

# Revolution and State Power in Nepal

*By the MLM Revolutionary Study Group, April 4, 2009*

The central question in Nepal today is state power and the means by which it can be conquered and wielded in the service of the overwhelming majority of the people of Nepal. Does the present unstable Maoist-led coalition government represent the beginnings of a process leading to socialism, and a beacon and valuable resource for the worldwide struggle against capitalism and imperialism? Or is a disorienting political strategy being implemented that is unprepared for the next challenge and is blocking further advance of the revolutionary process?

At present, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) is the largest party with a powerful mass base. It occupies leading positions, including Prachanda as Prime Minister, in what is essentially a bourgeois/feudal state backed by the 90,000 strong Nepalese Army and tens of thousands in the police force. While the Nepalese Army is confined to barracks, 19,000 PLA members have been housed for the past 2 1/2 years in cantonments (military camps), their arms are being held in the camps under UN inspection, and they are slated to be “integrated” with the Nepalese Army under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in 2006—the precise terms of which are still in dispute.

The UCPN (Maoist) announced in February 2009 that the Revolutionary People’s Councils in the liberated areas of the countryside have been disbanded. According to recent visitors, basic party units have been replaced by commissions and mass organizations in many areas. There is no evidence that the party leadership is preparing its mass base and the party for an actual seizure of power.

The class struggle, particularly the anti-feudal struggle, has abated since the end of the people’s war in 2006. The most intense and highest profile struggle has been the effort of landless peasants in the Terai to hold onto expropriated land during the people’s war, supported by Minister of Land Reform Matrika Yadav. Lack of support from the central government and growing differences between Yadav and the UCPN (Maoist) leadership led to Matrika’s resignation from the government and then from the party in order to form a reconstituted CPN (Maoist). While not widely reported, there are indications that a growing number of restless and rebellious forces are organizing outside UCPN (Maoist) authority due to the present strategy of the party. Elements of the PLA have recently criticized directives of the central government, even Prachanda, to stop recruiting new PLA members in the face of renewed recruitment of 3,000 soldiers by the Nepalese Army.

This stagnation of the revolutionary process is the result of the strategic decision made by the CPN (Maoist) in 2005 to end the people’s war, unite with a broad spectrum of parties to carry the anti-monarchist struggle through to the end, and to center its work around elections to a Constituent Assembly with the goal of forming a Maoist-led

government. It has characterized this period as a “political offensive,” with a particular emphasis on strengthening the party’s base of support in the cities.

Though the Unified CPN (Maoist) has not issued any official strategic documents recently (The Red Star is not an official organ and The Worker no longer appears), it is clear that the Prachanda leadership is pursuing a path of attempting to transform the bourgeois/feudal state from within and by peaceful means.<sup>1</sup> The party’s formulation is that the main tasks for the party are continuing the “peace process” to its end and writing a new constitution.

The draft of a new constitution by the party was overseen by Baburam Bhattarai, the leading representative of a bourgeois democratic trend in the party whose plans for economic development do not call for a break with the imperialist system. Nevertheless, this draft is being pitched as an “anti-feudal, anti-imperialist” constitution. However, assuming that the Unified Maoists can muster the necessary support from its uneasy coalition partners, the CPN (United M-L) and the largest Mahesi party, a “revolutionary constitution” (including land reform and other issues) will not be enforceable without a new mass revolutionary upsurge.

The central unresolved part of the peace process contained in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is the future of the bourgeois/feudal and the revolutionary armies. During his trip to Europe in late March, Prachanda called for the “integration and rehabilitation” of the PLA; party statements have generally paired this with a call to “democratize” the Nepalese Army. However, if the People’s Liberation Army is integrated with the Nepalese Army, this will split it up and make it impossible to function as a revolutionary force in society. Any notion that integration of the two armies will

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<sup>1</sup> In its most recent statement on the situation in Nepal (April 24, 2008), the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) wrote: “The election results in Nepal have proved once again the overwhelming anger of the masses against the outdated feudal monarchic rule in Nepal, against the Indian expansionist’s bullying and domination of Nepal, against US domination and oppression, and are a reflection of the growing aspirations of the Nepali masses for democracy, land, livelihood and genuine freedom from imperialist and feudal exploitation.... The real test, however, begins now after the CPN(M) taking over the reins of power. It is a fundamental tenet of Marxism that no radical restructuring of the system is possible without the smashing of the existing state. It is impossible to make genuine changes in the system through measures initiated ‘from above’, i.e. through state decrees and laws. Whichever Party may be in power, not excluding the most radical Maoists, one can only make laws at best, but to implement these it is imperative to mobilize the masses and advance class struggle against exploiters and oppressors and for radical changes for the liberation of the vast majority of poor. No ruling class will give up power without putting up a bitter struggle and carrying out sabotage and subterfuge against the oppressed class. Hence the real, bitter and most cruel struggle for power will now unfold soon after the elections.” The full text of the April 24, 2008 statement and the CPI (Maoist)’s earlier statements of June 2006 and November 2006 on Nepal are being posted at [www.mlmrsg.com](http://www.mlmrsg.com).

In order to encourage deeper study of the situation in Nepal, in January 2007 we produced a bibliography and a number of readings on the state, a peaceful transition to socialism, democracy and dictatorship and negotiations. This bibliography includes statements and interviews by the CPN (Maoist) in 2005 and 2006. It is available at [www.mlmrsg.com](http://www.mlmrsg.com).

allow the PLA to “disintegrate” the Nepalese Army from within is extremely dangerous. Integration of the two armies will deal a serious, possibly fatal blow to the revolutionary process underway in Nepal.

From the rich and varied experience of revolution in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is no evidence that a reactionary army can be transformed into a revolutionary army by “integrating” it with a communist-led army. The most germane experience in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country like Nepal is the military and political strategy and tactics of the Chinese revolution, which went through several stages between 1927 and 1949.

Other than truces during negotiations, Mao never stopped the people’s war and refused to integrate the Red Armies into the Guomindang armies. (Two Red armies were briefly renamed during the war against Japan.) In 1945, as part of an attempt to shift the onus for the looming civil war onto the GMD, and under pressure from Stalin, Mao made an offer to “nationalize” the two armies and reduce their size, an offer which he was sure would be rejected by Jiang Kai-shek. Without the continued independence and initiative of the People’s Liberation Army, the new democratic revolution in China could not have achieved victory, and the transition to socialist revolution could not have been embarked upon.<sup>2</sup>

At an important Central Committee meeting in 1938, Mao wrote that “The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universally, for China and for all other countries.” He went on to say that “Without armed struggle the proletariat and the Communist Party would have no standing at all in China, and it would be impossible to accomplish any revolutionary task.”<sup>3</sup> On more than one occasion, Mao stated bluntly: “Without a people’s army, the people have nothing.”<sup>4</sup>

For all of the above reasons, the current strategy of the Prachanda leadership is not a creative development of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. It is guided by a revisionist line and strategy that is in opposition to a revolutionary line and strategy of preparing the masses and the party to wage a struggle to seize political power in the interests of the oppressed in Nepal--which may involve elements of insurrection in the cities and renewed people’s war in the countryside.<sup>5</sup> This is the critical element in achieving the victory of the new democratic revolution. It is only through such a revolution that it becomes possible for the masses to strike at the roots of feudalism and imperialism and advance step by step towards a socialist Nepal.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> An appraisal of the role of political, military and negotiating strategies of the Communist Party of China between 1937 and 1946 is being posted on [www.mlmrsg.com](http://www.mlmrsg.com)

<sup>3</sup> “Problems of War and Strategy,” Selected Works, Vol. 2, pp. 219, 222 (November 1938).

<sup>4</sup> “On Coalition Government,” Selected Works, Vol. 3, pp. 247-248 (April 1945).

<sup>5</sup> It is true that a political offensive and insurrectionary activity preceded the CPN (Maoist)’s initiation of the people’s war in 1996. However, no “military offensive” is forthcoming to replace the current “political offensive,” as some have speculated.

<sup>6</sup> The CPN (Maoist)’s promotion of multiparty democracy as *the defining element* of the state under new democracy and socialism and as *an essential safeguard* against capitalist restoration is

Such a renewed revolutionary struggle will undoubtedly revisit the thinking once held by the CPN (Maoist) for joint ideological, political and military development of South Asian revolutionary forces, which was dropped by the party when its current path was adopted. In recent years, Prachanda has reassured the Indian government that the UCPN (Maoist) has purely “ideological” ties with the Indian Maoist forces.

To those who think that an armed seizure of state power by the Maoists would inevitably lead to defeat at the hands of the Nepalese Army or an invading Indian Army, we think that this greatly underestimates the revolutionary consciousness and experience of the Nepalese people and overestimates the freedom of the Indian expansionists to invade and occupy Nepal for any sustained period.

Given the growing crisis of the Indian semi-feudal/capitalist system and the massive and growing struggles of the Indian masses, the Indian government will not have a free rein. Internationally, capital is in such a severe crisis that the imperialist powers may prove incapable of controlling or blocking the advance of the revolutionary forces in Nepal. They may have insufficient resources for some semblance of economic development (and the corruptive ideological and political cookies that go with it), and insufficient military force to suppress a revolutionary mass upsurge.

The Nepalese revolution may turn out to be much more protracted and go through more stages than previously envisioned. The new democratic revolution in China covered a period of 22 years and went through two civil wars and the war against Japanese imperialism.

There is discussion in the party of seizing power through a new mass upsurge. For example, in an article in the March 16-31, 2009 issue of *The Red Star*, Basanta writes that “the Nepalese oppressed class has now arrived at a very glorious but more challenging juncture of seizing central power through a process of people’s rebellion of the Nepalese specifically under the leadership of our party the Unified CPN (Maoist).” However, while Basanta acknowledges that “All those communist parties, which participated in the government before revolution in the name of tactic, have all drowned in the swamp of revisionism. Nowhere and never in the history of the communist movement has a party led revolution from the government,” he holds out the hope that this can somehow be accomplished in Nepal without the armed overthrow of the state by means of a new revolutionary wave of struggle.

Thus, the central issue remains whether it is possible to peacefully transform the bourgeois/feudal state in Nepal into a revolutionary new democratic state, even with the use of the Maoist-led masses as a pressure group. If the answer is no, as we believe it to be, then it will require the Left in the UCPN (Maoist) as well as other revolutionaries to reverse the current direction of the party and lead the masses forward with a

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an important question in its own right and has led to—and has been used to justify—its present strategy. We have addressed this question briefly in “Evaluating the Cultural Revolution in China and its Legacy for the Future,” page 73, available at [www.mlmrsg.com](http://www.mlmrsg.com)

revolutionary strategy once again. The Unified CPN (Maoist) is not a consolidated revisionist party, and the revolutionary communist forces within it have an uphill battle ahead of them with important implications for the international communist movement and the worldwide revolutionary cause.<sup>7</sup>

The current transitional stage cannot last for long. There are two alternative paths of development: Either the bulk of the Maoist forces will get further submerged in

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<sup>7</sup> A number of things about the RCP's recent denunciation of the CPN (Maoist) must be closely scrutinized and criticized: Its lack of a materialist and dialectical analysis of the way that crucial contradictions are posing themselves to the revolution in Nepal; its accusation that the revolution has been "betrayed," as opposed to focusing on the continuing revolutionary class struggle against numerous enemies and obstacles—international, regional, domestic as well as within the party; and the assertion that the UCPN (Maoist) as a whole has become a revisionist party i.e., that revisionist consolidation is complete and that no revolutionary line struggle remains within the party. In addition the RCP arrogantly tells the Nepalese Maoists to study Bob Avakian's "new synthesis," which is, in basic terms, an eclectic mix of subjective idealism and Marxism.

The RCP's position on Nepal does raise a number of important questions, albeit in an overstated, abstract and sectarian way that does little to assist the revolutionary forces in Nepal and internationally. To the extent that the RCP examines the actual situation on the ground in Nepal at all, it makes unfounded claims such as that the Nepalese Army is operating around the country outside its barracks without opposition—in other words, the counter-revolution is nearly complete.

The RCP's recent efforts seem primarily aimed at re-establishing some RCP/Avakianist authority among revolutionaries and Maoists in the U.S. and internationally, and therefore are expressed in sectarian terms—blatantly self-serving, dismissive of the ongoing struggles of the revolutionary people of Nepal, and oblivious and unappreciative of the contributions of many, including the significant work of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), to the struggle against revisionism and the illusory "peaceful road to socialism" in Nepal and elsewhere.

On the other hand, the response to the RCP by the CPN (Maoist) in June 2006 defends the strategy of a peaceful restructuring of the Nepalese state, coupled with general assertions about the need for the violent overthrow of the state. The party claims to be making plans to "dissolve" the Nepalese Army and "reorganize" it under CPN (Maoist) leadership while avoiding any mention of the actual plan to "integrate" the PLA and the Nepalese Army. The CPN (Maoist) also refers to an unfavorable international balance of forces, implying that this makes it impossible for the Nepalese Maoists to lead an armed seizure of power and successfully defend it. The CPN (Maoist)'s defense of its present strategy is incorrect and unconvincing—as is its counsel to "just be patient—to wait and see."

The exchange of letters between the RCP and the CPN (Maoist) are available at:

- *(as posted on the RCP website)*: <http://revcom.us/a/160/Letters.pdf>
- *(as summarized in Revolution newspaper)*: entitled "On Developments in Nepal and the Stakes for the Communist Movement: Letters to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, 2005-2008 (With a Reply from the CPN(M), 2006)" (Revolution #160, March 29, 2009): <http://revcom.us/a/160/nepal-article-en.html>
- *(as posted on the Kasama website)*: [http://mikeely.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/two\\_lines\\_five\\_letters\\_maoist\\_nepal.pdf](http://mikeely.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/two_lines_five_letters_maoist_nepal.pdf).

administering a bourgeois/feudal state and trying to push it to the left--which will represent a serious setback to the revolutionary process--or a new wave of Maoist-led revolutionary struggle will lead to the seizure of power and the victory of the new democratic revolution as a transition to socialism in Nepal.

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## *Who We Are*

*The MLM Revolutionary Study Group is not affiliated with any party in the U.S. We advocate the development of a broad and dynamic anti-imperialist struggle that is closely connected to the most exploited and oppressed sections of people in the U.S. Additionally, we anticipate that serious revolutionaries who share an internationalist perspective and mass orientation will undertake the building of new communist organization to concentrate and develop leadership for such efforts, and to chart the pathways for revolution in the U.S., with a significant section of the working class and oppressed nationalities in the lead. We encourage such a project and will work to assist its development in every way we can.*

*The revolutionary struggle and communist movement in the U.S. must be solidly anchored in internationalism, in solidarity with people's movements against imperialism and particularly Maoist revolutionary forces who are battling to achieve socialism and the complete liberation of humanity under communism.*

*We believe that the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism need to be identified and affirmed, that the positive and negative experiences of revolution and socialism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century need to be carefully considered and summed up, and that MLM must be further developed in many areas in order to lead the next wave of communist revolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We hope to take an active part in the great debates sweeping through the international communist movement on these questions.*

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