of the Third World.

In developing countries, in general, the revenue the farmer gets by tilling his soil is discriminatory compared with the wages earned by unskilled labourers, namely on the average only between one third and one half.

Most developing countries subsidize the food prices for the urban population in order to keep them quiet. Such a policy is adverse to the farmers.

All the international organizations and donors stress constantly the importance of incentives for the farmers—but do just the opposite by dumping their food grain surplus on the poor developing countries. They thus rather help their own agriculture (at high expenses) and not the developing countries. I know not one single project in the world in which foreign aid would substantially have been earmarked to subsidize farmgate prices. The donors prefer to subsidize inputs (i.e. chemical fertilizers delivered as "aid") instead of outputs, which policy may show even negative results.

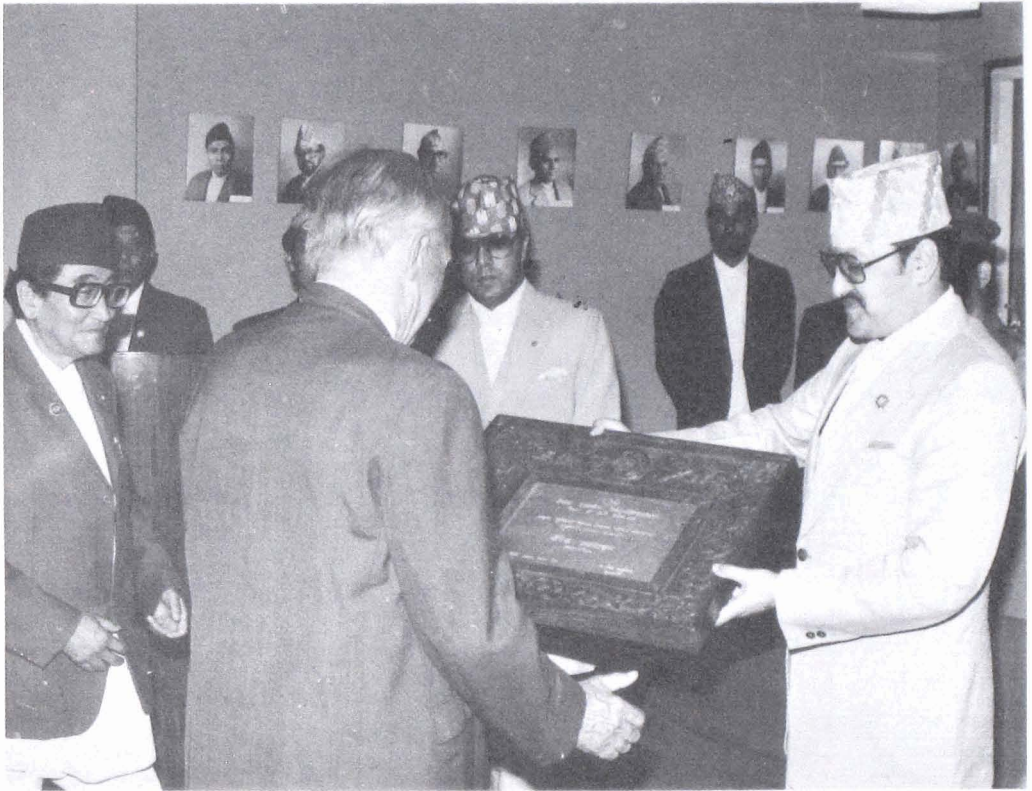
There is a *link between ecological deterioration and farmgate prices*. Every farmer is a businessman. His soil is his capital. The products he gets out of his soil is his interest. The farmer has to invest his labour and also some operational funds to get a benefit out of his soil. His revenue, however, depends not only on his investments, but largely on the market value of his product.

If the market value or farmgate price is low, he will not invest much labour and funds.

Ecological measures like soil and water management, soil protection, terracing, construction of small dykes, minidykes, drainage systems, planting trees, crop rotation, enrichment of the soil with organic material etc. are very labour-intensive. But the poor farmer simply cannot afford to do these things when he cannot expect any return from his effort and there is no incentive due to low farmgate prices.

In Nepal the increasing discrimination of the farmer is illustrated by the fact that in the time period 1964/65 to 1981/82 general agricultural consumer prices rose by 8.9%, while the agricultural farmgate prices increased by only 1.7%.

It is not too late to overcome the problems of Nepal. I am confident that if there is the political will by both the government and the donors to implement the reforms and changes needed Nepal will survive.



11. King Birendra Presenting Toni Hagen with the Birendra Prajnalankar, 1984.

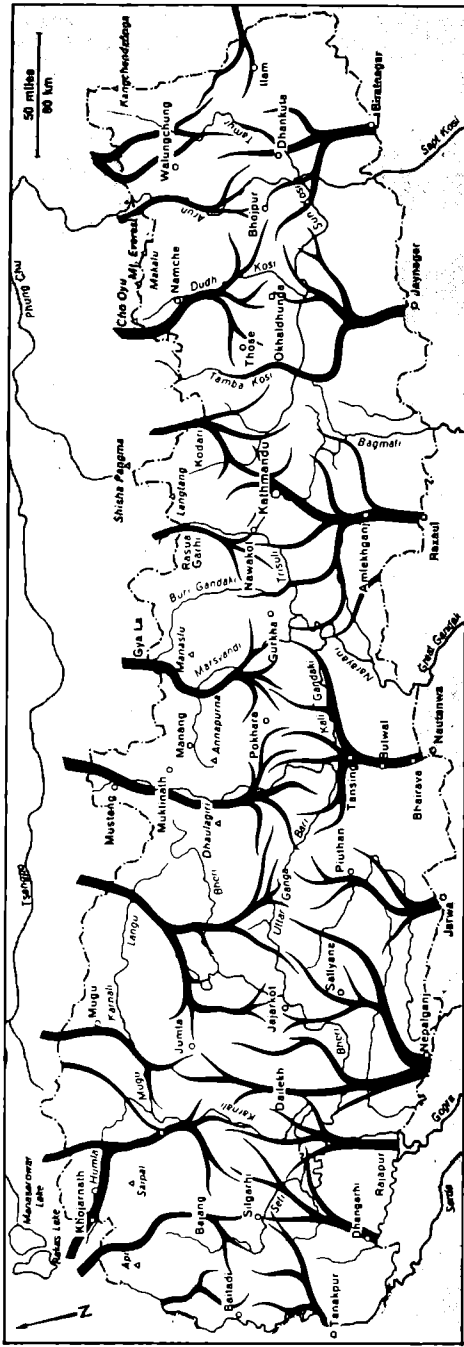


12. Dr. Toni Hagen with His Majesty King Birendra on the occasion of his being honoured with the Birendra Prajnalankar. The topic of discussion was the contents of Toni Hagen's speech.

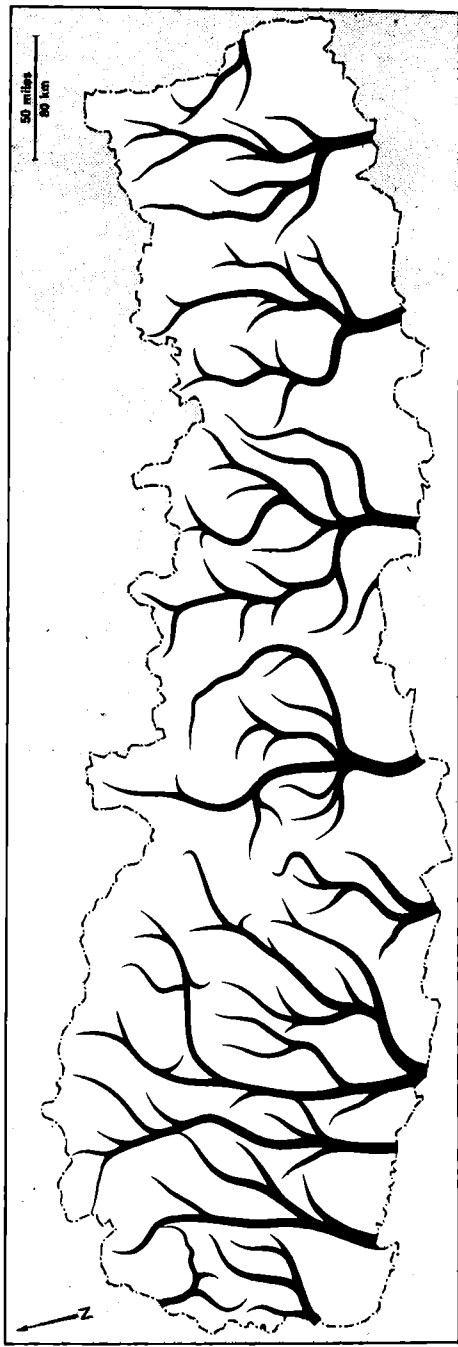
Looking Back on 42 Years of the Opening and Development of Nepal

Again and again I have been asked about my general impressions of Nepal, after having witnessed personally the last 42 years of the history and development of the country. Since I have also been working in many other developing countries on all continents during the last 30 years, I am in somewhat of a position to draw comparisons and to judge the development Nepal has undergone. Certainly Nepal has in many ways made tremendous material and technical progress since the termination of the autocratic Rana regime, that is, since the establishment of the first parliamentary administration along with public budgeting and auditing, the opening up of the country through motorable roads and air traffic, the establishing of public transport services, the construction of hundreds of suspension bridges, the building of modern hotels and shops, and the like. In the field of education and health services, Nepal had to start from scratch and has shown impressive progress. However, certain negative aspects are also obvious. This is apparently the price civilization pays for its progress—a process similar to the one we are now experiencing in the affluent societies of industrialized countries.

Except for the big towns, and especially the Kathmandu Valley, there does not seem to have been any run-away deterioration of the environment. Deforestation appears to have slowed down, and many young trees are now everywhere visible. There are surprisingly few new landslides on the steep slopes—this in spite of the heavy rains during the 1993 monsoon. At present Nepal does not compare unfavourably with the Swiss Alps. The prediction of some scientists in the 1970s that the country might at some time turn into a barren mountain desert, something on the order of Afghanistan, will certainly not come true. The energy crunch (firewood) remains of course troublesome.



13. A schematic diagram of the principal salt trade routes prior to the Chinese occupation of Tibet.



14. A schematic diagram of the principal salt trade routes after the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

I shall take the opportunity afforded by the next few pages to express my deep concern about certain developments and trends in Nepal—that is, about neglected tasks and missed opportunities in development.

SOME MAJOR CHANGES AFTER 1950

1950: A Nation on the Trails

In 1950 over 95% of the Nepalese population were living from agriculture. Subsistence farming produced sufficient staple foods and even a small amount of salable crops, such as rice, dairy products, vegetable oil, and spices. These products were carried on the backs of farmers to the Tibetan salt traders in the north of the country and to the marketplaces along the Indian border in the south, where the goods were bartered in exchange for salt. According to my own estimates and tabulations made during my expeditions in the 1950s, every winter between 20% and 25% of the total population undertook a yearly salt trip. The pattern of the salt trails can be seen from the following sketch. With the total closure of Tibet by the Chinese army of occupation in 1959, the salt trade with the north came to an abrupt end. From then on, the barter trade was directed exclusively towards the south.

The Effect of the New Mobility

The opening up of the hitherto inaccessible country through construction of roads again changed the trade pattern profoundly. Previously important marketplaces located in beautiful old towns lost their role in trade, while new marketplaces and trade centres with a chaotic mixture of modern concrete buildings and slumlike sheds mushroomed up along the new roads and at road heads.

The new mobility resulting from improved trails with suspension bridges and motor traffic, and also from the increasing migration from the hills, had also another effect: the boundaries between the various ethnic groups, which previously followed contour lines, became blurred. In the Terai, in particular, we now find no longer exclusively Brahmins, Chetris, and Tharus but also Limbus, Rais, Tamangs, Gurungs, Magars, Thakuris, and other peoples from the hills.

Impoverishment, Migration, and Dependence

When I entered Nepal for the first time in 1950 the population was about 8 million people. Today about 20 million live on the same surface area, but with decreasing cultivable land and decreasing productivity per acre. Nepal will soon turn

from a former surplus country into a deficit country with regard to staple food production.

In certain parts of Nepal—for example, in the area of the Integrated Hill Development Project (IHDP) in eastern Nepal—the average farmer was already in the early 1970s producing food for only eight months of the year. He had to buy food to feed his family for the remaining four months. Since there was no opportunity to earn any money in his village or in the larger surrounding area, he had to look for some job in the towns, in the Terai, or in India. Thus seasonal and permanent migration from the Midlands increased from 3.6% in 1959 to 12% in 1989, and has since increased to an estimated 15%. Due to the impoverishment of the rural areas, the population of Kathmandu has increased from 125,000 in 1950 to about 500,000 in 1992, with a corresponding construction boom, caused mainly by the new institutions and the many foreigners living there. The loss of the most fertile land in the Kathmandu Valley is irreparable.

These factors have increased purchasing power in the Valley, which in turn has generated new jobs. Rural areas, though, have seen little increase in employment due to development aid—something that would have slowed down migration; indeed they are hard put to resist the magnetic attraction that the Kathmandu Valley exercises.

Only 47%, or 26.6 billion rupees, of the national budget for 1991/92 was earned from local revenues. The remaining 53% was covered by foreign aid. This creates a dangerous dependency. In 1992/93 one-third of the budget, amounting to 42.12% of the hard currency reserves, had to be spent for foreign debt servicing. The foreign debt of 161 million U.S. dollars is, compared with other countries, not excessively high. However, considering the low per capita annual income of only 180 U.S. dollars (World Bank estimate), the annual debt payments of about 50 U.S. dollars per capita on the whole represent a pitfall for the economy.

Since the 1960s Nepal has received aid totalling about 87 billion Nepalese rupees. The question of what impact this has all had can no longer be brushed aside. It is more imperative than ever (for the Planning Commission, for example) to work out a strategy to fight poverty.

From Development Aid to Development Colonialism

Development aid as usually practised up to now has had just the opposite impact from what international development cooperation had been conceived to be at the outset, namely one conducive to independence and self-reliance. Development aid has indeed led to a state of affairs that can rather be called "*development colonialism*." Development colonialism is, in its impact, much worse than the dependency of former colonies on the colonial powers ever was.

Development Beneficiaries Become "Undevelopable"

When I was evaluating a very successful rural development project in Burkina Faso (sub-Saharan Africa), its young manager told me proudly, "In my project area there are still villages which have survived several development projects." By survival he meant, of course, not physical survival but the will power to engage in self-help, which survived in spite of the help that was imposed on the beneficiaries without their being asked about their own priorities and for their own contribution. The following example from Nepal deals with some farmers who did not survive mentally.

When I visited some villages in the IHDP in 1990 and asked the farmers what their wishes were in order to improve agricultural production, they replied: more chemical fertilizers. I was shocked by this answer, which I had never heard during any of my hundreds of visits to developing countries before. Usually the farmers would give top priority to a guaranteed fair farmgate price for their products, stabilized prices, land reform, and liberation from bonded farming with regard to the moneylenders. In spite of having for 16 years been at the receiving end of the 100-million-Swiss-franc Integrated Hill Development Project (IHDP) and simultaneously many other development aid activities, these farmers acted as if they had never heard of ecological farming with its mixed cropping and agroforestry. In other projects and in other countries, I have always been surprised by the great common sense of farmers. But the farmers to whom I spoke in the IHDP area are simply *no longer developable*.

A New Generation of Nepalese

For me personally, the growing up of a young generation of well-educated and well-informed Nepalese is the most striking experience among the many new changes. The young generation is attuned to socio-economic, ecological, and social problems. The results are visible in the many valuable new publications written by young Nepalese for their university or other new institutions. These young Nepalese know their country very well, from their own research work in the field, and feel responsible for their people. For them "Nepal" does not mean any longer just the Kathmandu Valley.

When I wrote my first geographic book on Nepal in the late 1950s there were no reference publications except for the Kathmandu Valley. Statistics were totally lacking. Today a wealth of statistical information is available.

Nepalese women played no role whatsoever outside their family before 1950. This is gradually changing now, and should continue to change much more.

Many young Nepalese have founded their own consulting firms, while others have established new non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including an association for human rights.

Since freedom of the press was instituted, several old newspapers have become much more critical and outspoken on the development issues facing Nepal, and new and different kinds of newspapers have provided a fresh look at events. Modern Nepalese newspapers are a source of much important information. Among periodicals one might mention is *Himal*. It contains excellent, well-researched critical journalism covering all aspects of Nepal, but especially development and foreign aid problems.

Available Local Expertise Demands a New Type of International Development Expert

In most fields of technical development, especially for rural areas, all the necessary expertise is available among the ranks of young Nepalese. Certain special high technologies and advice in matters of government organization and management, particularly as these relate to democratic methods of tax collection, may be exceptions. Small and medium-sized private enterprises can profitably be backed up by foreign expertise in social market economies, as has been done successfully by the Schmidheiny Foundation in Latin America. In my view there is no longer any need for the usual type of international technical development experts.

However, *development workers* at the grass-roots level are still highly required. I have witnessed firsthand many FAO projects in which the personnel, usually called "volunteers," joined in with the farmers to do almost all the work in the field. They speak the simple language of farmers and common people and do not fall into the so-called "development Latin" used by the "lords of poverty" at donor headquarters (see Chapter 44 below), which can hardly be understood by commonsensical people. Development agencies badly need the feedback from development workers at the grass roots in order to bring headquarters staff down from "orbit."

At higher levels, a new type of "expert" is needed: a *generalist, a wise, fatherly, and mature type of person with long experience in the Third World*, with a background of dealing with all kinds of different people at all levels, and with a sense for other cultures and local traditions. His task would not be to give technical advice but to promote a sense of integrity in competent local government officials, experts, and technicians and to offer them *moral support* and *protection* from the centralistic bureaucracy and from the power struggle going on at all levels, from the central government right down to village headmen and the heads of the clans. Such an expert should help farmers in the struggle in which they are usually entangled with

bureaucracies—for example, in requesting credits from local development banks or proper agricultural inputs from the government or from aid agencies.

This type of expert should also protect the farmers and local experts from foreign experts and development workers who feel superior to and think they know everything better than the local people.

Another important task of the new type of expert would be to protect successful small rural development projects from foreign donor agencies and their big money. Many large donors, facing a lack of good rural grass-roots projects and forced to spend appropriated development funds, are tempted to step in with their big money onto the terrain of successful ongoing small projects. At least ten percent of all the rural projects I have evaluated have been killed in this way.

The new type of expert should also be aware that the developing countries will not make much progress unless women become much more involved in the whole development process and are promoted accordingly.

Such an expert should be *up in his years* and have *no further ambitions to pursue a career in a big development agency*. He must already have his career behind him and be an *entirely free and independent man, one who can take decisions and actions on the basis only of his own conscience*.

Internal and External Factors for Change

Internal Factors

The historic political events in Nepal since 1950 have triggered profound changes in every respect. The main events have been:

1. The replacement of the ruling maharaja regime of the Ranas and the restoration of King Tribhuvan to power by the Nepali Congress Party in 1950/51.
2. The opening of the country to foreigners, to foreign diplomatic missions, to development agencies and their experts, and to tourists.
3. The first free elections in the country in 1957, with the establishment of the first elected government.
4. The imprisoning of the elected government of B. P. Koirala by King Mahendra and the introduction of the panchayat system in December 1960.
5. The reintroduction of the multiparty system under a constitutional monarchy in 1990, with freedom of the press.

One very grave problem for the future of Nepal has, of course, been the almost unchecked growth of the population from 8 million in 1950 to almost 20 million in 1993.

External Influences

The following events outside Nepal's borders have had a decisive impact on its development:

1. The replacement of British colonial rule by an independent national Indian state.
2. The occupation of the formerly independent Tibet by the Chinese army.
3. Development aid.
4. Tourism.

The government and people of Nepal are, of course, largely powerless against political developments to the north and to the south of them. The *Indian influence* draws its power from the many common ethnic and cultural roots and ties between the two peoples. Further, the border between the two countries is open and without any control on the Indians crossing it. Thus strong ethnic pressure, even though entirely non-violent, is exerted by India. This pressure is especially felt in the persons of the many Marwaris in the Terai, at places along the new roads in Nepal, and at road heads in the interior. The ethnic pressure may be illustrated in terms of numbers alone: about 1 billion Indians live in close proximity to only 20 million Nepalese, without having a controlled border between them. The repeated economic blockades by India—very easy to impose upon its small landlocked neighbour—further show the gross imbalance between the two countries.

The *annexation of Tibet by the People's Republic of China* has led to the loss of income among the salt traders in the high northern valleys of Khumbu and Thakkhola. On the other hand, the initial burden of the approximately 25,000 Tibetan refugees that poured into Nepal in 1959/60 turned out in the end to be of great benefit to Nepal, in that the carpet industry, the largest single source of hard currency, grew up in the wake of their arrival.

Development aid has both its positive and negative aspects with, in my personal view, the latter dominating. By this I do not mean to say that development aid should be abolished, only that it should be managed differently, so as to create employment and income for the common people. This is not the place to discuss the present socio-economic situation of Nepal, for which the forthcoming second edition of the standard publication of Wolf Donner may be referred to.

With regard to *tourism*, I consider its general impact as being positive. Still, there is a need to keep the ecological, cultural, and other forms of impairment arising from it under control and reduced to the minimum level possible.

In spite of the turbulent events in neighbouring countries and in Nepal itself, the latter has so far shown remarkable political stability. It may be anticipated that the multiparty system will not be an inherently stabilizing factor and may, in fact, temporarily serve to create additional unrest. But this is part of the democratic process, something its practitioners have to live with. As long as freedom of the press is guaranteed, one may be moderately optimistic about the future of Nepal.

Programmed Failures and the Vicious Circle in Development Aid

The Disappointing Global Results of Development Aid

In 1988 I set forth my experiences of almost 40 years of development aid in a book published by the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* titled

WEGE UND IRRWEGE DER ENTWICKLUNGSHILFE EXPERIMENTIEREN AN DER DRITTEN WELT (Paths and Dead Ends in Development Aid: Experimenting on the Third World)

The book contains case studies of 230 personally evaluated, and mostly rural, development projects funded by international organizations, bilateral aid, and NGOs in 24 countries on all Third World continents. (An English edition of the book, with the number of cases studies increased from 230 to 300, is under preparation.) The total project funding of these projects amounted to a little over 2 billion U.S. dollars.

The analysis resulted in the following conclusions:

positive projects	49.5%
cost of all positive projects	16%
negative projects	50.5%
cost of all negative projects	84%
average cost of a positive project	U.S.\$ 3 million
average cost of a negative project	U.S.\$15 million
cost of a "very successful" project	U.S.\$ 600,000

Eighty-four percent of the total funding, or roughly 1,690 million U.S. dollars, not only was spent uselessly and wastefully but actually caused harm to the target groups or to the government. Recently the Brazilian government published an evaluation on World Bank-financed projects in its country and came to the conclusion that 85% of such projects fall in the negative category. A necessary condition for a project to be considered to be positive is that it has not caused harm to its target groups.

The main conclusion of my analysis is that rural projects only have a chance to be positive if their cost is low, and if the local people (target group) fully participate in them, with their contribution (cash, kind, labour) amounting to at least 30-40% of the foreign investment.

It does not make much sense to play off small projects against large ones. Every developing country needs both. Rural development projects, however, must be small and simple, and must be run by the target groups themselves.

The Lords of Poverty

The Lords of Poverty is the title of a book which describes a large number of case studies of failures in development aid suffered by international organizations. This title takes its name from high officials at the headquarters of these organizations who maintain the vicious circle of failure.

Among such organizations under their control are, unfortunately, a number of NGOs. Such persons live off the poverty of developing countries, demonstrating by their behaviour and deeds that personal power and self-interest are more important to them than trying to alleviate poverty in the countries they supposedly serve.

The *World Bank* is certainly the most self-critical of all international organizations. The bank's own internal Evaluation Division found in projects that terminated in the year 1991 a failure rate of 37.5%. An independent external evaluation would probably have found a much higher percentage of failures. This is what may be concluded at least from the recently published internal report by **Willy Wapenhans**, a former vice president of the bank, who has since gone into retirement. According to him, the following are the reasons for the many failures:

- project information contains systematic distortions,
- the main aim of those responsible in the bank is to spend the money,
- a dislike of independent external evaluations,
- no feedback,
- those in the headquarters responsible for a project which, after some years, proves to be a failure never suffer any adverse consequences.

This has, according to Wapenhans, led to a specific "spending culture" and to a "culture of programmed failures."

Sir William Ryrie, for the last nine years president of the International Finance Corporation, a filial institution of the World Bank for promotion of the private sector in developing countries, heavily criticized the World Bank community at his recent retirement. According to him the long-term impact of large government projects has not been given the necessary consideration; a change from quantitative thinking (volume of aid) to qualitative thinking (long-term or sustainable impact) is now imperative; he went on to say that the big donors act more from self-interest (power and career tactics of personnel) than with the needs of recipient countries in mind. Sir William Ryrie pled for the quantitative reduction of aid.

The question of course arises why **Willy Wapenhans**, the former vice president of the World Bank, and **Sir William Ryrie**, the former president of the International Finance Corporation, expressed such views only at retirement and not earlier, when they would have had the means to change the policy of their institutions? Lords of poverty?

According to my own 40 years of experience, a masterly managed *vicious circle* has been developed at the headquarters of most of the major donors, containing the following phases:

- a centralistic approach of major international development aid from government or agency to government,
- a misguided conception of the projects at the headquarters of the big aid agencies,
- an easy and careless spending of money due to the pressure to spend,
- a lack of proper feedback,
- a misleadingly rosy reporting on project achievements,
- measuring the results of development aid by inputs (i.e. how much money spent) instead of outputs,
- the consequent lack of need to be successful, since results are not measured by sustainable impact,
- the absence of any need to learn from mistakes, since there is no need to be successful
- the lack of independent external evaluations,
- objections to any form of criticism ("do-gooder syndrome"),
- discrimination against critical field personnel, possibly resulting in their eventual "elimination,"
- negative selection standards of headquarters personnel,
- failures (visible to everyone some years later) that do not have any adverse consequences for headquarters officials responsible for them,

- an irresponsible increase of development aid by governments and parliaments without demanding independent external evaluations (more aid means more profits being poured back into the economy of the donor nations; see Chapter 46)
- a high percentage of "tied aid," most of which benefits the economy of the donor country,
- terrorizing governments and parliaments with the annual rating of donor nations prepared by the OECD according to the percentage of their GNP spent for development aid (inputs), with hardly any evaluating of impact.

Thus the vicious circle of "programmed failures" is closed and begins anew with the granting of more funds and the need to spend it within a given time.

The following chapter describes, in a case study, all the phases of such a vicious circle, one in which the Integrated Hill Development Project (IHDP) in eastern Nepal was trapped.

Case Study of a Vicious Circle

The Integrated Hill Development Project (IHDP), Eastern Nepal

The project, including construction of the road from Lamosangu to Jiri, between 1974 and 1991 cost about 100 million Swiss francs (approximately 70 million U.S. dollars). It was financed by the Swiss government (Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, DEH).

1971/73: *The project is conceived by headquarters in Switzerland under false assumptions.*

Based on several feasibility studies, improvements for the target groups are envisaged in not less than 34 different fields of development. The main objective is, however, to increase agricultural production so much that the area, which had been producing food to cover needs for only eight months in a year, would yield a surplus. The planned marketing of food surpluses requires the building of the 110-kilometre road from Lamosangu to Jiri in order to facilitate the sale of products in the Kathmandu market.

1974: *A first credit of 15 million Swiss francs for the road is granted by the Swiss government, although a previous feasibility study has arrived at a cost of at least 23 million Swiss francs.*

1976: *A country report of the World Bank on Nepal: "It seems that in those areas made accessible by roads the agricultural production so far has not been stimulated.... The high construction cost, the delays on the expected impacts in agriculture and the unbearably high maintainance and repair costs demand other solutions for Nepal."*

1980: In *Nepal in Crisis*, the result of exhaustive investigations by a team of three experts on behalf of the British Ministry of Overseas Development: "Road building promotes activities, but no development.... Road building, even when accompanied by measures in other sectors, has so far hardly stimulated economic productivity and, if any, then only for a small upper class..."

1980: *The report of a young Swiss geographer without any experience in road construction or time spent in developing countries whatsoever is published.* Based on the proposal contained in it, the Swiss government grants a credit of another 19 million Swiss francs in order to complete the Jiri road.

1981: The conclusion reached in *an investigation carried out by an experienced geographer.* "Road construction has a negative impact on the existing structures and benefits first and foremost a small upper class..."

1981 March 6: *The critical report of a television journalist is published.* The journalist is a member of a Swiss television crew that was commissioned by the Swiss government to shoot a film about the IHDP under the title *Learning from Mistakes.*

Excerpts from his report: "About one-third of our technical cooperation projects do not live up to expectations.... All the important decisions are made at headquarters in Bern, both project decisions and above all the selection of personnel.... Gross mistakes do not carry any consequences for the responsible desk officer.... There are mistakes committed which in any private firm would bring on the threat of dismissal."

1981 August 19: *SATA today—SATA tomorrow.* (SATA is the former Swiss Association for Technical Assistance, Nepal.) Triggered by the above-mentioned critical report of the journalist, the personnel of SATA in Nepal embark on a thorough discussion of the problems of official Swiss aid to Nepal. The results are published under the title above.

Excerpts: "The projects were not properly conceived and prepared... they were never evaluated or else evaluated too late, whether by headquarters in Bern or by the coordinator in Nepal.... ..deficiencies and mistakes are usually laid at the door of the "incompetent" partner in Nepal.... There do not exist proper criteria for evaluating the personnel.... This leads on the one hand to a feeling of unsureness among the personnel, and on the other opens the door to discrimination, flattery, envy, and nepotism."

1981: *An evaluation of the IHDP on behalf of DEH by Father Volken, New Delhi.* Father Volken, director of Indo-German social services in New Delhi, reports

that the objective of an increase in agricultural production obviously cannot be accomplished, and the agricultural production in the project area will most probably decrease. Father Volken tells me later on that a truly honest dialogue on the problems of the IHDP between himself and DEH in Bern has never taken place.

1982: *An evaluation of the IHDP by Dr. Graham Clarke of the International Development Centre, Oxford University.* His first stay in the field from 28 February to 20 June has as an objective the formulation of questions for subsequent evaluation. Dr. Clarke submits five reports on the planning of the evaluation, including "problems and recommendations" for the project. However, DEH headquarters (Dr. R. Högger), having read Dr. Clarke's reports, keeps the evaluation from going ahead and does not even allow a discussion of the project to take place.

1982 June 23: *A television discussion on the IHDP between Dr. Högger, deputy director of DEH, and Toni Hagen.* When Toni Hagen mentions a report by the chief engineer responsible for road construction which was critical of DEH headquarters in Bern, Dr. Högger replies that the engineer is incompetent and has therefore been declared *persona non grata* by the government of Nepal.

The said engineer happens to arrive in Switzerland the following day on annual leave. He is much surprised to learn from his parents of having been "expelled" from Nepal.

DEH is afterwards forced to apologize publicly in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 16 July 1981 for its misstatement. However, the deputy director's playing loose with the facts has no adverse consequences for him whatsoever.

(One may recall my own alleged "expulsion from Nepal" in July 1962; see Chapter 34.)

1984: *An international seminar on integrated hill development is held in Kathmandu.* I attend the seminar personally. The conclusions in the official report are: The absorption capacity of large-scale integrated hill development projects has long since been exhausted. Projects with too integrated an approach hardly carry any impact. The concentration on agriculture ought to be given top priority.

1985: *The official inauguration of the Jiri road.* A journalist of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* attends the inauguration and writes in the 15 August 1985 edition of the newspaper concerning the "successful" project (as the road certainly is from a technical point of view): "An area with a rich development potential will be opened through the new road. The road will, on the other hand, open up markets as far as Kathmandu, and the farmers will, thanks to the project, no longer suffer from low-income subsistence farming."

1985 August 15: *A reply by Toni Hagen in the NZZ* Again the low development potential of the project area is mentioned. Since agricultural production will not be increased by the IHDP, the road cannot serve to bring any surplus to Kathmandu. Thus the road will not serve primarily the farmers but a small upper class. This is not in keeping with the Swiss law regulating development aid, which demands that priority be given to creating work and to generating income for the poorer sections of the population.

1985: *Publication of an external evaluation by Dr. Basler on behalf of the Swiss parliament (Basler report).* This is the first external evaluation ordered by the Swiss parliament for any DEH project in 20 years of official Swiss development aid.

The Basler report is quite critical of the IHDP. The main findings are as follows:

— The IHDP was conceived at DEH headquarters in Bern and is too big, too ambitious, and too hasty.

— Neither the government of Nepal nor the target groups in the field are real partners.

— This explains the very small local contribution of the Nepalese government of only 10%. Planned was a local contribution of 50%. Given such a low contribution, local responsibility was accordingly low.

— The will to engage in self-help on the part of both the government and the target groups is impaired by such massive foreign investment.

— The only sustainable impact will be through promotion of the Tuki movement (model farmers at the base) through the Nepalese Dr. Krishna Kumar Panday. For the 300 (originally 1,000) Tuki farmers still active in 1990, however, a fraction of the project cost of 100 million Swiss francs would have been sufficient.

Basler, in his report, is astonished at the lack of feedback and asks emphatically why, after the 20-year-long experience of DEH, *no proven principles of development cooperation have been established?*

The reply of DEH to the latter criticism is as follows: "Every attempt to formulate principles on development aid necessarily creates contradictions."

Comment: Insiders with field experience decades back established the rule that rural development projects must be small, simple, and based on the full participation of and an adequate contribution from the beneficiaries.

The main "contradiction," which indeed does exist, is that the big donors, under the pressure of the "need to spend," cannot invest large amounts of money on small projects.

1985 July: *A two-hour broadcast about the IHDP by officials of DEH on Swiss Radio.* Title: "Development Aid in spite of Risks and Corruption." The above-mentioned manifold criticism of the IHDP is totally ignored in the broadcast. The Nepalese are blamed for most of the problems and deficiencies.

1987: *The view of the Nepalese counterpart of the IHDP* representing the government of Nepal, **Bihari K. Shrestha**, then joint secretary for local village development. He visits Switzerland in order to negotiate with DEH the final monitoring (evaluation) prior to the handing over of the project. When Mr. Shrestha arrives at the Zurich airport, he rings me up instead of going straight to DEH in Bern. He visits me at my home in Lenzerheide. I show him the questions prepared by **Rainer Bodmer**, who is to carry out the monitoring and handing over of the project in Nepal. The comment of Mr. Shrestha is very simple and clear: "Very good questions, but they ought to have been asked at the beginning of the project and not at the end."

1988/90: *A final exhaustive monitoring by a consulting firm on behalf of DEH.* The lack of increase in agricultural production is tacitly admitted, but this deficiency is said to be offset by "other successes."

1989 May 12: *A paper of the Evaluation Service of DEH on the IHDP has the strange title "Heat and Light."* The paper deals mainly with the "unforeseeable" in such projects. It ignores totally the fact that the early critics perceived many of the "unforeseen" problems, as illustrated in this chronology of the project.

1989: *DEH and sustainability.* "Sustainability" is in high fashion in discussions of development aid nowadays. However, it is not at all new. It has been the aim of every expert in development aid who has taken his task seriously. In my analysis of 230 development projects, "sustainability" is the criterion for determining whether a project is "successful"/"very successful" or not.

In 1989 DEH asks an external consultant to question its personnel on their experiences with regard to "sustainability." The summary of the replies of the DEH personnel is as follows: "Sustainability is of little importance for DEH. The discussions held so far on the subject serve only as alibis. Everybody is for sustainability, but nobody really cares about it. The will is lacking to evaluate the sustainability of projects seriously, nor do fully elaborated working procedures exist to do so."

Disregarding these findings, DEH writes on the cover page of the same document: "Sustainability has always been the objective of the development aid of DEH."

In the same paper, DEH also speaks of their evaluation research as being a "Swiss pioneer work" and as being accorded international recognition.

1990: Ben Dolf, former *HELVETAS* coordinator in Nepal, is disappointed with the IHDP, and in the May/June issue of *Himal* draws some general conclusions about rural development projects: They must be small, simple, easy to oversee, and cheap, and the target groups need to participate and contribute fully.

1990: *Repair of the landslide-covered Jiri road near Charikot by means of capital-intensive high technology.* See Chapter 48. Such measures clearly violate the Swiss law regarding development aid, which calls for creating work and income.

1991 July: *A report containing the interviews of four experienced IHDP insiders is published in the Swiss periodical "Der Beobachter".* The report is very critical and echoes the statements of earlier critics mentioned above.

1992: *A statement made by DEH on the IHDP appears in the "Weltwoche" of 8 February.* (The *Weltwoche* is a well-known weekly in Switzerland.) The statement is DEH's reply to new criticism by Toni Hagen: "Contrary to what Toni Hagen wrote in the *Weltwoche*, the IHDP in Nepal is by no means a failure."

The Lessons from the Failures

Aid and Agrarian Policy Discriminate against Farmers

I have previously expressed some thoughts on the subject of this chapter, in the address given on the occasion of being honoured by King Birendra on 5 June 1984 (Chapter 41). Ten years later my statements are still fully valid. The worst of the decades-old mistakes are committed again and again, namely the discriminatory farmgate prices for the products of farmers. Farmgate prices in general, if the input in labour of the farmer is counted, add up to only between one-half and one-third of the earnings of an unskilled labourer. The low farmgate prices thus work as an anti-incentive. On the other hand, the donor countries supply such inputs as chemical fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides, irrigation pumps and, worst of all, gigantic dams for irrigation. Most of the money spent for such inputs flows back to the donors, and is thus rather questionable "development aid." The inputs in "development aid," however, regardless of what percentage of them flows back to the donors, are an important criterion for the annual OECD list ranking of donors in terms of their "generosity."

Donations in food aid may be essential following disasters. Such aid, however, reaches the victims in most cases too late, and in too large quantities when it does eventually arrive. In addition, there are today many chronic Third World importers of food grains only because most governments fail to embark on a farmer-friendly agrarian policy; the imported food grains, produced in the industrialized countries, are subsidized and thus cheaper for the governments to buy than foodstuffs sold at fair prices by their own farmers.

The farmers in industrialized countries enjoy a guaranteed high price for their products. That's why they produce mountains of food grains and dairy products. The same food could be produced in the developing countries with a low capital

investment and low energy consumption but high labour intensity, and would thus generate income and fight poverty.

Up to now fair farmgate prices have been introduced only in a few developing countries—for example, in Taiwan and India—with corresponding success.

The demand for food grains and other staple food items will always increase. Due to the discriminative low farmgate prices, however, migration from the countryside to towns is becoming a threat. In 1950 there were 12 people living in rural areas as against one living in a town. In the year 2000 there will be only 2.6 people living in rural areas for every town dweller. The agricultural labour force is decreasing, while the demand for food grains will steadily increase due to population growth.

Food-for-Work Programmes: Depriving the Poor of Development Potential

It is often said that hunger can be eliminated by redistribution of produced food. It is a fact that, at the present, global food production is sufficient to feed all people. However, the surplus is produced mostly in the industrialized countries, and not where hunger exists. It is furthermore well known that hunger does not only exist due to lack of food but is also the result of poverty. Back in 1967 the then director general of FAO, **A. H. Boerma**, stated in a UNDP conference in Rome that poverty is as much the cause of hunger as lack of available food. Poor people cannot afford to buy the necessary food. Consequently, one important means of fighting poverty in developing countries would be to create work and to generate income. But this is generally not done, especially not in regions affected by starvation or natural disasters, where food relief is mostly spent in food-for-work programmes, which do not create any income at the base whatsoever. When will international and other such organizations ever learn that poverty cannot be fought by charity, by feeding centres, by soup kitchens, or by food-for-work programmes?

The economies of even the poorest countries have changed from ones based on subsistence and bartering to ones based on the free flow of money. Whether we like it or not, this is a fact. But it is also a fact that a monetary economy is the foundation, or rather the precondition, for development. Money and incentives are the motor that drives all development. Through food-for-work programmes, the wheels are turned back towards a predevelopment barter economy.

Generating income at the base through cash-for-work programmes is the only means to stimulate the local economy. Purchasing power at the base will produce many other local jobs.

Recently the ambassador of a major donor country defended food-for-work programmes by saying that labourers paid in cash would not properly use the money but spend it on alcohol; people are still not ready for democracy, as witnessed by the

petty quarrels going on between the political parties. This is a patronizing attitude, one in which the common people of Nepal are looked upon as children. The trend of such remarks, if taken to their logical extreme, would be that no credits and no cash loans should any longer be given to farmers.

Giving the lie to this arrogant philosophy is the experience gained from successful grass-roots projects all over the world, which have shown that poor people know very well how to make the best use of the little money they do have. One particularly striking example is the Grameen Bank project in Bangladesh, which serves over 1.1 million loan recipients, called members of the bank, as each of them obtains shares in the bank through their repayments. The members are mostly landless labourers—that is, the poorest part of the population—and 88% of them are women. The loans are small, an average of only 40-70 U.S. dollars each. The repayment rate is 88%, unmatched anywhere in the world. The money is used for small income-producing investments in the informal sector. The Grameen Bank has possibly been the most successful and cheapest project ever established to fight poverty.

Indeed big donors could learn much from the simple woman in developing countries about how to make the best possible use of money.

Income generated at the grass-roots level through cash-for-work programmes can be used to establish revolving funds for local groups and communities, provided that a part of the wages is not paid out but earmarked for such funds. Revolving funds have proven to be the best means to create local initiatives and local responsibility, as shown by a large number of very successful projects all over the world.

One should mention, finally, that the success of the carpet industry in Nepal is due to its having been initiated under a cash-for-work rather than a food-for-work programme.

Wrong Ecological Policies and Measures

The environment conference of Rio de Janeiro in 1992 was necessary, but it triggered hardly any useful measures at the grass roots, the place where ecological activities must occur. Indeed human beings were not a subject for discussion; top priority, rather, was given to international agreements, and the usual demands for more money. Switzerland, for example, after the conference hastily diverted 300 million of its anniversary credit of 700 million Swiss francs (700 Years Switzerland) to "ecological projects"—not for ecological measures at the farm level, though, but to global ecological studies to be conducted by universities and private consulting firms. Thus most of the money spent this way—officially called "development aid"—remains in Switzerland. In past years easily flowing development funds have frequently been diverted to such research. In the course of one such programme, the

University of Bern invented a new type of agricultural terrace—the "Bern terrace," examples of which I ran across in Kenya. To my surprise, the terraces proved technically deficient, promoting soil erosion rather than protecting the surface. The farmers of South Asia, and of Nepal in particular, developed their types of terraces many hundreds of years ago. The same may be said of the farmers in North Yemen and of the Incas in South America. They have developed a unique mastery—call it even a fine art—in this field. Had they waited for the "scientific" terraces invented in 1992, most of them would have starved to death.

It has long been known what needs to be done to protect the environment in the farm areas of developing countries. Mixed cultures and agroforestry and the use of dung were practised by most farmers on all continents before the arrival of development aid. It is difficult, then, to understand why foreign aid agencies continue to reforest with pine trees. Pine trees are not autochthonous to the hills of Nepal but only to the high altitudes. The needles render the soil acidic and prevent the growth of any green undercover to keep in the moisture. No Nepalese farmer would ever think of planting pine trees. It is true that goats are not tempted to graze on pine trees, but in planting them one deprives the farmer of the use of forests and multipurpose trees (fodder for his cattle), which traditionally have been an important part of his mixed farm-animal economy.

It is estimated that in the area of Chautara, during the dry season, about 25% of the green fodder originates from privately owned trees and 75% from the forests (D. Schmidt-Vogt 1993). Earlier authors have pointed out the close relation between agriculture, pasture land and forests, as based on the role livestock play in agriculture. Already in 1931 one author stated that the forests are an essential supplier not only of fodder but of agricultural inputs in general, such as dung and other organic material. It is estimated that 2.8 hectares of local mixed forests are need to keep up sustainable productivity on one hectare of farmland.

In the Alps, too, people are beginning to realize the bad effects of monocultures on forests, and efforts are being made to increase the proportion of mixed forests.

Ecological measures on farmland require much work. Building terraces, mini-dykes, dams for retaining water needed to replenish ground water tables, the planting of windbreaks and trees, the enriching of soils with dung and with other organic materials (mulching), the introduction of agroforestry, and the like are all very labour-intensive. Building terraces alone requires 100 man-days of labour per hectare. The farmer will not invest much in his land if the return is low due to very low farmgate prices, and if he has no other sources of income, such as cash-for-work programmes.

Ecological measures targeting the decreasing farmland in developing countries will become in future a matter of survival. Some years back the *World Watch Institute* in Washington came to the conclusion that by the year 2030 the world will arrive

at a turning point: by then, with a population of about 12 billion people and farmland still on the wane, world food production will no longer be sufficient to feed everyone. And a very recent study by the same institute has advanced the fatal date of 2030 to the mid 1990s.

Farmers Are No Fools

Farmers in developing countries are basically oriented towards the market economy. It has all along been one of the main mistakes on the part of development agencies to consider farmers in the Third World to be fools. They are not. They think over carefully what is worthwhile to produce, and on what land, in order to achieve the best possible input/output ratio and revenue. They simply will not invest in improving their land if they get too low a price for their products.

In 1978 I was commissioned to evaluate a number of FAO projects in Madagascar. One of the projects had as its aim to increase rice production. It had run in three phases from 1967 to 1977 at a cost of 1,155,000 U.S. dollars. In spite of the fact that the Dutch volunteers who worked on the project had doubts about its success, 15 voluminous project reports (1967-1975) had already been produced by the FAO, all beginning with the same standard phrase: "The results achieved so far justify extending the project by an additional phase."

Carrying out my evaluation turned out to be very simple. Sitting under a tree with the farmers, I merely had to ask them, "Why the hell don't you produce more rice?" Their reply was as to the point as my question: "Why should we? With vanilla, coffee, and cloves we can earn twice as much money with only half the labour."

We always preach market economy but often practise the contrary through our policy of development aid. The principles of a market economy are incentive and competition. But in administering development aid, we subject poor farmers in the developing countries to anti-incentives and destroy their competitiveness vis-à-vis subsidized farmers of the rich North. The World Bank estimates the damage done to developing countries by the protective import measures of the latter, especially the European Common Market, against their products to be about twice the amount the same governments spend on development aid.

The Responsibility of the Major Donors

The major donors have based their development-aid philosophy on seven utopias:

Utopia 1 (1949): It is possible to close the gap between the rich countries in the North and the poor countries in the South.

Utopia 2 (1950): It is possible to close the gap with money (Marshall Plan), and that within one or two decades.

Utopia 3 (1950s to 1970s): There is a trickling down effect of development funds poured into countries from the top (through governments).

Utopia 4 (1970s to 1990s): There is a trickling down effect from the countless institutions built up with development funds.

Utopia 5 (the present): There is a trickling down effect from the countless international conferences, seminars, and workshops, and from the ever increasing development tourism in general.

Utopia 6 (since the 1960s): One can communicate with the grass roots via a theoretic, intellectual language.

Utopia 7 (the present): Third World countries can be developed Western style, along democratic paths, within one generation. (The Western democracies have needed many centuries—Switzerland, for example, 700 years.)

What I politely called "utopias" at the beginning of this section is in reality self-deception. Many of the donors know very well how questionable many of their projects are, yet the need to spend and vested self-interest do not allow them to be critical.

At the beginning of development aid in the 1950s, when former colonies were becoming free nations, the argument for fund raising was on one hand to "close the gap" between the rich North and the poor South, and on the other to "pay back a debt." The previous colonial powers were summarily made the scapegoats for the sorry state of affairs in many developing countries and for the gap between the two opposing sides. A feeling of guilt was purposely instilled by the development lobby.

Since many developing countries, especially ones in Africa, are now in a much worse state than at the end of the colonial regimes, the above-mentioned criticism no longer makes much sense. Still, in my own view, the rich North is now guilty of largely bringing about the sad situation in many developing countries: we have, with our development funds, supported and financed agricultural policies that have been discriminatory towards farmers. In dumping our subsidized surplus food, we have done much harm to local production. Through the frivolous targeting of development funds for questionable projects, we have caused the disastrous foreign debt of the developing countries. We have made many of the developing countries dependent on us—a dependency which is worse than colonial dependency ever was.

In channelling all official aid from government to government, we have, in many countries, created and cemented in place power and money elites who care little for the well-being of the population. For decades the "trickling down effect" of such aid was praised. It is now generally agreed that the "trickling down effect" has not

occurred. Indeed the contrary is happening—what may be called the "sucking up effect," which makes rich people richer and poor people poorer.

While I was in Kathmandu in 1993, the newspapers reported every day on conferences, seminars, workshops, steering committees, and working groups that convened to discuss such topics as the "alleviation of poverty" and the protection of the environment. New institutions of this type are constantly popping up among the many that already exist—each dealing with the same issues. They all believe, obviously, that their thoughts and words will somehow automatically trickle down to the grass roots.

During the same year the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) celebrated its tenth anniversary. In their case, too, it would be heartening to learn that some trickling down to the grass roots has come out of the abundance of conferences and papers they have sponsored. Nor is the establishment of an agricultural research centre on 30 hectares of forest land assigned to them by the government any cause for joy. Research can, of course, be carried out in the centre, but only for local conditions, not ones applicable to Afghanistan or Bangladesh, each of which has its own quite different range of natural settings. ICIMOD is, in effect, competing with Nepal's National Agricultural Research Centre, thus draining urgently needed funds from the local institution.

And finally, we are responsible for the increasing corruption in the Third World, today very often said to be the cause of the low impact of development aid. However, corruption always needs a donor and a receiver. There would be no corruption without a donor.

We, the donors, have made a lot of money from development aid—a legitimate outcome only as long as the profitable projects do no harm to the recipient country or to the target groups. Such, however, is the rule among many of the big hydroelectric dams and large irrigation projects.

Switzerland, for one, by June 1993 had contributed 828 million U.S. dollars to the World Bank, from which it reaped profits of about 4.7 billion U.S. dollars through consultancies, delivery of technical know-how and other services, and equipment and other goods.

Many bilateral aid programmes allocate a very high percentage of their contributions as "tied aid," that is, money used for supplying equipment and consumer goods. Most of the money spent this way flows back to the donor.

One important cause of the sorry state of development aid is the *need to spend* the development funds. Most governments and parliaments of the big donor nations regularly disburse development funds without demanding an independent external evaluation of the impact. Insiders have long known that the problem in development aid is not the lack of funds but the lack of good projects. A statement to this effect was made way back in 1967 by the director general of FAO, **A. H. Boerma**. At the

conference of Swiss ambassadors of South Asia in New Delhi in November 1991, participants made similar statements. The headquarters of the large donors, for their part, are tempted to embark on grand and costly projects in order to ensure that approved funds are spent within the current fiscal year. This is especially harmful to rural development projects. The latter must be small, easily manageable, and cheap (low investment per capita), and enjoy full participation among the villagers and a local contribution of at least 30-40% of the foreign investment. It is only by becoming involved in every aspect of a project that the people will consider it as their own and will take responsibility for it, and thus guarantee its sustainability.

The donors' *need to spend*, however, undermines the will to engage in self-help. Furthermore, it renders coordination among the competing donors very difficult, if not impossible.

The need to spend derives from three causes:

- many donors wrongly believe that development and democracy are a matter of mere money,
- many donors pretend that solidarity, too, is a matter of mere money,
- many donors demand more development aid out of pure economic self-interest.

Flouting the Principles of Democracy and the Market Economy

It is a firmly established principle of democratic tradition and the market economy that he who has caused damage to the environment through faulty methodology or harmful products should pay for the damage. If he is not willing to do so voluntarily, he faces court action.

If a manufacturer of motor cars produces faulty vehicles, he is forced to repair them at his own expense. Pharmaceutical industries are sued for products that are later shown to have produced harmful side effects.

Not so when it comes to development aid. The donor of the Chobar cement factory obviously has no thoughts of installing filters in the chimney of the plant and paying for the environmental damage caused so far by the unfiltered one.

Construction of the Marsyandi hydro project has heavily damaged the main road from Mugling to the plant site. In spite of the fact that the hydro plant was completed a few years back, the donor does not appear to be making any plans to repair the road.

It is generally admitted that the target for irrigation projects set by the big donors in Africa has been reached by only about 25% of the cases. The recipient country still has to service all the debt, as if 100% of the targeted land were irrigated.

The big donors or international agencies involved in development aid are never sued for projects that are proven failures. "File closed" has been the common response to anyone who tried to single out those responsible.

I know of only one case, in North Yemen in 1967, in which a country has threatened to sue the United Nations at the International Court of Justice in the Hague for "corruption, incompetence and parasitic behaviour." I was the one sent to investigate on behalf of the UN, the result of which was a clean sweep being ordered of all personnel.

In 1973 I was also called upon to give testimony for the Ethiopian government in a case at an international court against a foreign petroleum company which had failed to live up to its obligations. Ethiopia won the case.

Why do developing countries or NGOs not sue donors at the International Court of Justice when projects have harmful consequences? The mere threat of punitive proceedings would make those responsible at donor headquarters much more cautious in spending their money. Recipient governments, too, would think twice before embarking on costly projects. In order to prevent freewheeling use of lawyers and evaluation experts in mutual recrimination, one reasonable condition would be that suit could not be brought until ten years had elapsed from the termination and handing over of the project. After that length of time it will be clear to every person of common sense whether a project has been a success or not according to the original targets set.

The idea of suing donors for harmful projects is, of course, a utopia. If a country did sue a donor, the latter could simply punish it by not granting a single dollar more in development aid. We simply have to accept the fact that the rich donor countries are, with their money, in a much stronger position.

The Impact of Tourism

Tourism has changed Nepal profoundly. It has both positive and negative consequences. The negative impacts are, however, no justification for condemning tourism summarily. Rather, ways have to be found to limit the damage caused by it.

Comparison with Tourism in the Alps

Both the Himalaya and the Alps are poor in natural resources except water power. The hill areas have a limited potential for agriculture. As early as the Middle Ages Swiss hill farmers were forced to migrate or to engage in mercenary service, like the Nepalese after 1816.

Switzerland has also had its population explosion, namely from 2.7 million people at the end of the nineteenth century to 6 million people today, on only a quarter of Nepal's surface area. Industrialization of the Swiss midlands created an economic gap between the hill people and the people of the lowlands. Migration started from the poor mountain valleys, as in Nepal. Between 1870 and 1900 there were not less than 260,000 seasonal and permanent migrants, roughly 12% of the population (the same order of magnitude as in Nepal in 1989).

Tourism got going in the Alps at just the right time to save the destitute mountain people from a bleak future. In some cantons, tourism is today the backbone of the economy. In the canton of Grisons, my home canton, which contains the famous hill resort of St. Moritz, tourism has created 40,000 jobs, and the income from tourism stands at 1,700 million U.S. dollars, half of total annual revenues. The negative side of tourism, though, is now becoming evident in the Alps too. Limits are being reached in what nature can tolerate from mass tourism. Efforts are being undertaken to increase not the quantity of tourism but its quality.

Decentralization

Decentralization as it applies to tourism has a long way to go in Nepal. Switzerland may serve as a model in this regard. There each hill resort or resort area has its own private organization for planning and controlling tourism. The members are hotel owners, businessmen, and representatives of the farming community, municipality, and tourist transport enterprises. Each tourist is required to pay a fee according to the number of days spent in the area. The fee goes exclusively to the local private association for tourism; the government receives nothing from tourists directly. The association itself is responsible for planning and targeting tourism in its area, for the upkeep of trekking paths, for publishing brochures, for maintenance of the cross-country ski trails, for the protection of the natural environment, and the like. The central government and canton governments merely set quantitative targets and limits for tourist development. This is the democratic way of promoting quality tourism.

Tourism in Nepal

In 1992 the arrivals in Nepal numbered 334,553, an increase of almost 15% over 1991 with its 292,995 tourists. Investments in the tourist sector are estimated to be about 61 million U.S. dollars, and about 40,000 jobs have been created in it. The per capita investment per job is about 2,560 U.S. dollars and compares favourably with many development projects—for example, the IHDP.

Tourism has triggered more local investment and done more to promote self-help in Nepal than most development aid—be it in modern hotels, in tourist buses, in tourist and trekking agencies, in small lodges and tea shops along the main trekking routes, or in handicraft and small souvenir shops. The Nepalese tourist industry is a gross beneficiary, however, of a transport infrastructure for which it has not paid its share.

Trekking Tourism

Roughly 10% of the people who come to Nepal are trekkers, and they number about 30,000 annually. Trekking tourism has created about 2,000 permanent and 25,000 seasonal jobs. The investment per job is estimated at about 40 U.S. dollars and is thus very low.

Trekking tourism produces income for the poorer parts of the population along a broad base. It enables many farmers to earn money for buying necessary additional food, thus sparing them the trouble of having to migrate for longer periods for this

purpose. Most porters are farmers, and trekking does not take place during the farming season.

Trekking tourism is of special importance to the two main trekking areas, Khumbu and Thakkhola. Before the annexation of Tibet by the People's Republic of China, the Sherpas and the Thakhalis lived from trade with Tibet. With the end of this trade, the people in those high valleys suddenly lost their source of income. Without trekking tourism, most of them would have been forced to migrate either seasonally or permanently.

The positive impact of trekking tourism could be promoted still further by ensuring the full participation of the local population. This is being done successfully in the Annapurna Conservation Area Project under the supervision of the King Mahendra Trust. Such programmes could profitably be extended gradually to all major trekking areas.

Ecological and Cultural Limitations

The ecological and cultural threats posed by tourism are growing and must therefore be kept under control. The absorption capacity seems now to have been reached. The increase to one million tourists per year by the year 2000, as originally planned by the government, has in the meantime been reduced to 500,000.

For all the problems facing it, Nepal continues to be a unique paradise attractive to tourism of every kind.

Neglected Tasks - Missed Opportunities

In looking back on 40 years of development in Nepal, I wish to offer some reflexions on tasks which in my view have not received the attention due to them—to the detriment of the people—, on missed opportunities to develop the human and natural resources of Nepal, and on possibilities that have been passed up to fight poverty.

1. High-tech road repair without jobs for Nepalese

The construction of the Lamosangu-Jiri road was, given the application under it of appropriate technologies, environmental measures, and large cash-for-work programmes, a commendable model.

The Jiri road was heavily damaged in 1989 by a major landslide west of Charikot. In view of the small number of vehicles using that segment (only 20-30 per day), the obvious solution—and one geared to fighting poverty—would have been to engage a few hundred Nepalese to dig out and repair the road in a cash-for-work programme.

However, DEH decided otherwise: It applied the capital-intensive high technology of bore holes, large-scale cement injections, and giant cement walls, as has been done after similar damage to major international transit routes (both railways and highways) through the Alps. The total expenditure of about 13 million Swiss francs (38% of the original construction cost of 34 million Swiss francs) for the most part flowed back to Switzerland, thus becoming a highly questionable "aid" to a poor country—not to mention the fact that such measures clearly violate the Swiss law regulating development aid.

2. Anti-development food-for-work programmes: drought relief in 1992

In Chapter 46 lessons were drawn from the failures in development aid, and the importance of creating jobs and income on a broad scale was emphasized. It was stated that food-for-work programmes do not produce any income and therefore totally fail to alleviate poverty. Yet in Nepal, as in most developing countries, food-for-work programmes are still very much "in" and highly praised, by both the World Food Programme and the government.

A very recent example is the drought of 1992, in consequence of which the Nepalese government declared 56 districts to be "drought-affected areas." About 50,000 metric tons of food grain were allocated by various donors. Yet again the chance to embark on cash-for-work programmes in order to combat poverty was missed. In *The Rising Nepal* of 20 April 1993 the following statement was made: "Though the food grains assistance is to be distributed free of cost, the government has a policy to gear up the local development by mobilizing the local bodies to distribute the food grains in Food-for-Work Programmes..."

3. Fighting deforestation through cash-for-work programmes

Krishna Bahadur Kunwar wrote an article in *The Rising Nepal* on 12 February 1993 under the title of "Poverty and Energy Problem in Nepal." The article states that there exist in Nepal only 5,738 biogas plants. Many families could afford to build such a plant if its cost were below 100 U.S. dollars. If only 310,000, or 10%, of the 3.1 million Nepalese rural households built such biogas plants, firewood consumption and *deforestation* could be *reduced by about 30%*.

Cash-for-work programmes could generate the necessary income to enable poor families to obtain such a biogas plant. If half of the 310,000 households received a subsidy of 50% (50 U.S. dollars) of the cost of each biogas plant, the total outlay of 15 million U.S. dollars would still be only a fraction of the forestry master plan project budget, with an immediate and sure effect on reducing deforestation.

4. Income-generating local road construction

Road building and development

Highways built according to European standards are essential links between major cities, big tourist centres, sites of natural resources, large construction sites (hydroelectric dams) and rapidly developing areas. Since the opening of the country in 1951, however, construction of major highways has proved to be more difficult, more time-consuming, and above all much more costly than anticipated, both for

the construction itself as well as for the following maintenance and repair. Because of the much too small and insufficient taxes on road users, the government is not in a position to guarantee proper maintenance in the long run. A lasting and ever increasing dependency on foreign aid has been created. It is shameful to see the extraordinarily bad shape of most of the main roads (Tribhuvan Raj Path, Arniko Highway, and the Pokhara road near the Marsyandi hydroelectric dam).

I had occasion to revisit the Lamosangu-Charikot road in 1993 and was fascinated to see the excellent condition it is still in after 10 years of being in use. The efficient drainage of all the slopes above the road and the thorough protective measures at all the brook and river crossings are outstanding—features not seen on roads of much greater importance. It is indeed regrettable that this masterpiece of Swiss engineering was conceived for a route with such little traffic (an average of only 30 cars a day) rather than for a part of the Tribhuvan Raj Path from, say, Thankot to Daman Pass.

It is difficult, given the 30 thousand million Nepal rupees spent on development aid since 1960, to understand why the capital Kathmandu still has no adequate road connections with India. The road project originally proposed via Pharping and Kulikani to Bimphedi (Chapter 2) ought to be reconsidered. In addition, modernizing the Hitaura-Kathmandu ropeway into a high-capacity means of transport for both passengers and goods has much to recommend it.

The hilly Midlands with their generally small development potential require a different approach from that applicable to international highway standards. (The World Bank, incidentally, arrived at the same conclusion in 1976; see Chapter 45.) Local feeder roads will be of benefit to local rural people only if they are constructed through income-generating activities (cash-for-work) and accompanied by income-generating projects. If this is not done, then the opposite of the so-called "trickling down effect" will take place, namely the "sucking up effect." The latter redounds to the benefit not of the poorer segments of the local population but of people from outside and those belonging to the upper class—at the expense of indigent locals.

The actual construction of local rural roads to accommodate relatively low traffic requires fully adapted low-cost technology, measures to preserve the environment, labour-intensive techniques requiring as little capital investment as possible, the use of local building materials (no cement), and simple procedures which enable repair by local people. Most of the feeder roads in rural Nepal show few signs that these proven preconditions for rural development have been met. However, there are two outstanding exceptions:

The Dhading District Development Project (DDDP)

The road construction technique of the road to Dhading was first introduced in the Tinau Watershed Project in Tansing. This type of road was called a "green road." In the subsequent DDDP, financed by the GTZ (Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, German bilateral aid) the "green technique" was applied right from the beginning to the fullest extent. The supporting embankments, roadside steps, and all wall constructions were based on traditional local expertise, whose existence is borne witness to by the dense pattern of old porter trails with their stone-plated paths and abundant *chautaras* (rest places), and also by the beautifully built stone-wall houses of the Gurungs.

The first 17-kilometre stretch of the Dhading road cost only 7.6 million rupees, of which 83% was spent as cash-for-work wages for the local labour, enabling the financing of 62,000 man-days per year. With outlays of only 450,000 rupees per kilometre, the Dhading road has been by far the cheapest road in Nepal. (The cost of the Jiri road in the IHDP was five times higher.) With such an influx of income, the prevailing poverty in the area was dealt a successful blow. A number of the participating farmers were able to pay back their debts to the local moneylenders. The income served also for investment in local community activities, including drinking water supplies, small irrigation works, and schools.

The local population participated with a 25%-35% contribution of their own to the total local investment.

No contractors were engaged. All the work was done by the local population itself. They were expected to organize the labour force, including headmen and overseers, by themselves. Only technical advice was given by the project personnel who, moreover, were under the supervision of a Nepalese engineering firm.

The project also embarked on many other kinds of activities, such as improving farming techniques, increasing drinking water supplies, constructing schools and administrative buildings, and promoting improved handicrafts.

5. Hydropower: a little used major natural resource of the country

Hydropower is certainly the main natural resource of Nepal. Unfortunately, from 1951 onwards, its development has not received the attention it deserves. The present power shortage in the Kathmandu Valley is the result of such neglect. The national hydropower potential is estimated at 83 million KWs, of which 42 million KWs are estimated to be economically feasible. Yet only 2.79% of this potential is at present exploited.

In 1992 94.7% of the total energy demand was still being covered by firewood, and only 0.7% by hydropower, and this in a country that has the highest hydroelectric potential per square kilometer and per capita in the world.

Nevertheless, electrification of large areas according to European standards will not generate income for the majority of the population. It will in fact have its price: Supplying the whole country, especially the rural areas, with electric power has its limitations, since consumers will have to pay for it, at least partly. Since, however, development has not been able to create sufficient income-generating jobs in the rural areas or to improve the earnings of farmers through fair farmgate prices, most farmers simply cannot afford to pay energy taxes. Large-scale electrification will require never-ending subsidies from donors, and will thus add to the dependency on foreign aid.

The much discussed *Arun Hydropower Project* is in my view questionable. Is it really necessary to start a major hydroelectric project so far to the north in Nepal, for which the construction of a major transverse road through the whole country is required? Does not putting most of the burden for generating power supplies on one very big plant make the latter indispensable and thus vulnerable? The vulnerability of major roads, too, has again been demonstrated by the recent flood disaster.

There are many smaller potential project sites (river bends cut by tunnels) in Nepal close to the Terai; they would not require major long-distance road construction, and access to them for maintenance and repair would be less problematic.

The argument offered at the Nepal symposium in Bonn in August 1993 by the desk officer responsible for the Arun project at the German donor headquarters was not convincing. He said that the electrification of eastern Nepal would be one battle in the fight against poverty!

The suspicion is that this German donor is now on its way to producing yet another monument of a major project undertaken in the wrong place, along the same lines as the cement plant in the Kathmandu Valley.

Nepal has so many opportunities of run-of-river hydroelectric plants that construction of big dams is not advisable.

In the long term, when petroleum resources begin to become scarce and more expensive, there will be another chance for Nepal either to export hydropower as such or to produce products requiring high-energy input, such as nitrogen fertilizer made according to the Haber-Bosch process, or liquid hydrogen for running motorcars.

6. The drinking water supply for the Kathmandu Valley

The drinking water system of Kathmandu was initiated in the 1920s, with water tapped from the Phulchoki range and from the Sheopuri range. The output of the springs is limited, and is decreasing because of deforestation. While the water from Phulchoki-Godavari is of good quality, that from Sheopuri is not. It contains very finely dispersed mica, which no filter can remove. It causes the so-called Kathmandu disease.

It is understandable that the government and many private households should have embarked on the search for ground water. Such is available, but its replenishment from the surrounding mountains is limited. At present the ground water in the valley is heavily overexploited, and the water table sinking. Unfortunately it seems that no inventory is made of the bore holes in the Kathmandu Valley. Data on the formations penetrated and the fluctuations in the water table, as well as the results of pumping tests, are sorely needed.

The scarcity of drinking water in the Kathmandu Valley has long been evident—and not only since Tibetan rugs began to be washed there. No river in the Kathmandu Valley originates in the snow-covered Himalaya. Thus the catchment area is very small: the run-off of the Bagmati is generally low but fluctuates greatly between the dry season and rainy season. Only during the rainy season can it be called a river. In the dry season it almost completely stops flowing. The Bagmati and other rivers in the Kathmandu Valley have always been the natural sewage system of the valley and have therefore been heavily polluted, even if with natural organic waste, which desintegrates very fast by itself. With modernization, chemical pollution has been introduced on a scale far beyond the absorption capacity of the rivers.

Leakage and wastage: the present main problem

The loss of drinking water due to the leakage of the distribution system in Kathmandu is estimated by the government to be about 45%. Other sources have arrived at a figure of 60%. The German government has offered aid in the form of modern devices used to locate leakage sites and to repair the distribution system. Unfortunately this has, for reasons unknown to me, not materialized.

Drinking water has its price, like electrification. The users will in future have to pay a reasonable charge for it in order to reduce waste and to guarantee maintainance.

The long-term solution

Already at the end of the 1950s, when uncontrolled drilling started, I was pointing out the problems relating to the future water supply in the Kathmandu Valley. I proposed at that time to tap the crystal-clear Himalayan waters from Hellambu and Gosainkund and to pipe it to reserve tanks in the area of Sundarijal. The drop of 2,000-3,000 metres could have been used to produce hydropower. Small though the production would have been, it would at least have contributed to the power supply.

It is a source of wonder why international and bilateral aid organizations failed to undertake such a project when the time was right. Given the very large number of beneficiaries (and voters) in the valley, it would not only have represented a decisive contribution to the health of the people but at the same time would have reaped large political dividends for both the government and the donors.

7. The income-generating cheese and dairy industry

Cheese-making on high pasture land started in the early 1950s. After forty years there are still ten cheese plants that secure an increased income for about 2,000 mountain farmers who, added to their families, total about 10,000 beneficiaries.

Cattle-breeding and cheese-making occur on mountain pastures at altitudes of 3000-5000 metres—the only possible income-generating activity at such heights besides trekking tourism. The potential in Nepal is vast.

The main obstacle to expansion is the fact that the state is running the dairy industry. The cheese-makers are employees of the state with a fixed salary. They lack any incentive to increase and improve production. Nor do they have any interest in investing labour in ecological measures to improve the mountain pastures or to plant trees in their surroundings. The local cheese-makers also know very well that the central dairy plant in Kathmandu is, due to its bad management, wasting a considerable number of their fine cheeses and is operating at a loss. Such a state of affairs certainly provides no incentive for the cheese-makers in the mountains.

Originally, all the cheese-making equipment was manufactured by local craftsmen. When some donors realized how successful the cheese-making project had turned out to be, they began to "support" the project by importing modern stainless-steel equipment, the repair of which local craftsmen were unable to carry out. In this way additional local jobs and income were lost.

Privatization of the whole cheese and dairy industry would release a great potential for the development of the poorest areas of Nepal.

8. Medicinal herbs

Already in the early 1950s there was talk of exploiting the medicinal herbs found growing in Nepal. In 1952 I myself was asked by CIBA Switzerland to have a look into the availability of *Rauwolfia serpentina*, which the company required for a medicament used to lower blood pressure. This venture, however, proved to be premature. Only now that private enterprise has been promoted does this promising industry show signs of gaining momentum. Indeed there is considerable potential in Nepal, provided that the medicinal plants are farmed on plantations and not simply collected in the wild. It has been estimated that already 50 of the most important plant species collected previously have been wiped out.

9. Wool production

Given the high demand for quality wool for the carpet industry and the vast potential on the Nepalese mountain pastures between 3,500 and 5,000 metres, the local production of wool deserves serious consideration.

10. Modern vocational training—wasted traditional skill

The Nepalese, especially the Newars, have developed a unique craftsmanship in fine art, such as wood carvings, foundry ware, jewellery, thanka painting, textiles, and household goods. A stroll through the local market of Asantol in Kathmandu will bring one into contact with an outstanding collection of handicrafts. According to my experience in almost all countries on all continents, there is nothing to match the local bazars in the Newar towns. If I compare them with the souvenir shops in the famous tourist centres in Switzerland, I can't help but assign most Swiss souvenirs to the makers of "Rubbish International Unlimited."

Most of the local producers are small family enterprises. The father has taught his son, and that son teaches in turn his son. In Switzerland, too, all of today's big industries grew out of traditional small family enterprises.

The philosophy of modern vocational training centres is quite different. The trainees are taught to work in classrooms on unmarketable self-purpose training objects without any value (for example, cutting high-precision cubes out of pieces of iron). Not only in Nepal, but all over the world, development aid has totally missed out on the opportunity to build up vocational training on the pre-existing traditional base of highly skilled craftsmanship. Recruitment for the modern vocational training centres was not primarily targeted at the old craft-oriented families; rather, literate trainees were sought. In the process, one frequently ended up with the wrong people, ones with higher pretensions: white-collar workers who

had an aversion to work with their hands. Development aid has failed miserably in building on local skills. It has failed to promote family enterprises by giving advice on marketing, bookkeeping, and administration. Modern vocational training centres have hardly done any follow-up work on their trainees, such as furnishing them with starting capital to establish or upgrade their own workshop, as was done so successfully by the Swiss FUNDES Foundation in Latin America.

In establishing vocational training centres, people have too often hesitated to plunge directly into production in accordance with the teaching-by-doing philosophy. A well-conceived vocational training centre for craftsmen has to produce for the market. Only such centres will become self-supporting and independent from foreign funds or government subsidies and will thus have the chance to survive in the long run. This lesson has been learned much too late. A tremendous amount of outstanding local skill has thus been wasted and lost forever.

11. Improved water mills

Nepal has tens of thousands of local traditional water-driven mills. With their vertical shaft and oblique blades, they are a kind of forerunner of the modern Caplan turbine. By simple means, including replacing the wooden wheel and blades and bearings with iron parts, one could increase the efficiency of the wheel considerably. Instead of building on local skill and experience, though, foreigners have invented a totally new small by-pass turbine, thus neglecting the much simpler local design. To be sure, Nepal needs all three types: the very simple improved Caplan water wheel (micro plants), the by-pass turbine type (mini plants), and the large hydroelectric plants on the major rivers.

12. Removal of the cement plant out of the Kathmandu Valley

Pollution is the trademark of the cement plant near Kirtipur, an enterprise built contrary to all economic reasoning and principles: heavy industry (cement is a kind of heavy industry) needs to be established where the raw materials are found, in order to keep the transport cost of the cheap bulk materials as low as possible. Steel industries, for example, are found in those places where iron ore and coal are not far away. Transport costs do not weigh as heavily for high-quality steel as for the cheap raw materials.

One of the raw materials for the cement plant near Kirtipur, the fuel, has to be brought from India. The limestone comes from Godavari.

The proper economic location of the cement plant would have been in the Terai, where the limestone of the Mahabharat range is not far away, and where the cost of transporting Indian coal would also have been much less.

In addition, it is in my view unforgivable that beautiful marblelike fossil limestone should be wasted on producing mere cement or road gravel, as is done now, one side effect being the polluting of the whole recreation area of Godavari with dust and noise. The limestone of Godavari could be a unique resource for decorative work on buildings, for stone floors, and other purposes, as indeed it was in the case of many Rana palaces.

13. Income-generating disaster relief

Generating income is especially important after disasters, when many disaster victims find their fields destroyed and their houses, household goods, agricultural tools, oxen, seeds, and income lost in a single stroke. Cash-for-work programmes are the proper means to alleviate suffering and poverty, yet such programmes are today very rarely applied during disaster relief.

The example of the Bangladesh disaster relief in 1972

After the devastating 1971 war of liberation in Bangladesh, the infrastructure of the new nation was totally wrecked: 296 railway bridges, 276 road bridges, and 1.5 million houses were destroyed, 900,000 hand weavers were out of a job due to lack of cotton wool, 300,000 oxen were lost, and no agricultural inputs were available. Within a few weeks the 10 million refugees who spent nine months in India during the civil war returned home. There, upwards of 6 million citizens were "floating people," who had had to hide during the war. An additional 10 million people had lost their agricultural tools. Some 26 million people, mostly farmers, due to fear and lack of agricultural inputs, had not cultivated their fields for at least one of the three annual cropping seasons.

In 1972, after the war in Bangladesh, I headed the large UN relief programme (338 million U.S. dollars). Under *cash-for-work programmes* having *54 million U.S. dollars* to work with, hundreds of thousands of impoverished people got work for a fair wage. In addition, many tens of thousands of small repayable loans were granted. Not only was the totally wrecked infrastructure (including 570 bridges) reconstructed within the six months left before the start of the rainy season, but also 1.5 million destroyed houses were rebuilt in self-help style. The purchasing power created at the base worked miracles on the whole rural economy. Local markets, having been depleted for almost one year, filled up with all the goods required in rural areas. Within that one year the new nation of 75 million people was back to normal, including normal food production.

The relief operations in Bangladesh in 1972 were also a very good object lesson with regard to the local transport of 2 million tons of imported food grains and

many other relief goods from the harbours into the inland capillary system. This was done for the most part by traditional means of local transport: mainly along the many rivers and waterways on local, non-motorized boats and, to a lesser degree, on bullock carts, bicycles, and rickshaws. Air transport was negligible. All transport costs were met by the local purchasing power created by the cash-for-work programmes.

A study carried out at the end of the operation showed that the transport capacity of non-motorized river boats with load limits between 2 and 50 tons was twice as high as the capacity of road, railway, and motorized boat transport combined. In general, the *capacities of local transport are always grossly underestimated*. The outstanding example of the capacity of local transport by porters and on bicycle was the *Ho Chi Minh Trail in Vietnam*. Over this trail of many hundreds of kilometres through rugged terrain, a whole fighting army, including its heavy ammunition needs, was supported.

Illegal disaster relief becomes a great success

But I had to break all the UN rules to accomplish what I did in Bangladesh. In order to generate the necessary cash for the large cash-for-work programmes, it was necessary to sell part of the total of 2 million tons of donated food to those who could afford to pay for it. I knew, on the basis of a similar task I had been assigned to in North Yemen in 1969 after the civil war there, that this was illegal within the UN system. Consequently, without asking UN headquarters, I signed an agreement with Prime Minister **Sheikh Mujibur Rahman** and United States Ambassador Mr. **Spivak** (who got the green light for this action within 24 hours from Washington). I informed the UN secretary-general only after the cash-for-work programmes were well under way, in order to prevent their being stopped from New York.

I had to break the UN rules also in many other respects, in order to make sure that the relief aid really worked in favour of the people. As a consequence, my critical final report on the whole UN operations was later on confiscated by UN Secretary-General **K. Waldheim**. That was very regrettable, since the international organizations could have learnt much from the experiences of the highly successful relief operations in Bangladesh.

I was able to go this unorthodox route because, before being handed the assignment for Bangladesh by **UN Secretary-General U Thant**, I had already petitioned for retirement at the end of 1972. Consequently I was an entirely free and independent man. Both U Thant and the UNDP director, **Paul Hoffman**, went into retirement in 1972/73, and since I enjoyed their confidence, I decided to leave the UN the same year too.

15. A letter written by Abdur Rab Chowdhuri, the coordinator of foreign aid in the Bangladeshi prime minister's office, on the work of Toni Hagen.

Secretary,
Co-ordination Division
for External Assistance for
Relief and Rehabilitation,
Prime Minister's Secretariat,
500/E, Dhanmondi, Road No.7,
Dacca-5



Cable: COEAR
Tele: 315336/7.

D.O. NO. *RC-496*

23rd May, 1972.

Excellency,

In the meeting of the voluntary agencies held on May 10th, 1972, a resolution was adopted to send a letter to you commending the work of Mr. Toni Hagen. As the Chairman of the group I have been asked to transmit the letter which I have the honour to reproduce below.

On behalf of the international agencies engaged in relief, rehabilitation and development projects undertaken jointly with the people and the Government of Bangladesh, this letter attempts to express our gratitude to UNROD --- and especially its first Director, Toni Hagen --- for guidance, encouragement and support throughout these past post-war months in Bangladesh.

There has not been to our knowledge a comparable emergency relief situation where a temporary UN agency has assumed such a major burden above and beyond its direct assistance to the Government. UNROD's frequent and regular progress reports on availability of foodgrains, restoration of the internal transportation system, relief and rehabilitation project commitments undertaken by multi-lateral, bi-lateral and non-government voluntary agencies have proved of irreplaceable use to most of us in matching our capabilities and resources to the utmost high-priority needs of Bangladesh.

Those of the voluntary agencies (and that includes most of us) who have approached Mr. Hagen directly for

advice or assistance have found him accessible and generous in support of initiatives which help meet Bangladesh's needs.

It is our hope and belief that the experience gained through the UNROD, Bangladesh will contribute significantly to the United Nations Disaster Relief Agency about to be organised on a permanent basis from Geneva.

Mr. Hagen departs from Bangladesh with our respect and affection in confidence that he will continue to provide encouragement, guidance and support to voluntary agency initiatives elsewhere, which the Bangladesh experience has confirmed can best meet the needs of the host Governments, United Nations and voluntary agencies alike.

2. I am also enclosing a list of voluntary agencies working in Bangladesh.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,



(Abdur Rab Chaudhury).

His Excellency,
Mr. Kurt Waldheim,
General Secretary,
United Nations,
New York,
U. S. A.

14. The Bangladesh disaster relief model for Nepal 1993?

In the face of the present flood disaster of July 1993 in South Asia, one wonders whether international organizations and governments will embark on large-scale cash-for-work programmes, the fastest way to get a country and its people back to normal and to fight poverty. Abundant rural works will have to be carried out after the recession of the floods: the repair of roads, trails, and bridges, the cleaning up of farmland, irrigation works, and riverbeds, the restoration of small dams, the building of new protection dams, the building and repair of houses, the reterracing of plots destroyed by landslides, the planting of trees where landslides have swept them away, and so forth. The hundreds of thousands of farmers and porters in Nepal who in the 1950s were busy carrying loads for the salt barter trade can be put back on the trails again to carry food grains and other relief goods from the Terai to the hills, for pay under a cash-for-transport scheme. One could allow them to keep a part of the total individual load, of say 40 kilogrammes, for their own family. Operations following such a disaster ought to be organized on a war footing. Why not create dozens of *Nepalese Ho Chi Minh trails* from the Terai or roads to the remote hill areas? Such transport would certainly be much cheaper than airlift, which in Nepal costs on the average three times as much as the value of the food grains. This is a unique chance and a challenge, after the disastrous floods of 1993, to embark on *large-scale innovative cash-for-work programmes* and at the same time to fight poverty efficiently and to restimulate the local economy.

15. Resettlement of the refugees from Bhutan

The 90,000 refugees from Bhutan will have to be resettled in Nepal, no matter how high their hopes are to return to Bhutan. These hopes are at best slim, since the "Buddhist kingdom of Bhutan" insists on "ethnic cleansing," and the government of India, which has the power to influence the Bhutanese, is indifferent.

Resettlement of their fellow countrymen is a real challenge for the government. The resettlement should start as soon as possible; simply feeding the destitute newcomers without giving them proper work will have adverse effects on them. It will promote social desintegration and unrest and eventually criminality and violence.

Both the government of Nepal and the international organizations should draw lessons from the UN Bangladesh disaster relief operations in 1972 and the successful resettlement of Tibetan refugees in the early 1960s in Nepal. Of course teaching the refugees from Bhutan to learn carpet-knitting is out of the question, but there is the chance to establish a model for agricultural resettlement in the Terai, which is buckling under the spontaneous resettlement of hundreds of thousands of people from the impoverished hills of Nepal as it is.

The principle of this resettlement should be to use exclusively cash-for-work programmes on a large scale, under which the refugees would build up their own infrastructure themselves: housing, roads, water supplies, land reclamation, small irrigation projects, village afforestation, school buildings, vocational training centres, and the like, just as the Tibetan refugees did 30 years ago. No feeding centres need be established; the beneficiaries of the cash-for-work programmes should buy all their basic needs in the nearby markets. The Dhading District Development Project described above may serve as a model. Under common cash-for-work programmes, the people can be helped to restore their original village structures from Bhutan or organize themselves into new communities.

If against all expectations the refugees are able to return to Bhutan one day, the money spent on the refugees would not be lost for Nepal (as it would be after long years of maintaining feeding centres and camps). Nepalese immigrants from the hills would be happy to settle in the built-up infrastructure.

16. Gurkha soldiers for the United Nations

I have previously, in my first book on Nepal (1960), made the suggestion that mercenary service in foreign countries should, for ethical reasons, gradually be reduced, although the earnings from the Gurkha soldiers are an important revenue for the country. I proposed at that time that the UN should recruit soldiers from Nepal for their peace-keeping missions. Such a course of action would, of course, have been premature as long as the Cold War was still going on. But with the increasing intervention of the UN all over the world today, the time has come to renew my proposal. Gurkha soldiers—among the finest soldiers in the world—would be extremely reliable and, having been recruited from a small neutral country, would be acceptable even for politically delicate missions. Some regiments of Gurkha soldiers under permanent UN contract would be immediately available for deployment anywhere. In carrying out their mission, they would at the same time generate a considerable income for the people of Nepal.

Ecological and Cultural Threats and the Dangers for Nepal

Cultural Erosion is Irreversible

There exist large numbers of articles and books on ecological deterioration in Nepal. The ecological threat is well known, as well as the measures which ought to be taken to stop it. Development aid has so far largely failed to be of decisive help in halting the trend towards increased deforestation and soil erosion, air and water pollution, and the like. On the contrary, it has largely added to the problem, the cement factory in the Kathmandu Valley being the striking example, along with the mushrooming brick plants there. Both are the consequence of the construction boom in Kathmandu, triggered in one way or the other by development funds.

I was one of the first persons to point out, already in the 1950s, the ecological dangers Nepal faces, and I have for a long time been giving well-meant advice to deal with them.

Today, in the face of the global ecological threat, I feel less and less at ease in giving advice to the government of Nepal. We, the 15% (800 million people) of the world population living in the industrialized countries, use upwards of 80% of the global natural resources and non-renewable energy resources, and thus cause between 10 and 20 times more damage to the global environment than the developing countries with their poor. We cause the green-house effect, and we are responsible for the hole in the ozone layer. People of developing countries also participate in the destruction of nature, of course. But they do so mostly for reasons of poverty, needing, for example, firewood for cooking or more land for cultivating crops. We of the northern tier of countries, on the other hand, destroy nature to maintain our affluence.

Personally, however, I am much more concerned about the *cultural erosion* and the *cultural decline* in Nepal than about the ecological threats to nature. Ecological

threats can be reduced provided that the political will to reform and to take the necessary measures exists. The process of eroding and bankrupting culture is entirely *irreversible*. If once lost, no reforms and no measures can restore culture; no money whatsoever can buy it back.

The Lords are Leaving the Country

This is the title of a book by **Jürgen Schick** describing the theft of art objects in the Kathmandu Valley. Another book on the same problem under the title *Stolen Images of Nepal* by **Lain S. Bangdel** has been published by the Royal Nepal Academy.

It is estimated that since the opening of the country in the 1950s about 50% of the cultural objects from temples, shrines, and public buildings have been stolen and funnelled into the international antiques market. There is a kind of international Mafia at work, which arranges theft of cultural treasures very professionally. Orders can be placed from abroad according to picture volumes on Nepal or books on Nepalese culture. It is, of course, true that Nepalese too are involved in the looting of their own culture. However, the blame should be assigned not primarily to them but to the buyers from the rich countries. It is like corruption in development aid: no money—no corruption. In the case of stolen art: no money—no international buyers' market.

The people of the rich Western countries have, since the end of the war, gradually been turning away from traditional human, social, and cultural values. The "permissive" society given birth to in 1968 provided the greatest single push for the new ideas of denying traditional values and promoting unlimited freedom and liberty in every respect, without demanding the responsibility which is indispensable for any new freedom and liberty. The new freedom gave, among other things, the green light for indulging in an unchecked materialism, which was made into a religion, with motorcars, for example, as one of its cult objects. In Switzerland there exists a political party, the Motorcar Party, the aim of which is to promote the unlimited use of automobiles. This is what the Motorcar Party perversely calls "freedom." Major segments of Western society have lost their cultural roots. At the same time, people have become more individualistic and selfish, having lost the sense of responsibility for society as a whole, for nature, and for the environment. Modern society has become an entity of irresponsible consumers and wastemakers. The consequences of such a development are serious, and in Europe already clearly visible in the increasing criminality and spread of drug consumption: Zurich in Switzerland, once a model of a clean and safe city, is today one of the unsafest places in the world.

In the 1950s the Nepalese were still living in full harmony with their environment and with their culture and religion. Religion was interwoven entirely

in their daily life. The "cheerfulness of the soul," as I have called it, stems from this internal harmony. The cheerfulness of the people is still today one of the main attractions of the country for its many tourists.

It is very important that Nepal preserve its unique multicultural diversity based on equal rights. There would be perilous consequences for the country if the ruling ethnic group were to try to dominate the ethnic and cultural minorities. To what lengths such a policy can lead is drastically illustrated by events in the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia. Nepal is suffering at present from the "ethnic cleansing" in Bhutan, which calls itself a "Buddhist kingdom." It would be preferable to term Nepal a "*multicultural kingdom*" instead of a Hindu kingdom, in order to make the non-Hindu population (for example, Sherpas and Bhotias) and other ethnic minorities, such as the Newars and the Gurungs, feel still more at home in the country.

Development aid and above all tourism are well on the way to bringing materialistic society to Nepal. The contrast between the very poor Nepalese and the rich development experts and tourists has further promoted cultural erosion, and this is only heightened by the untoward behaviour of certain foreigners. Many Nepalese are gradually losing their cultural identity and becoming "mentally displaced persons."

People who have given up their cultural identity and roots and have replaced them with an individualistic materialism and associated values, with little sense of responsibility for the whole, are not promoters of democratic processes. They are prone to follow populist or even demagogic politicians. Nepal, squeezed between its two mighty neighbours, may be at special risk in this respect.

In 1992 the Nepalese people boldly reintroduced the multiparty system along with freedom of the press and other liberties, all preconditions for the smooth functioning of the democratic process. The present political unrest, after the introduction of basic liberties, is natural. All nations, including the old and new ones of Eastern Europe, go through the same experiences following their newly attained freedom. It shows again that democracy cannot be introduced all at once by decree, or by a revolution, or even by a referendum. It is a *long historical process*, which has to *start from a base*.

Exactly for this reason, *international development aid* with its *centralistic approach through governments* has strengthened, or rather built up, the centralized power-hungry bureaucracies in most developing countries. This is *counterproductive to any decentralized democratic development, which requires individual responsibility from the grass roots right up to the top for the well-being of the whole nation*.

My Gratitude to Nepal

In looking back on the 42 years of my association with Nepal, I realize that I have experienced something unique: in spite of numerous political changes, I have managed not only to survive them but also, with only one exception, to maintain cordial relations with the most various sorts of politicians—even though I have not by any means been uncritical, particularly in matters of Nepal's development. Thus I have consistently supported the use of appropriate technology. I had no sympathy for King Mahendra's coup of 15 December 1960 once he interned Koirala and his fellow comrades-in-arms. King Mahendra did not betray any reaction to my having not once mentioned his name in the first edition of my picture book on Nepal, in which B. P. Koirala was lauded as a great fighter for freedom and human rights.

By contrast, in personally inaugurating and opening the sales store of the carpet-knitting workshop, he stood squarely behind me and displayed extraordinary courage towards China.

I did not sympathize with his panchayat system. Mahendra would probably have done away with it and instituted new reforms himself had he had the chance to experience the political stagnation with his own eyes.

In looking back, I have to say that King Mahendra was an extraordinary political personality and conducted the difficult foreign policy of his small country with great political instinct and skill.

Nor have I always been uncritical towards the later regime. While I praised the referendum of 1980 as a courageous act, I made no bones about criticizing in my picture book the favour shown to the ruling panchayat establishment. King Birendra, however, did not hold this against me; three years later he conferred Nepal's highest honour on me. During the regular audiences that are associated with the decoration, my talks with the king have always been marked by cordial frankness.

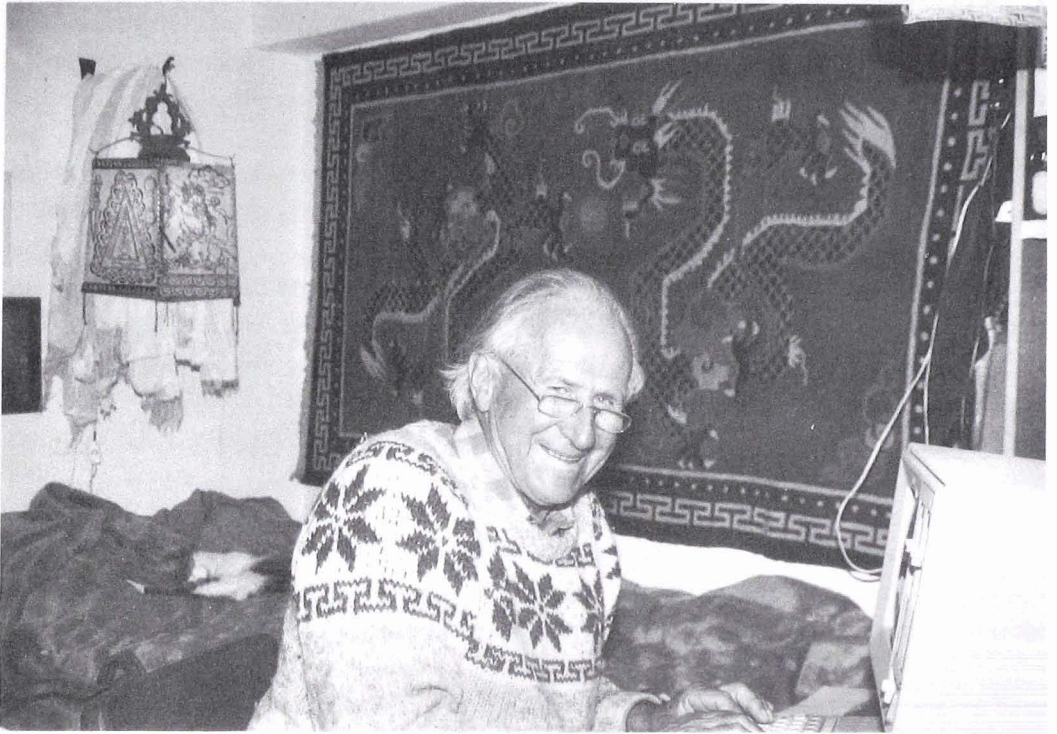
In my opinion, the constitutional monarchy must not be a matter of serious debate. The king (and Birendra in particular) is the integrating figure necessary for Nepal's political survival between its two powerful neighbours.

This was shown to be the case particularly during the Indian economic blockade in the spring of 1989. One must keep the contrast in mind: 900 million Indians as against 20 million Nepalese, or a mineral-rich country that is industrialized by Third World standards as against a poor country with no mineral wealth worth speaking of and no direct access to the seas.

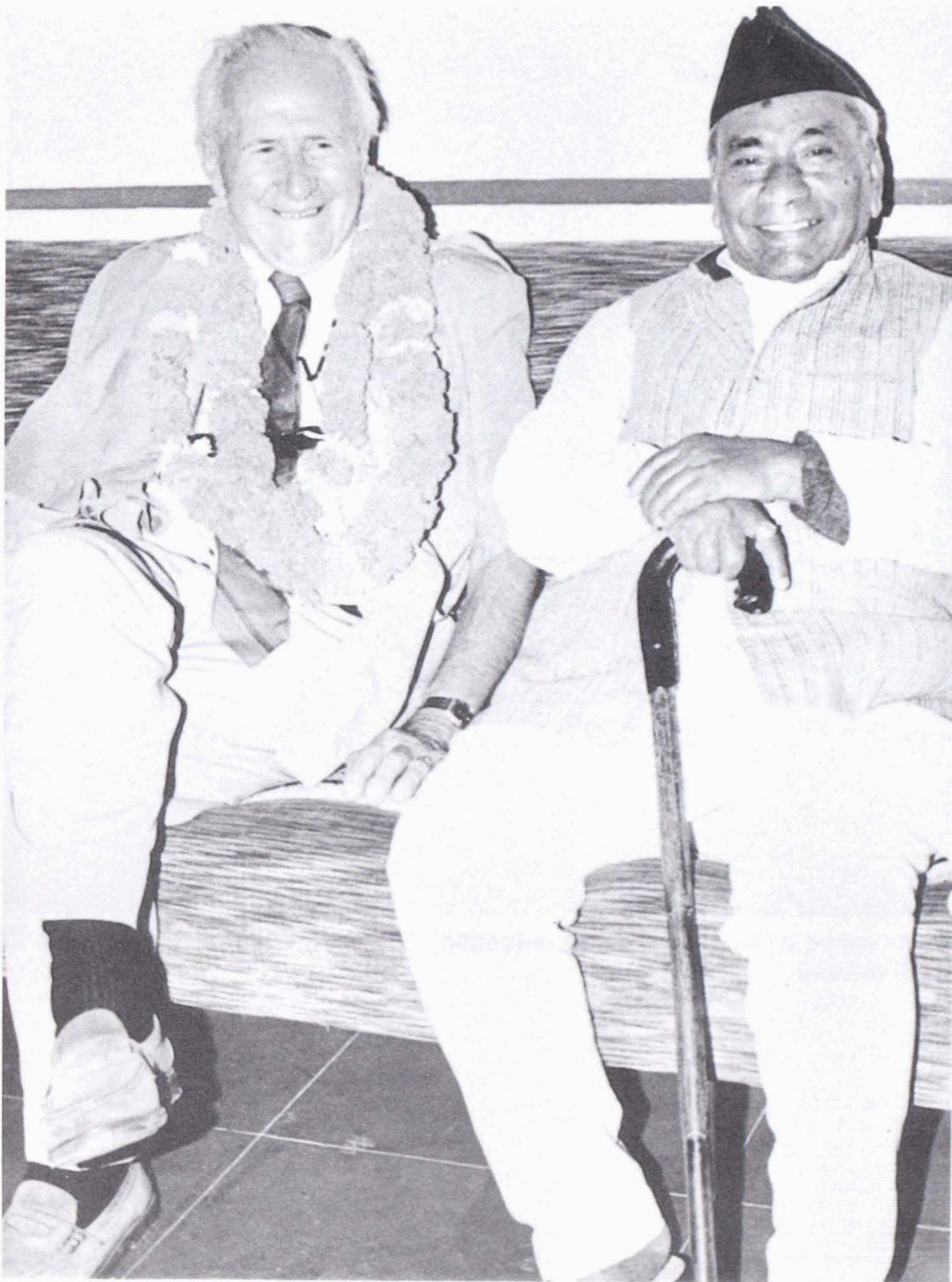
I have been impressed and often moved during my trips to Nepal when meeting old friends. Many are no longer living, including Narendra Mani Diksit (foreign secretary in the 1950s), Mr. Maskey (director of the National Museum and a poet), General Khatri, and Bim Bahadur Pande, who died shortly before my trip to Nepal in 1992.

It would take too long to list the names of all those persons, both within and without government, with whom I was, and in many cases still am, connected by ties of cordial friendship.

My experiences with my faithful Sherpas and porters were one of a kind. I hope that I have been able to leave a monument for them in this book. The Nepalese, rich or poor, with whom I have been associated or have otherwise come into contact—they have all made my years in and later vacation trips to Nepal rich and rewarding. When I think of my second home, Nepal, it is with deep gratitude.



16. Toni Hagen at work on a book in his home in Lenzerheide, 1985.



17. Toni Hagen meets Mr. Ganesh Man Singh, 1993.



18. The opening of the photo exhibition on 16 November 1993 by King Birendra (Rajendra Chitrakar, *The Rising Nepal*).



19. The handing over of the draft of Toni Hagen's memoirs on Nepal to King Birendra.

Curriculum Vitae of Toni Hagen

- Born:** 17 August 1917, Lucerne, Switzerland
- Nationality:** Swiss
- Family:** Married to Gertrud, born Naegeli; one son, Christopher, and two daughters, Katrin and Monica.
- 1941 Diploma in engineering geology, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich.
- 1943 Ph.D. (Natural Science), Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich.
- 1944 - 1945 Geological and geotechnic investigations for the Linth-Limmern hydroelectric dam; practice in photogrammetry and photogeology in private firm Dr. R. Helbling.
- 1945 - 1951 Research assistant and lecturer on air photo interpretation, photogeology and photogrammetry, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich.
- 1949 - 1992 Publicist and writer on disaster relief, refugee relief and resettlement, and development aid; 46 articles in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Zurich.
- 1950 - 1951 First six-month mission to Nepal (Swiss-Nepal-Forward Team) sponsored by the Swiss government, under the patronage of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich.
- 1952 Geological field work and research in Nepal, commissioned by the government of Nepal.

- 1953 - 1959 Geological reconnaissance survey of the whole of Nepal, commissioned under the United Nations. Expanded Technical Assistance Programme, New York.
- 1959 - 1962 Director, Basic Survey Department, Ministry of Planning, Government of Nepal, commissioned under OPEX (operational and executive) by United Nations Expanded Technical Assistance Programme, New York; execution of aerial surveys, basic surveys for building suspension bridges, road building, (e.g. shortest link Kathmandu - India via Pharping), hydroelectric dams (i.e. Kulikani, Karnali), drinking water supply projects (e.g. Kathmandu), agriculture, soil protection, handicrafts.
- 1960 - 1962 Chief delegate, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), temporarily seconded by UN to ICRC for resettlement of Tibetan refugees in Nepal; start of the successful carpet-knitting industry in Nepal took initiative for the resettlement of Tibetan refugees in Switzerland and for the establishment of a Tibetan monastery.
- 1963 -1966 UN adviser to the National Petroleum Company, Bolivia, four new discoveries; Lecturer on air photo interpretation and photogeology at the new Technical University La Paz; Ground water surveys on the Bolivian and Peruvian Altiplano; Evaluations of rural development and resettlement.
- 1966 - 1972 Consultant to the administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York, Paul Hoffman (former director of the Marshal Plan); was administrator of the UNDP, special missions as troubleshooter (fact-finding missions, evaluations, advice to governments), to many countries on all continents.
- 1969 Special representative of the UNDP.
- 1969 - 1971 Chief of the UNDP Reconstruction and Development Programme in North Yemen after the civil war.
- 1970 Several short missions as adviser and coordinator of the international aid to Peru after the earthquake.

- 1971 Chief of the UN relief operations in East Pakistan after the cyclone and during the civil war.
- 1972 Chief of the UN relief operations in Bangladesh after the civil war (338 Million US dollars).
- 1973 Evaluation of the relief and reconstruction programme in Bangladesh; Retirement from the UN.
- 1973 - 1992 Adviser and evaluator for international organizations, bilateral aid, and NGOs on disaster relief, refugee problems, and development aid in many countries on all continents; resource person for many international seminars and workshops.
- 1973 - 1992 Member of the Experts Commission, foreign aid, Caritas Switzerland.
- 1974 Member of the board, Tibet Institute, Rikon, Switzerland.
- 1974 - 1982 Lecturer at the postgraduate course on developing countries, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich; 1981-82 member of the board.
- 1976 Evaluation of the relief and reconstruction aid to Peru after the earthquake of 1970.
- 1977 - 1978 Research on disaster relief and author of the Disaster Relief Manual, on behalf of Caritas Internationalis, Rome.
- 1980 Honoured by the University of Basle, Switzerland, with an honorary doctorate in medicine for the activities in the developing countries.
- 1981 First president, Swiss-Tibetan Friendship Association.
- 1984 Member, Royal Nepal Academy, Kathmandu; honoured with the Birendra Pragya Alankara by King Birendra of Nepal.

- 1988 Publication of the book *Wege und Irrwege der Entwicklungshilfe* (Paths and Dead Ends of Development Aid) by Neue Zürcher Zeitung Publishers, Zurich, an analysis of 230 development projects in many countries all over the world.
- 1989 - 1993 Guest lecturer at Oxford University on disaster relief, refugee relief, and resettlement and development.
- 1992 - 1993 Photographic exhibitions in St. Gallen, Switzerland, in Oettingen Castle (Bavaria), in Bonn (Center for Sciences), and in Kathmandu on work in Nepal - on the occasion of his 75th birthday.
- 1992 *Brücken bauen zur Dritten Welt Erinnerungen an Nepal 1950 - 1992* Akademia Verlag St.Augustin/Bonn.
- 1993 Agreement with Oxford University for depositing the assets of evaluation reports on about 400 projects relating to disaster relief, refugee relief and resettlement, and development aid at the Refugees Study Programme, University of Oxford.
- 1994 *Building Bridges to the Third World , Memories of Nepal 1950 - 1992*, Book Faith India, Delhi.