By Micah Shristi  
Former Weather Vane Editor

Hurrying along to catch my tempo to work last Sunday, I looked up to see huge crowds of spectators being held back by army personnel at Pulchowk. A twinge of fear mixed with the instant rush of excitement I felt.

“What’s going on, Didi?” I asked a woman standing near me. She told me that a few minutes earlier a soldier had detonated a bomb that had been placed in the middle of the main road. “Now they’re searching for a second one, what a noise, what a noise!” she said.

My mind rushed back over the last two weeks of bombings in the Valley. I recalled the shopping centre bomb, the water treatment plant bomb and the bomb in Lalitpur that killed the army technician trying to defuse it. Thank goodness no civilians have been killed in the Valley yet, I thought to myself.

From the direction of Jawalakhel, I heard the sounds of snarled rush-hour traffic that had been held up for more than an hour. Motorbikes and smaller vehicles were starting to filter around the blocked thoroughfare by honking their way through side alleys.

Standing on a high curb I peered over the crowd and down to the main street. I could see army personnel cautiously moving around in the eerily deserted street. All the shop shutters were down, and even the abundant stray dogs were conspicuously absent.

To my surprise, the crowds of spectators didn’t seem too concerned about the possibility of a large explosion. People were craning their necks and jostling each other for a better view. My inclination was to dive behind the nearest parked taxi to avoid the shrapnel and broken glass I was sure would soon come blasting through the air.

I went inside a dark pharmacy; the electricity to the area had been cut off. A candle was burning, creating a sense of calm in contrast to the scene outside. I phoned the office, saying I’d be a little late to work. Even in this crisis situation the man behind the counter tried to over-charge me for the phone call.

To my relief the officers soon signalled the “all clear,” and crowds surged forward from all the side streets. Everyone wanted to see, the crater left by the explosion and get his or her face on the evening news. The bombsite became an implosion of humanity as people started running to see followed closely by motorbikes, buses and cars. All I could see was shredded newspaper all over the street while everyone started yelling “chocolate bomb!”

We all then realized that the bomb had been a hoax; nothing more than a bag full of sweets and rice wrapped in newspaper. The explosion that everyone had heard came from the device the army uses to detonate suspicious objects.

I smiled with relief watching teenagers trying to jump in front of the news cameras. If only every bomb scare turned out to be a chocolate bomb.

In further pursuit of the knowledge of “what’s really going on,” Shristi plans to take a break from copy-editing in December for a trip to Iraq with Iraq Peace Teams. “It’s ridiculous that after 10 years of sanctions which have killed over 500,000 Iraqis (many of them children), our President still wants to increase our regular bombing of Iraq into an all-out military invasion,” he said.

Shristi and his wife met in EMU’s WSSY program. Wanting to share a surname without adopting each other’s, Micah and Charlotte settled on “Shristi,” a Nepali name meaning new beginning or creation. Charlotte is currently volunteering in Colombia with Justapaz, a peace and justice organization. Following a two-week Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation in November and an art therapy program in Sincelejo, she will join her husband in Kathmandu in January. Benner said the couple’s name adoption, along with their willingness to live separately so soon after marriage, is proof of their “yen for adventure,” and “typical of Micah—very unconventional.”

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