



Revolution In Nepal



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A Workers Party Pamphlet
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The People's Democratic Revolution in Nepal is now passing objectively through a gateway of great victory accompanied by a danger of serious defeat... the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has arrived at a serious and extraordinary juncture of possibilities and challenges... it is apparent that the forces of revolution and counterrevolution are going ahead in the direction of decisive confrontation... Only by remaining united can the proletariat and the revolutionary masses, after completing the historical task of democratic revolution, open the way to go ahead towards socialism and communism.

– *From the recent UCPN(M) political document Present Situation and Historical Task of the Proletariat.*

Introduction

The first communist revolution of the 21st century is unfolding in Nepal. The Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) is leading the workers, peasants and oppressed in a movement that seeks nothing less than a whole new world. Ever since the destruction of the Soviet Union, the ruling class has told us that communism is dead. Unfortunately for them, the people of this small, desperately poor country do not appear to be listening.

Nepal's Maoists are fighting to make a new kind of revolution in a new kind of way. They do not seek to mechanically copy the models of revolution we have seen in the past, and they have made a painstakingly detailed analysis of what they see as the mistakes made in the revolutions of the 20th century and how they intend to avoid them. They have often surprised their friends and supporters

around the world with their creative and innovative tactics, and they have consistently sought to develop a method for applying Marxism to Nepal that actually fits the conditions in that country. They take their tactics from an analysis of the real world around them, not from century-old books.

Having analysed the degeneration and eventual defeats of the socialist revolutions in Russia and China, the UCPN(M) has proposed that in order to try to prevent this from happening in Nepal, multi-party democratic elections will continue even after the seizure of state power by the revolution. They envisage a system where the ordinary working people are capable of voting the party bureaucrats out of office if it becomes apparent that things are going wrong, and Maoist leader Chairman Prachanda has publicly stated that they see themselves as continuing in the tradition of Lenin, not Stalin, who they see as having made serious errors. They have proposed that Nepal's standing army be dissolved and replaced by arming the people. A system of people's militias responsible to local power authorities that are in turn responsible to a state structure under the control of the people would, in their opinion, make a large permanent military force unnecessary.

They have fought for almost 20 years for a new Nepal, where the workers have jobs, the peasants have land, the oppressed nationalities have self-determination, the women have equality and the nation has full independence. Their struggle has transformed Nepal, and opened up possibilities for revolution and freedom that the world has not seen in decades. A successful revolution in Nepal will create an echo heard around the world, and will have a particularly large impact on Nepal's south Asian neighbours, such as India, where there is already an advanced revolutionary movement that the Indian government has declared to be the greatest security threat the Indian ruling class has ever faced. As the man who Nepal's Maoists take their name and their ideology from once said, a single spark can start a prairie fire. And, after centuries of poverty, inequality and injustice across the world, the grass is very dry.

Crushingly poor

Nepal is a crushingly poor country. Over half the population live below the international poverty line on \$1.25 a day or less, and 82.5% of the population live on less than \$2 a day. On the United Nations Human Development Index in June 2009, Nepal was ranked 145th out of 179 countries, in the lowest group

sometimes referred to as the 'fourth world'. The countries immediately below it on the list are the Sudan, Bangladesh, and Haiti. There are four phones per one hundred people and 99% of the population do not have access to the internet. Only just over half the population can read and the literacy rate is only 26% for women. The majority of children never attend secondary school and the average life expectancy is just 64 years. Women are heavily oppressed, with less access to education and work, and thousands of Nepali women are sold into the international sex trade, particularly into brothels in India. Rigidly enforced traditions of arranged marriage weigh heavily on the young, both male and female. Increasing numbers are fighting for the right to "love matches" – the right to freely choose their marriage partners for themselves. A caste system condemns great numbers of people to second class citizenship. People born into the Dalit caste, also known as 'untouchables', are condemned to dirty and humiliating tasks such as cleaning sewage and rubbish, and are prohibited even from using the same wells as higher castes. The country historically had a monarchical system that viewed the Nepali language and their own Hindu religion as the defining culture of the country – but in fact Nepal has over 40 distinct ethnic and religious groups, often with their own languages and culture. The inequality they have suffered affects their lives and opportunities.

As is to be expected for such a poor and underdeveloped country, it is heavily rural. The majority of people are peasants, with about 80% of the population living off agriculture. Many peasants are locked into a lifelong cycle of debt, where local landlords and money lenders and also government loan agencies charge crippling interest rates for the loans they require to invest in the most basic farming equipment, or to buy food at times of crop failure, natural disaster and so on. Hunger and outright starvation is widespread in rural Nepal, with the UN World Food Programme reporting in July 2009 that starvation there is as severe as it is in the Congo and Ethiopia¹. Over 600,000 people are facing starvation every day, and millions more are close to it. The Ministry of Agriculture recently estimated that in 2010, the country may face a food deficit of 400,000 metric tonnes.

Nepal is also heavily indebted as a nation, with 28% of the national budget going towards repaying international loans. There is little in the way of medium or heavy industry, with Nepal's major exports being carpets, garments and agricultural products. This lack of national industry contributes to the unemployment rate of around 50%, forcing Nepalis in their thousands to leave the country and attempt to find work overseas. The most common place to go is India, which has an

1. http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=15304

open border with Nepal, but Nepali expatriate workers can be found everywhere from Dubai to Malaysia.

It should be clear from these facts how hard life is for most people in Nepal. But it is not hard for everyone. While Nepal as a country is very poor, there is a privileged minority of Nepalis who are doing just fine for themselves. Nepal is an extremely unequal country, with a ruling class of landlords, capitalist businessmen and aristocrats living off the backs of the poor. The top 20% of Nepalis possess about 45% of the nation's wealth, while the lowest 20% possess just 7.6%. Ten percent of the population own around half of the land, while the bottom 50% own less than 10%. There are also marked inequalities between the urban and rural areas. For example, only 24% of peasants in the countryside have access to adequate sanitation facilities, compared to 45% in the cities. The lives of the rich urban elite are markedly different:

A prosperous family in Kathmandu may derive its wealth from an aristocratic legacy, or modern occupations such as business, law, or medicine. They may have houses in the urban center that can be rented out, and also own land worked by tenant farmers outside the Kathmandu Valley. Together, a wealthy married couple can earn upwards of US\$6,000 a year. The easy availability of domestic workers from rural villages allows the wife to delegate household chores. The education of the children is perceived as fundamentally important in securing a future in modern Nepal. They study in private English-medium boarding schools and go on to complete college degrees abroad. Health services in Kathmandu are good in comparison to the rest of the country, but serious problems such as cardiovascular disease are entrusted to doctors in India or Thailand. Despite the irregular supply of electricity in the Valley, the family will have a range of electrical appliances and might have invested in a computer with Internet access. Their lives in Kathmandu are very comfortable.²

Semi-feudal, semi-colonial

Nepal is what revolutionary communists describe as a 'semi-feudal, semi-colonial' society, dominated in particular by the power of India to the south. The struggle for revolutionary change in Nepal is linked inseparably with their

2. <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Asia-and-the-Pacific/Nepal.html>

struggle against 'Indian expansionism'. This is not just rhetoric. India and Nepal have signed treaties which force Nepal to consult with India before taking any kind of military action, and there are countless cases of Indian interference in Nepali politics. Nepal is not allowed to purchase weaponry from anywhere except India without Indian approval. Much of this takes place in the shadows and is not openly admitted, but there are cases where political parties split after one leader or another has dinner with the Indian ambassador, and there are many reports of India's spy agency RAW interfering in Nepal. If nothing else, India is a large and militarily powerful nation, which does not hesitate to throw its weight around in the South Asian region it dominates. Around 70% of Nepal's economic trade is with India, and all India would ever have to do if it wanted to hurt Nepal is close the (currently open) border and watch the country starve. In May 1989 India did just that, placing an economic blockade on Nepal after the Nepali government tried to withdraw from Indian 'protection' and tried to negotiate a stronger relationship with China. This blockade did massive economic damage to Nepal, and was only lifted in April 1990 after a new government was formed which promised to be more cooperative with India.

India's domination of Nepal takes many diverse forms. Culturally, Nepal is flooded with Indian films and music. Politically, Nepali parties and military cliques often operate as little more than Indian agents. Militarily, India's massive army sits threateningly just beyond Nepal's southern border forcing its way into every calculation about the future. India has also imposed a series of unequal treaties that give her "rights" to Nepal's natural resources – especially Nepal's rivers which are such valuable sources of water and hydroelectric power. And, above all, Nepal's economic development has been retarded and twisted in ways that have kept it backward and dependent, and which have served Indian interests.

Largely as a result of this foreign domination, the people of Nepal are fiercely nationalistic, particularly in response to the hated Indian domination of their country. One would struggle to find a more clear case of a neo-colonial state. There are historical factors present here as well – while Nepal is today crushed under the heel of Indian expansionism and Western imperialism in a wider sense, it has never been conquered by a foreign power. When the British attempted to invade and annex the country in 1814, they suffered a series of humiliating defeats, and while they were eventually able to defeat the Nepali forces in several key battles and impose the Treaty of Sugauli, Nepal never became a colony of the British Empire in the way that India did. This is a matter of great pride to many Nepalis.

Movement for democracy

Until 2006, Nepal was ruled by a Hindu monarchy, a line of kings who claimed to be gods. From 1950 to 1962 there was a period of limited democracy, but this was ended when the King staged a royal coup, dissolved parliament and banned all political parties and trade unions. Nepal was ruled directly by the monarchy for the next four decades.

All this changed in 1990, when the people of Nepal rose up in the first 'Janaandolan', or People's Movement. Throughout the country, and particularly in the capital city of Kathmandu, the people took to the streets calling for an end to the absolute monarchy and for democratic elections. The protests were called by the Nepal Congress Party and an alliance of left-wing organisations. Eventually, after battles between protesters and state forces that resulted in many deaths, the King backed down, and multi-party elections took place. The Nepal Congress won the elections, a new government was formed, but ultimately not a lot changed. A new constitution was written, but the monarchy remained and it was still the ultimate power in the land, dissolving governments as it saw fit and threatening with repression any political party that got out of line. The people of Nepal shed their blood, but the politicians who rose to power on the basis of this simply used their new positions to grow fat while ordinary Nepalis went hungry. The pressing issues that ordinary people wanted addressed, things like land reform, jobs, and freedom from foreign domination, were not satisfied. This was just the first in a long series of betrayals and sell-outs that left the people of Nepal disillusioned with their political parties.

The two major parties in Nepal, until the rise of the Maoists, were the previously mentioned Nepal Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist). Despite its name, the UML (as it is usually referred to in Nepal) is not a revolutionary, or even a particularly radical organisation. Putting the lie to its 'Communist' name, the UML never challenged the institution of the monarchy, and became referred to as "His Majesty's loyal Communists." They won the elections in 1994 on a platform of delivering land to the peasants, at a time when less than 10% of the population owned more than 50% of the land. They also promised to provide running water and electricity to all citizens, and to ensure that every village had at least one television. However, to deliver on all this would have required the UML to challenge the vested interests that enjoyed a privileged position through exploiting the poor. The UML would have had to challenge the power of the landlord class, taking its land and redistributing it

amongst the landless. Compensation was not an option, then or today – Nepal is simply too poor to afford to buy out the landlords³. So it would have to have been carried out through revolutionary means that struck directly against not only the feudal landlord class but also against the feudal state that protects it. The UML balked at this, and delivered none of its promises.

The people of Nepal had been betrayed.

This set the stage for the rise of a small, little known group called the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). The CPN(M) did not simply appear out of thin air and immediately begin a war against the government. There was a long period of consolidation, through which the party was formed out of factions that split from other groups and united around the belief that armed, revolutionary struggle was necessary to transform Nepal. In the 1990 Janaandolan, the two main forces as previously mentioned were the Nepal Congress and the United Left Front, which together fought for and won a limited parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy. However, there was a third (although much smaller) force formed by radical communists uncomfortable with the limited demands of the United Left Front and its alliance with the Nepal Congress, party of the landlords. This radical coalition called itself the United People's Front (UPF). While the Congress and its moderate left allies fought only for limited reforms, the UPF raised the demand for a republic and a Constituent Assembly, to be formed with the express purpose of writing a new constitution that would allow for the creation of a new Nepal.

The leading groups involved in the United People's Front merged to form the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre). In 1991, it held its first convention, where the party adopted a line that Nepal would only be transformed through 'protracted armed struggle', and the party decided to remain an underground organisation. It set up an above ground electoral front called the United People's Front, led by a revolutionary intellectual called Baburam Bhattarai. Another key

3. Maoist Constituent Assembly member Hari Roka recently spoke on the issue of compensating the landlords for land reform in a speech to parliament: "we believe that no compensation should be provided. The Land Reform Commission led by Keshav Badal presented its report to the Manmohan Adhikari government nearly 15 years ago. Badal said that providing compensation in the process of land reform would cost Rs. 45 billion. Now, according to our calculations, it will cost the state more than Rs. 200 billion. If we do this, we will have to take loans from multilateral agencies or from bilateral donors. At the current time, almost 28 percent of the core budget goes towards paying previous loans in installments. If we borrow Rs. 200 billion, almost 60 percent of our core budget will go towards servicing loans. That will leave no money for infrastructure development, provision of subsidies and development of a market."

leader of the CPN (UC) was a former school teacher called Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who would later come to be known as Prachanda. The United People's Front took part in the 1991 general elections, where it won nine seats and became the third largest force in parliament after the Nepal Congress and the UML.

In 1992, the newly-formed government led by the Nepal Congress introduced a programme of cutbacks and neo-liberal reforms, including heavy privatisation, somewhat similar to Rogernomics in New Zealand only with a much more brutal impact due to the much more severe poverty present in Nepal. This led to economic chaos and skyrocketing prices, and the people were furious. While the UML wavered and waited for the next elections (in which it came to power), the revolutionary forces in the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre) joined together with several other radical groups and formed the Joint People's Agitation Committee to organise mass resistance to the government cutbacks. They called a general strike for April 6.

From general strike to People's War

As the general strike approached, the situation became tense. Police flooded the streets, and violent incidents began to occur. On the evening of April 5th, the Joint People's Agitation Committee called a half-hour long 'lights out' in Kathmandu, and attempts to enforce it by strike activists led to clashes between them and the police. At dawn on the day of the strike, Agitation Committee supporters protested outside a police station in Pulchok. As the sun crept over the Himalayas, the police came out of their building, pulled out their weapons and opened fire on the unarmed demonstrators, killing two of them.

Later that day, a mass rally took place in Kathmandu in support of the strike and in protest against the government cutbacks. Without any warning or provocation, the police picked up their lathis (long bamboo sticks) and attacked the demonstration. As protestors tried to defend themselves from this brutal assault, the police drew back. But any hopes the demonstrators may have had for a peaceful end to the situation were suddenly destroyed when the police raised their guns and opened fire on the unarmed crowd, murdering fourteen innocent people.

These examples of police repression played a significant role in solidifying the party ranks in support of the struggle ahead. They couldn't even protest in their own streets without being beaten up and shot by the police. Not all of the party leaders were willing to take that final necessary step forward, but most were,

and in 1994 the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre) and the United National People's Movement split. The minority of leaders and members who still clung to the idea that peaceful methods could work kept up their old work, but the majority of party activists and party leaders decided that the time had come. They decided to declare war on the government. Baburam Bhattarai led the militant faction of the above-ground section into the new organisation, while Pushpa Kamal Dahal led the revolutionary section of the underground activists. It was around this time that Dahal took up the alias 'Prachanda', which means 'the fierce one'. In 1996, this new organisation changed its name to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). It held this name until 2009 when, after a series of mergers with other radical communist groups, it added 'Unified' to the beginning of its name.

The United People's Front had, through its electoral work, been preparing the ground for revolt for some time. The people in the poor rural districts where the UPF had support had sharp grievances, and the Maoists organized them to fight against the local political powers. The Maoists ran in the elections on the basis of those demands and for the purpose of preparing the people for an insurrection. They issued a basic set of 40 demands to the government, which if not met would justify the beginning of revolutionary war. When the UPF won seats in places like Rolpa and Rukum (to the surprise of all) the local power-brokers responded with massive repression. The mass resistance to that repression gave rise to a revolutionary mood for armed struggle, so that when the Maoists called for a countrywide insurrection, launched across Nepal, it found its strongest support in the previously mentioned districts of Rolpa and Rukum, which then became the most powerful base areas of the people's war where new forms of state power could emerge. Mao Zedong wrote that revolutionary guerrillas should relate to the masses like a fish to the sea. The Maoists made sure that the water was there and that it was deep enough before they took the headlong leap that began the People's War.

On February 13th 1996, Maoist party activists and local villagers gathered outside a government office in the countryside. This was the local establishment of a government department that issued loans to poor peasants at exorbitant rates that left them indebted for life. In a move that mirrored those taken by peasants in the French Revolution centuries earlier, the villagers and the Maoists stormed into the building, seized all of the loan papers and administrative records, took them outside and burned them. The oppressed people of Nepal had declared war on their government.

Soon afterwards, Maoist fighters attacked and destroyed three police outposts, burned down a foreign-owned bottle plant and bombed a liquor factory.

They seized weapons, ammunition and supplies from the police stations they ransacked, and used these to arm the new recruits they found amongst their peasant supporters, who were organised into what they called the People's Liberation Army. It should be noted that the Maoists did not begin the war with any military capacity whatsoever, strange as that may sound. Senior party leaders have admitted recently that they actually began the war with just one .303 rifle, which barely worked and was nicknamed the 'old timer'. This was carried around the country to be used in various initiating actions of the war. There is well-documented evidence that, in the early years of the war, the Maoists attacked police stations with flintlock muskets! However, the most common weapons used in the early days of the People's War were the khukuris, or long knives traditionally carried by Ghurkas and other nationalities in Nepal, and basic farm tools like sickles, pitchforks, scythes and so on. In areas like Rolpa and Rukum, before the government presence was eliminated, the police attempted to ban village blacksmiths from repairing or constructing any potentially dangerous farm implements as they feared these being used against them by the peasants.

Rebellion spreads

The rebellion spread rapidly, and by 2001 the Nepali police admitted that 35 out of Nepal's 75 districts were 'moderately to severely' affected, and in four districts in mid-Western Nepal, around Rolpa, the Maoists had complete control and had eradicated the police, the military and the state bureaucracy. These districts where they had complete control were a part of Nepal populated largely by an oppressed minority nationality known as the Magar people. As part of the revolutionary process, the new forms of state power included autonomous areas where the oppressed Magar people exercised forms of political self-determination. These areas were organised into the Magarat Autonomous Republic. By 2006, the end of the military aspect of the People's War, the Maoists had liberated 80% of the countryside, and the government only held secure power in the major urban centres, main road networks and immediately around the various military bases – all this at a time when international capitalism had declared communist revolution a thing of the past!

The Maoists were using a strategy developed by their ideological namesake, Mao Zedong, called protracted people's war. Under this strategy, revolutionary forces fight the government where it is weakest, winning the support of the peas-

ants and displacing the state from the rural areas. Once the government presence has been removed, the revolutionary forces seek to organise a new society and a new form of democratic government in what is called a 'base area', an area where the ruling class has no power and the poor, working people are in charge. These areas provide, as the name implies, a base from which the revolution can spread to other areas, gradually displacing the government from the entire countryside, at which point the revolution can spread to the cities and defeat the weakened government. They are also experimental zones where the social transformation is actually initiated, and where the enthusiasm of the people is fanned by the practical changes in wealth, life and power. They become like beacons illuminating the darkness of the old society and attracting everyone who dreams of a new road.

This is more than just a military strategy. Communist revolution is in no way similar to a coup d'état – power is not seized on behalf of the people, it has to be seized by the people. The revolution is by its very nature about social transformation, the empowerment of the powerless and the defeat of the powerful. People's War is a war not just against the army, the government and the state, it is a war against the vested ruling class interests that dominate society, against the rich and powerful as a class, against all the old social relations, against backward and oppressive ways of thinking, against forms of discrimination such as the oppression of women and the caste system. It is a war fought not simply between two armies and their respective generals, but by all the oppressed classes and groups in society united around a vision of a new and better society, against all the forces in the currently-existing society that prevent this vision from being realised. People's War is class war, and a particular form of class warfare designed for the specific conditions of a country like Nepal.

Role of liberated areas

The liberated areas, then, were not simply areas where Maoist guerrillas held power at the point of a gun. Quite the opposite is true. Even at the height of the war, the PLA (which, unlike the royal army, did not have the backing of both an established government and also foreign governments such as India, the UK and the USA) was always militarily weaker than the Royal Nepal Army, and if the RNA mustered sufficient numbers it could travel wherever it wanted to. The Maoists could not have forced their power onto the people even if they had wanted to. They succeeded because they had the support of the masses, and they

had this support because unlike every other movement in Nepali history, from the Nepal Congress to the UML, the Maoists kept their promises, and they had a programme of radical change to allow for these promises to be realised.

In the liberated zones, society was radically transformed. Land was seized from the parasitic landlords and distributed amongst the peasants who worked it, according to the principle of 'land to the tiller'. While it was never compulsory, peasants were also encouraged to pool their meagre resources and set up collective farms and communes. Collective forms of organization were particularly important because they allowed the farmers to pool their labour and carry out infrastructural activities – building roads, schools, irrigation, wells, etc. This is key to transforming the countryside in a place where “investment” will never pour in from somewhere else but, rather, be left to rot by the ruling powers. In many of the liberated areas, the people were so poor that there were often no landlords at all, and feudal relations took the form of loan sharks rather than land tenancy. Collective forms of organisation and production were also essential to make possible the revolutionary army in the first place. Without tractors or much farm machinery beyond what was common in mediaeval times, human labour power is essential to work the fields and gather the harvest. Under the existing social structures, a peasant family quite literally could not afford to spare anyone to join the revolutionary army. Collective organisation of production allowed for much more efficient production, and ensured that the community took responsibility for making sure the family of a soldier in the People's Liberation Army was taken care of.

The PLA fighters were expected to help the peasants with their harvests and their everyday work in the fields, and this made a noticeable contrast to the soldiers of the royalist army. A village counted itself lucky if, after the RNA passed through, its crops were not stolen, its men were not killed or disappeared and its women were not raped. In a country where women are horrifically oppressed, and where the feudal cultural attitudes towards women are very backward, the Maoists resisted pressure to accommodate to these ideas and made a very high priority from the start of fighting male supremacy and delivering to women the respect and equality they deserve. The People's Liberation Army retains the highest percentage of women in its ranks out of any rebel army in the entire world, with about 40% of its fighters being female. Ideas about the role of women were transformed, with men being expected to participate in household chores, cooking, cleaning and raising children. In the PLA and the liberated zones more generally, young people challenged the tradition of arranged marriage. Marriages based on choice and love became more common, including marriages across caste lines.

The Maoists encouraged the peasants to form Revolutionary People's

Councils and Peasant Associations in the villages. The People's Councils were an exercise in a new form of democracy, similar to the soviets of Russia and China. Whereas in the past power had tended to lie in the hands of either some kind of traditional authority structure, often a village patriarch or something similar, or in the hands of a bureaucrat appointed from the government offices in Kathmandu (which to poor peasants in Nepal's rural heartland may as well be a foreign country), the new grassroots organs of power allowed for poor peasants to elect members of their own class to lead the village, and allowed for much greater representation for women, lower castes and oppressed ethnic groups. Peasant associations took charge of implementing land reform, dispossessing the landlords and organising more efficient agricultural methods to produce more food and raise living standards. Ordinary people were provided with both economic benefits and political empowerment in a new form of society that saw power flow from the bottom up. And most important of all, it became possible to see how a new Nepal could emerge from such revolutionary changes and how, over time, the profound problems of poverty and feudal society could be overcome by the people.

Role of Royal Nepalese Army

As the success of the People's War became apparent and the strength of the Maoist movement grew, the ruling class and its government became increasingly conscious of the fact that it was in a crisis situation. From 1996 to 2000, the fighting was between Maoist forces and the police, with the poorly armed, trained and equipped police force failing to present much in the way of an effective resistance to the revolutionary struggle. In October 2000, however, this changed. Maoist forces carried out a brazen raid on the government headquarters in Dunbai district, crushing the police force defending the area and expropriating 35 million rupees from the local bank. This Maoist victory shocked the ruling class, and it decided that things had moved to a higher level. In response to this attack, and the string of Maoist victories more generally, the government mobilised the Royal Nepalese Army and sent it on the offensive against the Maoists. Traditionally, the direct oppression of rural people had been carried out by police forces, and the Royal Army had been kept in reserve – often presenting itself as the guarantor of national independence against Indian encroachment. It was a shocking break with tradition for the military to engage directly like this, and there was sharp struggle over this change, including within the Royal family itself. The advance of

the Maoist revolution was causing deep splits, even among reactionary forces.

The RNA carried out a brutal campaign against the rebels. It is a fact agreed upon by all international bodies that the majority of deaths and human rights abuses in the conflict can be attributed to the RNA, not the Maoists. It enthusiastically employed the US strategy in Vietnam of 'destroying the village to save the village'. Attack helicopters swept the countryside, strafing villages and mass gatherings with machinegun fire. Thousands of people suspected of being Maoist supporters were disappeared, or extra-judicially killed in what the RNA called 'encounters'. 'Encounters' were when the state forces murdered in cold blood people the regime suspected of being rebel sympathisers, while claiming that their well-armed troops were acting in self defence. Countless women were raped by RNA soldiers. Crops were destroyed and village houses burned down, which in a country where most peasants hover just above the starvation line meant disaster for the victims. The RNA's approach was essentially one based on taking revenge. The peasants overwhelmingly supported the rebels and opposed the state that had oppressed them for so long, and the RNA felt it necessary to punish them for this. However, as in many cases before in history, this approach backfired. It is somewhat difficult to maintain the support and gratitude of people you are indiscriminately butchering, and the arrogant and murderous approach of the Royal Army strengthened support for the Maoists. Peasants flocked to the Maoist cause as they observed the contrast in behaviour between the royal forces and the fighters of the People's Liberation Army who worked under the principle of serving and respecting the people.

Eventually matters came to a head. Despite years of murder across Nepal, the King and his lackeys were unable to defeat the Maoists who, despite losses and the brutal oppression they faced, continued to expand the liberated zones and to grow their forces in size, strength and quality. The Maoists were regularly capturing weapons from the army and police, and it reached the point where the Royal Army soldiers were often outgunned by the poor peasants they were fighting.

Parallel state

The CPN(M) was operating a parallel state in many areas across the country, particularly in its strongholds where it had entirely displaced the 'official' state. This is a key part of revolutionary strategy. A revolution is not an act of destruction for its own sake, it is an act of transformation and replacement of the old with the

new. Communists seek to build a situation of ‘dual power’, where the poor and oppressed have built the political structures to take control of society and run it themselves. The classic example of this can be found in the Russian Revolution, where the workers in Petrograd, Moscow and elsewhere formed workers’ councils (soviets). These were democratic bodies made up of delegates elected from the factory floor and from working class neighbourhoods, where everyone had an equal say and an equal vote. And it wasn’t just factory workers – soldiers at the front and in the rear formed their own soviets, and began to elect their own officers and democratically decide whether or not to take part in the bloody campaigns that the Tsar and then the Provisional Government tried to force them into.

Peasants in the countryside formed their own soviets, and began to seize control of the landlords’ estates. These democratic workers’ and peasants’ councils are what communists argue should replace the fake democracy provided to us by capitalism, where we are granted a meaningless vote once every few years to decide who will oppress and exploit us next. We argue that democracy should be extended to every sphere of human existence, and that the economy should be under the democratic control of the people. In the soviets, all officials could be recalled by their constituents at any time and for any reason, and all officials were paid no more than the average workers’ wage. The Russian Revolution took place when Lenin and the Bolsheviks won a democratic majority in the Congress of Soviets, and declared that all power would be transferred to these organs of working class self-government. There was a similar situation to this in Nepal during the People’s War. There were two states, two armies, and two governments. For obvious reasons, such a situation cannot last indefinitely – at one point one state will have to eliminate the other.

In June 2001, an event took place that dramatically changed the political landscape of the country and marked a major turning point in Nepal’s history. According to the official reports, Crown Prince Dipendra went on a drug-fuelled shooting spree in the royal palace, murdering nine members of the royal family including his parents, King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, before shooting himself. This shocking event irreparably damaged the image of the monarchy in the eyes of the Nepali people, who quite understandably asked the question, “Is this how gods behave?” After Dipendra finished what may have been the shortest period of rule of any King in Nepal’s history, while dying of his wounds, the brother of ex-King Birendra took the throne on June 4th 2001. Nepal was now under the rule of King Gyanendra.

It should be noted that this account of the massacre is just the official explanation, and not one that is accepted by all Nepalis. Large sections of Nepali society,

including the Maoists, question this account of events. There is widespread suspicion that Gyanendra was behind the massacres, and it is well known that there was sharp disagreement between him and King Birendra over the deployment of the army against the rebels, a deployment which Birendra opposed.

Gyanendra quickly moved to assert his power. In October 2001, just a few months after taking the throne, he dismissed the government. He appointed a new government a week later, but the move alienated many Nepalis, in particular bourgeois democrats who had previously tolerated and even wholeheartedly supported the institution of the monarchy either as something they saw as genuinely positive for Nepal, or on the basis that the monarchy was better than the main enemy, i.e. the Maoists.

Royal coup

However, this action was nothing compared to the one he took three and a half years later. By this point the Maoists had effective control of the Nepali countryside. The government's power was limited to the major cities, key roads and scattered military bases. In Maoist theory, there are three phases to a People's War. The first is the stage of 'strategic defensive', when the government and the army are still much stronger than the revolutionary forces, who are forced to operate in the shadows for fear of being crushed. The next phase is that of 'strategic equilibrium', at which point the revolutionary forces and the ruling class forces are evenly matched. By this point it is assumed that significant base areas have been developed, the revolution has spread throughout the country, a strong and well organised people's army exists and significant social transformations are taking place. The final phase is the 'strategic offensive', a phase in which the revolutionary forces are objectively stronger than the old state forces and the successful seizure of state power by the oppressed is on the horizon. By the end of 2004, the Maoists saw themselves as being in a state of strategic equilibrium with the government. In August 2004 the Maoists surrounded Kathmandu Valley and announced a blockade upon it. The king was a rat in a hole.

Gyanendra then made the most disastrous move in the history of the Nepali monarchy. On February 1st 2005, he declared that the multi-party democratic system and its various parties were incapable of defeating the Maoists. On this basis, he dissolved parliament and seized full executive powers in a royal coup. The bourgeois parties that had happily collaborated with the monarchy for so long

were declared illegal, their politicians were placed under house arrest, and a state of emergency was declared that put Nepal effectively under martial law. Freedom of the press was suppressed, with thousands of journalists fired for being critical of the monarchy. Phone and internet lines were cut.

This marked a turning point in the revolutionary struggle in Nepal. Until now, the Maoists had been struggling against both the bourgeois-feudalist parties and the monarchy, who presented a united front against the revolutionary insurgency. But this alliance had split, the King had turned on his (admittedly pretty useless) allies, and this opened up some very real opportunities for the CPN(M). As the bourgeois parties were now being suppressed by the monarchy, and as a result were being forced to initiate at the very least a defensive struggle, the Maoists could now form an alliance with them that would have the strength to bring down the monarchy once and for all. The Maoists had identified the King as the main enemy, and were willing to use any means to go about bringing him and the monarchy down.

Senior Maoist leader Gaurav gave a speech in London in November 2007 that explains the reasoning behind their tactical shift. In a part of his speech that dealt with the situation in 2005, he said:

Our People's Liberation Army was right at the gate of Kathmandu valley. If you have ever gone to Kathmandu, there is one place called Tangot, it is the main gate to enter Kathmandu. Here there was a big police station, in which we annihilated almost two dozen armed forces without any loss from our side, and so we captured Tangot. Right after that we entered into the process of this negotiation.

Many revolutionaries, many Maoists and our comrades have raised one question. You reached the gate of Kathmandu, why was it necessary to enter into the peace process? That is a big question.

True, we had liberated 80% of the countryside and we had reached up to the gate of Kathmandu. But in order to seize countrywide power, for countrywide victory, our strength was not enough. The Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) was confined to their barracks, they could seldom come out. Whenever they were carrying out actions against our forces, they could just suddenly come out of their barracks, go 4-5 kilometres away from the barracks and encircle a village, and kill each and every person they found before returning. The next day they would propagate that they had killed a number of Maoists from the People's Liberation Army.

Actually, they were not able to kill our force. They killed the common

people. That was their practice for almost one year, since one year back. On the one hand, the RNA could not actually inflict any defeat on our People's Liberation Army. On the other hand, we were not able to capture their big barracks. They were well fortified, especially with the help of US military experts. They used land mines to surround the barracks, and they used barbed wire. We tried many times but we failed to capture their barracks. That was the situation militarily. We were in a stagnant position militarily. We were trying to make a breakthrough but were not able to capture the barracks, because they were well fortified, and they had lots of modern weapons supplied by India and also helicopters. We were unable to achieve further military victory.

That was the military situation and so far as the political situation is concerned we enjoyed the support of the urban people, but it was not to the level that was required for general insurrection. The support was there, but finally to capture the city and the capital it was necessary to carry out insurrection, revolt. The support provided by the masses was not at a sufficient level in the cities including Kathmandu, because the masses were divided. Some supported Nepali Congress, other people supported other parties and the level of support of the masses was not enough that was required to achieve the final victory. So this was the political situation.

So in the midst of this situation we decided that in order to get further support from the masses our party should take some other initiatives to gather further strength. Otherwise the war would remain in a stagnant situation. Neither the enemy could defeat us, nor could we defeat the enemy. That was the situation. For how long could we continue this situation? War has its own dynamics, it cannot stay still for a long time, for example, if we cannot win victory, the enemy will eventually be able to defeat us. We had to take a new initiative. According to the dynamics of war you have to find a new way to maintain a dynamic situation, we should not be in a static situation in a war for long.

In those circumstances our party decided to take different steps, other political manoeuvres. Our party worked out alternative political tactics of going to the negotiations. Right from the beginning we explained People's War as a total war. Sometimes there is a wrong notion among Maoists that People's War is simply the war in which we confront the opposite army, the confrontation between two armies, but this is not true. People's War is different. People's War is a total war. We are confronting the enemy on all fronts, including the military front as well as the political front, economic front and

also cultural front. On different fronts we have to fight the war, so it is a total war.

During the time of the People's War itself, and even before that also, we entered into negotiations with the government in 2001 and 2003. But both times they ignored our demands. Again we returned to the war. But in 2005 the situation was quite different, the political situation was also different, which had been created by 10 long years of People's War. For example the political situation was that 7 other political parties, parliamentary parties, were working together and in cooperation with the King to smash the People's War. They were participating in the parliament, they were part of the government, they formed the government and were in cooperation with the King. They were very much united to fight against us, and it was necessary for us to use political manoeuvring to split the enemy camp. It was necessary, because they were united.

We took the initiative and we called the political parties to unite with us to make some sort of alliance to overthrow the monarchy. But they didn't accept it. When we proposed this to them in 2001 and 2003 they didn't accept it. But something new happened in Nepal. King Gyanendra, who was autocratic, staged a coup d'état and arrested most of the political leaders who were actually working with him. He arrested most of them and put them behind bars and their political parties were banned. They could not carry out any political activities, so there was a big challenge to those political parties. There was a question of existence for those political parties. So this is one aspect, and for that we thank King Gyanendra, for we stretched our hands to those political parties to make an alliance with us, and the situation compelled them to come to join hands with our party.

This was political compulsion, which had been created by the People's War itself. And it was a good opportunity for us to make an alliance with the 7 parties. We made the 12-point agreement, as it is popularly known, and in that alliance we concretely put forward the demand that we should make an alliance to fight against the autocratic monarchy.⁴

4. <http://kasamaproject.org/2008/04/09/gaurav-the-revolution-in-nepal/>

Maoists in government

The rest, as they say, is history. The bourgeois parties had formed what they called the ‘Seven Party Alliance’, and the SPA signed a 12-point agreement with the Maoists that agreed they would fight for a republic and a Constituent Assembly – the same goals that the United People’s Front fought and died for 15 years earlier. The Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance called for a nation-wide general strike between April 5 and April 9. The urban masses responded with massive enthusiasm, and the strike rapidly exploded into a mass movement, with over a million people taking to the streets of Kathmandu, a city with a population of just under two million people! The second Janaandolan had begun, and this time it was not going to accept a compromise – the king had to go. The monarchy put troops on the streets and threatened to crush the protests with tanks and guns, and a tense situation developed. Then, on April 21, the king caved in and declared that he would give up his executive powers and end the state of emergency. He called for elections to be held as soon as possible.

It is worth noting that the protests in the cities only had the success they did, and only mobilised the numbers they did, thanks to the involvement of the Maoists. Not only did the Maoists mobilise their supporters in the working class slums of Kathmandu, but they mobilised hundreds of thousands of villagers from the surrounding countryside to flood into the city and take part in the demonstrations. Young and old, male and female, the Maoists arranged to bus as many people as they could in to ensure the movement against the King was as powerful as it could possibly be. And those that could not catch a bus walked.

On May 28th 2008, the king abdicated, and Nepal was declared a republic. After decades of struggle, the people of Nepal were one step closer to freedom.

After the restoration of civil rights to the people and the fall of the monarchy, the Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance formed a coalition government. The PLA, confined, reorganized itself into a number of cantonments spread throughout the country. This represented a significant concession to the “peace process”, since the withdrawal of the revolutionary armed forces from the political base areas weakened the revolutionary political power and transformations there. After a great deal of arguing and tension, elections were finally held in April 2008.

The assumption of the reactionary forces was that the Maoists would be trapped in the process – that they would attract a section of the people – but be overshadowed by the reactionary Congress and UML parties, and so forced to participate in a process controlled by the pro-parliamentary bourgeois forces.

However, despite all the hopeful predictions of international imperialism, despite all its ignorant claims that the people would reject the Maoists, who were after all nothing but terrorists who ruled through fear, the people voted overwhelmingly for the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), and the stage was set for the first communist revolution of the 21st century.

In the elections to the Constituent Assembly, the Maoists won by far the largest number of seats and the largest popular vote, but they didn't win an outright majority. This led to huge problems trying to form a government, as they had to work out a common agreement with parties they went to war against only a few years previously and who were bitterly opposed to the Maoist programme of radical social transformation, let alone the Maoist goal of a socialist republic. This caused the Maoists problems right from the start, as on the one hand they didn't want to alienate their coalition partners to the point that they pulled out and caused the Maoist-led government to collapse, but on the other hand the Maoists refused to abandon their goal of radical social change and the improvement of the people's lives.

After a long period of indecision, a coalition government was eventually hammered together consisting of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), the Madeshi People's Rights Forum, the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), the People's Forum Nepal, the Nepal Sadbhawana Party and the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist). This coalition contained everything from parties based on ethnic chauvinism to phoney communist parties, and of all the parties the only ones interested in radical social change were the Maoists.

The Maoists originally aimed to have their leader Prachanda become the first president of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, but the reactionary parties banded together and prevented this from happening. Prachanda instead became prime minister, and the presidency went to Ram Baran Yadav of the Nepal Congress, party of the landlords, which chose to remain in opposition to the government.

The Maoists were faced with an incredibly difficult situation. They were constrained by their coalition partners, who resisted every radical move. But despite this, the situation was still filled with opportunities. The Maoists had gained a very high moral ground – they had emerged as the most popular party in the country, which represented a mandate for their revolutionary goals. And they were in a position to expose the army and other parties – to win over to their side new sections of the people as a sharp struggle emerged over what “New Nepal” would look like, whether the official army would be transformed and whether it would submit to representatives of the people.

While in government, the Maoists put forward their plans to rapidly modernise Nepal – giving the people a much clearer sense of what was possible, and how poverty could be overcome.

A major part of their plan has been the use of Nepal's incredible resources for the people, especially by using the unique waterways of Nepal for hydro-electric power. Many powerful rivers flow out of the Himalayan mountains through Nepal and from there into the plains of India. These resources have been largely controlled by India – including by imposing unequal treaties on Nepal. Nepal also has many lakes and waterfalls. They hoped to exploit all these resources through dams and massive hydro-power projects, with the stated goal of producing 10,000 Megawatts of electricity within 10 years. This would make an immense difference in power-starved Nepal, where electricity is restricted on a daily basis. Not only could these resources bring electrical power to rural Nepal, but it could also be sold outside Nepal's borders for foreign exchange (if India's political domination were finally overthrown.)

The formation of a Maoist-led government also led to increased levels of working-class militancy. In response to their bosses' refusal to negotiate with the union for a better pay deal, workers on Gurash Tea Estate, Kuwabashi Tea Plantation and Joon Tea Garden seized control of the tea plantations and factories and started running them under workers' control. The workers' union is affiliated to the Maoists and the workers were confident in the knowledge that the government would support them. This illustrates how difficult and complex a task the Maoists faced. Even as Prachanda was abroad seeking necessary foreign investment in Nepal, the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal Trade Union Federation Revolutionary forced the closure of Indian medical giant Dabur's subsidiary in Nepal, shutting down its main factory, demanding a 10% bonus for the workers and other benefits. Addressing a meeting in Kathmandu, senior Maoist leader Khim Lal Devkota said "It is futile to talk about industrial security until the workers' rights and welfare are guaranteed."

Despite the endless deadlocks caused by the resistance of its coalition partners, the Maoist government still managed to enact some progressive social change. It abolished slavery, banning the Haliya system of bonded agricultural labour. It also gave formal recognition to Third Gender people, with a 21 year old lesbian woman receiving the first identity card stating her gender as "Third" in September 2008. This is an extremely radical move considering how dominated Nepal is by its feudal culture, with all the backward ideas that entails. Nepal's first openly gay MP was also elected to the Constituent Assembly. Despite the fact that he is not in the CPN(M), the conditions for his election only exist because of the new,

revolutionary culture the Maoists are trying to create. The gay Constituent Assembly member, Sunil Babu Pant, who represents the Communist Party of Nepal (United), a much smaller left wing group, was later sent overseas by Prachanda to represent Nepal at the United Nations General Assembly, to support a statement recognising human rights violations on sexual orientation and gender identity. The Maoists also allocated money in their proposed budget to build community centres for homeless transgender people.

While in government, the Maoists faced all the problems that were faced in the past by groups such as the UML. The fundamental difference, however, was that the Maoists made serious attempts to push radical change through the halls of parliament, and carried on a wide range of struggles outside of it. It should also be noted that the very political institution their government was based on, the Constituent Assembly, was something the CPN(M) and its leadership had been fighting for since the early 1990s, and something the revolutionary communist movement in Nepal more generally had been fighting for throughout most of the 20th century. The Maoist movement has so far continued to achieve its strategic goals.

However, any hopes the people of Nepal had that the new government would deliver the fundamental changes they need were cruelly destroyed. The Maoist-led government only lasted from August 2008 until May 2009, less than one year. The issue that triggered the Maoists leaving government was the issue of control of the armed forces.

Control of armed forces

Under the terms of the peace accords, the PLA was confined to a series of cantonments throughout Nepal and the Royal Army was confined to barracks. The Royal Army (which was renamed the Nepal Army after the abolition of the monarchy) and the PLA were both banned from recruiting any new soldiers, and both sides were banned from acquiring any new weapons or ammunition. The Maoists agreed to dissolve their parallel government structures, and to return the private property seized during the war. The peace accords committed the country to the restructuring of the state to better reflect Nepal's ethnic diversity (a longstanding demand of the Maoists and the various nationalities discriminated against under the centralised, Nepali-speaking, Hindu-practising state structure), and perhaps the most significant point of all was the commitment to integrate the

Nepal Army and the revolutionary army.

One country cannot have two armies facing each other indefinitely, and the Maoists argued that the Nepal Army needed to be 'democratised'. Considering historical experiences in Chile, where the military toppled the democratically-elected socialist government of Salvador Allende and installed a brutal dictatorship in its place, or Indonesia where the military also carried out a murderous coup d'état that wiped out the Communist Party, at the time one of the world's largest, the Maoists had every right to be concerned. The state is not a neutral instrument. It comes into existence with the rise of class divisions in society, and is fundamentally a violent institution that exists to defend the power and privilege of the class that holds political and economic power. In Nepal, the military had the blood of thousands dripping from its hands, and the Maoists had no intention of trusting it to stand by peacefully and allow them to change society.

If the ranks of the Nepal Army were suddenly flooded with passionate young revolutionaries committed to fighting for a better world, and if the top ranks of the military suddenly had to allow in former revolutionary commanders, all staunchly loyal to the Maoist party, it would at the very least make it exceedingly difficult to carry out a coup, and could potentially lead to the soldiers of the army being won over to supporting the revolutionary cause. After all, most of them are from poor peasant and working class backgrounds. As with all the demands of the Maoists, this was put forward as part of a clear and carefully thought out strategy to weaken the forces of the rich and powerful while strengthening the forces of the poor and oppressed, in preparation for revolution.

The officer corps of the army was not blind to this. Many remain loyal to King Gyanendra to this day, and the army as an institution has not been fundamentally changed since the days of the monarchy. Army Chief of Staff General Rookmangud Katawal, the top military commander, publicly stated in defiance of the peace accords that he would not allow 'ideologically indoctrinated' PLA fighters into the army's ranks.

Katawal refused to cooperate with the peace process, defying legitimate government orders and continuing the tradition of the army operating as a law unto itself, free from civilian control. In direct violation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreements, Katawal oversaw three recruitment drives to the Nepalese Army, all of which were tolerated by the courts. When the PLA carried out a similar recruitment drive in retaliation, it was declared unlawful by the Supreme Court! When the Maoist-led government refused to extend the terms of eight generals who had reached mandatory automatic retirement age, Katawal ignored the Defence Ministry's orders and reinstated the generals. Katawal also withdrew

the army from the National Games, held between branches of the security forces, because of the PLA's participation, a move obviously designed to provoke the government.

Maoists leave government

In April 2009 the Maoist-led government formally requested Katawal to provide “clarification” over the illegal army recruitment, the extension of the generals’ terms and the boycott of the National Games, as well as his generally insubordinate attitude. He chose not to reply within the 24 hours provided to him, and two weeks later the Cabinet voted to sack him. Katawal refused to accept the letter informing him of this.

However, despite the legitimacy of the government’s action even by bourgeois legal standards, Nepal’s President Ram Baran Yadav used his position, which was supposed to be largely ceremonial, to override the sacking and ordered Katawal to remain in his position. Outraged at this, Prachanda resigned as Prime Minister on the 4th of May, labelling Yadav’s move a “presidential coup.” Prachanda said he would “quit the government rather than remain in power by bowing down to the foreign elements and reactionary forces”. The Maoists left the government.

A new government was formed out of a shaky coalition of 22 parties, united around nothing more than opposition to the Maoists and their plan for radical social change. A leader of the UML named Madav Khumar Nepal became prime minister. The new prime minister was beaten not once but twice in two separate constituencies during the elections, and both times by Maoist candidates. He and the party he represents were clearly rejected by the Nepali people, but this didn’t stop the ruling class from imposing him on the people anyway.

As usual, the hand of India could be seen. The Maoists had made a very clear point of moving Nepal out of India’s sphere of control, and had made efforts to develop a new relationship between the two nations based on equality. Traditionally the first overseas trip a Nepali PM makes is to New Delhi to seek the approval of his Indian masters, but Prachanda broke with this, travelling to India’s rival, China, and negotiating several diplomatic agreements with them. There is a long history of India bringing down any Nepali government that tries to do this, with the 1989-1990 blockade being a perfect example of this. Most significantly of all, the Maoists had declared their intention to review, and if necessary, withdraw from the unequal treaties signed between India and Nepal. New Delhi was not

going to tolerate this sort of insubordination.

The Nepal Congress has historical ties with India, and President Yadav lived in India for years, studying and attaining degrees in Calcutta and Chandigarh. Needless to say, once the new government was formed all serious efforts to challenge Indian dominance were forgotten about.

Waves of mass protest

After leaving government, the Maoists launched a massive and ongoing campaign against the presidential coup. Declaring that the military was not subject to civilian control and that until this changed Nepal could never be changed, they began a campaign of protests, strikes and demonstrations against the military, the 'Indian puppet government' and for 'civilian supremacy'. The Maoist slogan of civilian supremacy and the struggle both for and against it has defined Nepali politics for the past year.

Since leaving government, the Maoists have launched and successfully concluded four massive waves of protests. A fifth is about to begin, as this pamphlet goes to print. The first wave followed immediately after the resignation, with street demonstrations, strikes, and door to door awareness-raising actions. From the fall of their government up until the beginning of 2010, Maoist members of parliament staged protests in the Constituent Assembly and prevented the house from sitting. Every time the parliament attempted to hold a session on anything, Maoist Constituent Assembly members stormed the stage and chanted slogans against military supremacy. The Maoist demands are for the issue of civilian supremacy to be debated in the assembly, and for the president to apologise and admit his actions were wrong. They have a wider set of demands including the formation of a new national government under their leadership, review of all unequal treaties with India, and they continue to push their general programme of land reform and social change. Their most basic demand - for a debate about the issue of whether the military should have to obey civilian authority - has been consistently refused by the government.

Their protests have rocked the nation and displayed the level of support they hold among the masses. They have staged sit-in demonstrations around all the government offices in the country, including the state headquarters in Kathmandu. They have mobilised hundreds of thousands for torch-lit marches and mass rallies in the urban centres, and they have called a series of rolling general strikes

including an all-Nepal general strike. There have been several waves of land seizures carried out by their organisations of landless and poor peasants, and they staged a series of demonstrations along the border with India in protest at Indian intervention against their movement. Last year, they unilaterally declared thirteen autonomous states across Nepal for the oppressed nationalities such as the Magar people, the Sherpas and the Mhadesis. Prachanda has publicly stated that if the counter-revolutionary government continues to ignore their demands, these states could be raised to the level of a parallel government. They have launched a major campaign against Indian domination of Nepal, declaring their main enemy to be 'Indian expansionism' and that the struggle for civilian supremacy cannot be won without also winning the fight for genuine national independence. In short, the Maoist movement continues to grow and while they have been flexible, in some cases calling off protests to allow for further negotiation, they refuse to compromise on their core demands.

These protests are about more than just the slogans they are called under. Many thousands of people have learned how to march and manoeuvre against the police in the streets of Kathmandu, and the Maoists are using these as dress rehearsals for the decisive insurrection to come. They are displays of strength, and a way for the party to gauge its levels of support amongst the masses.

The party has also engaged in a series of internal debates over how to proceed towards revolution, and under what timetable. The fascinating thing about this, and something that bodes well for the future, is that the Maoists have displayed a very open internal culture allowing for expression of dissent, criticism of senior party leaders and without any kind of bureaucratic measures being taken against minority lines. The party has not suffered any major splits, despite the best efforts of the reactionaries to provoke this, and has emerged from these debates with party unity at a stronger level than ever.

The Maoist party has strengthened its position since the signing of the peace agreement. Despite the fears of many supporters abroad, and despite the best efforts of the imperialists and the Nepali ruling class, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has continued to work towards achieving its strategic aims.

The Maoist strategy since 2005 has been based around strengthening their support base in the urban areas. As senior leader Baburam Bhattarai pointed out in a September 2009 interview, "What we have been doing since 2005 is the path of preparation for general insurrection through our work in the urban areas and our participation in the coalition government."⁵ The Comprehensive Peace Ac-

5. Interview with Baburam Bhattarai conducted during a visit to Nepal in August-September 2009 by

CORDS have allowed Maoist activists to operate openly in every village, in every district throughout Nepal. In particular, it has allowed them to expand massively into the cities. In the 2008 elections, the Maoists won half the seats in Kathmandu, which had been the centre of royalist power with a minimal and totally underground Maoist presence.

As the Gaurav speech makes clear, the Maoists did not believe they could advance towards victory without a major shift in tactics. They did not have the military strength to destroy the royal army in battle, and felt that they could probably not take Kathmandu by force of arms. Even if they succeeded in liberating the cities, the cost would have been tremendous and in the densely-populated urban areas working class people would have been caught in a deadly crossfire. As well as this, the Maoists were concerned about the likelihood of foreign imperialism intervening to crush them if they attempted to seize power in 2006. Baburam Bhattarai has stated that a direct violent seizure of state power would have invited foreign intervention that would have turned the country into 'another Afghanistan'. As well as this, as is made clear both in the Gaurav speech and in the Bhattarai interview referred to above, the Maoists did not feel they had enough support in the urban areas to justify an insurrection. They are not interested in leading a coup d'état that will force them to hold power by pointing guns at the people – instead, they want the ordinary people of Nepal to have reached the point where they can see for themselves that revolution is a necessity.

Workers and students

Since 2005 when they expanded openly into the cities, Maoist-affiliated trade unions have mushroomed. The vast majority of militant industrial action that takes place in Nepal today is carried out by their revolutionary unions, who have succeeded in winning many wage increases and betterment of conditions for the workers they organise. And the people of Nepal can tell the difference between the Maoists and the bourgeois parties on this front. In November last year, workers in the Dharan Industrial Area launched a strike that shut down the operations of several pharmaceutical companies operating in the area. They began the strike as part of a union affiliated to GEFONT, the trade union federation of the UML

members of the World Peoples Resistance Movement (Britain), see: http://www.wprmbritain.org/wp-content/uploads/nepal_documents.pdf, pp45-54. This interview has also been reproduced as a Workers Party pamphlet; for further information see the Workers Party website: www.workersparty.org.nz

party. However, as the strike wore on, it did not take the workers long to realise that, as they put it, the UML union ‘tilted toward the management’ and did not represent their class interests. So they left en masse and joined a radical Maoist union which enthusiastically took over organising the strike. There are many cases similar to this one, and Nepali business groups regularly complain of the militancy of the UCPN(M)-affiliated unions.

They have also developed a base among students, winning elections in a great number of student associations. Maoist students have padlocked their universities and attacked their chancellors over issues like fee increases and lack of democratic governance, and these young intellectuals are playing a valuable role in the developing revolutionary movement.

When the PLA was confined to the cantonments, the Maoists set up a youth wing called the Young Communist League. According to its chairman, Ganesman Pun, the YCL represents the “fusion of the Party’s military and political character”. Pun was a former commissar to the People’s Liberation Army Ninth Brigade, and there are many other former PLA fighters and commanders in the YCL’s leadership. It acts as a paramilitary wing of the party, and effectively operates as a second police force in Nepal, and one that the poor can turn to in the knowledge that it will take their side in disputes. When the PLA entered the cantonments, the YCL expanded throughout the country, and the Nepal Army recently released statements saying it now considers the YCL to be a bigger threat to it than the PLA.⁶ The YCL is a massive organisation, with branches throughout the nation, and it can be seen at Maoist demonstrations facing off with the police and preventing them from attacking the rest of the crowd. It also carries out political education work as well as helping with development projects, street cleaning, farming and other activities to benefit the people.

The simple fact of the matter is that since 2005, no other organisation has been able to mobilise as many supporters onto the streets as the Maoists have. No other organisation has been able to carry out strikes and political shut downs on the scale the Maoists have. The Maoists have the support of the people and the reactionary parties are terrified by this. The objective situation is that revolution is becoming more possible and more likely by the day.

6. http://telegraphnepal.com/news_det.php?news_id=7011

Shifting the balance of forces

It is worth analysing the Comprehensive Peace Accords (CPA) signed between the Maoists and the Seven Parties, what they contained and why the Maoists signed them. The signing of the peace accords triggered a certain amount of confusion and concern in the international communist movement, with many friends of the Nepali revolution worrying that this was a betrayal of the People's War, that the Maoists had decided to pass on their chance to seize power and were on the road to becoming just another UML-style reformist organisation. The facts do not bear out this conclusion.

On the surface, these demands seem quite minor, and in many cases (such as the dissolution of the parallel state and the return of captured land) it seems as if the Maoists were agreeing to roll back the gains of the revolutionary war. But following a deeper analysis, it becomes clear how the peace accords allowed the Maoists to advance in their revolutionary struggle.

As has been previously mentioned, another factor in the Maoists' decision to postpone their seizure of power was the strength of the Nepal Army, which they had been unable to defeat in battle. The peace accords have been used to try to change this situation. It is often mistakenly assumed that because the Maoists have ended the war and sent the PLA into cantonments, they have grown militarily weaker. But it should be obvious that the Maoists' military strength can only be judged in comparison to the strength of the reactionary army, and if we base our analysis on that, it is clear that the Maoists have succeeded in weakening the Nepal Army.

The peace accords have not only banned the state's army from recruiting new troops, they have banned it from purchasing new weapons and even replenishing its supplies of ammunition. The army has frequently protested about this since 2005, and has broken the peace accords by holding three separate recruitment drives, and is currently preparing for another one. However, despite its lack of compliance with the agreements, the army has still been concretely weakened in terms of its military capacity. On February 17th this year, it complained to the government that it is "facing many hurdles in their training and regular works due to the lack of adequate arms and ammunition". Five thousand necessary posts in the army are currently unfilled due to the ban placed on recruitment by the peace accords, leading to major organisational problems. Half the army personnel are living in bunkers as there is no adequate housing for them, and half the Nepal

Army's aircraft are currently grounded.⁷ There have been similar complaints over the past two years.

What this shows is that the peace accords have been beneficial to the Maoists in almost every sense. As Bhattarai revealed, they have been using the time since 2005 to prepare for an uprising, and the peace accords have allowed them to openly expand throughout the country to carry out these preparations. The peace accords have militarily weakened the main threat to the Maoists, the Nepal Army, and they have effectively imprisoned it in its own barracks. At the same time, the Maoists have developed their presence throughout Nepal as they please.

The Maoist movement is raising the slogan of defending the peace process not out of some abstract attachment to the idea of 'peace', but because the peace process is allowing them to achieve their goals and weaken their enemies. And the more the balance of power shifts towards the Maoists, the more possible a successful revolution is going to become.

Dual power continues

This shift in the balance of power must be kept firmly in mind when evaluating the situation in Nepal. Despite them officially dissolving the parallel state, Nepal is still very much in a situation of dual power. Nepal has been without local government since the peace accords. Due to disputes over the form the new local governments should take, they simply haven't been formed, leaving an obvious void at the local level. What would fill this void? While it's hard to say from afar, it seems reasonable to assume that direct enforcement of power by the local police, traditional power structures and any recent power relations would all play a role. And it seems reasonable to assume that there are plenty of villages in rural Nepal where the poor villagers continue to go to the source of authority they know will favour their side – i.e. the Maoists, who have their own police force in the form of the YCL.

No matter where it is in the world, the state by its very nature only holds power on the basis of its claim to hold a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence. And in Nepal, the Maoists have received the obvious mandate of the people to employ (and define) legitimate violence. The fact that so many Nepalis voted for them after the decade of People's War, and the fact that so many Nepalis

7. <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=NA+complains+of+hurdles+in+training&NewsID=228085>

participated in that struggle, is testament to this.

Dual power does not require formal government structures to be a reality. All power is in the final equation based on violence - who exercises violence and in whose interests. In Nepal today the feudal state is not the only force capable of doing this. As a result, the interests it represents are on unsafe ground politically, economically and even physically.

Baburam Bhattarai revealed a great deal about this in August 2009 when he stated that the Maoists are not trying to form a parallel state, but the government is running a parallel state to the Maoists.⁸

The Maoist line of army integration should also be seen in this light. The state's power rests on its claim to a monopoly over legitimate violence. If the institution which exercises this legitimate violence, i.e. the military, is neutralised, the state is powerless, particularly in a situation where politically and organisationally the state is weaker than a force like the Maoists. Maoist power structures and organisational networks can mobilise the masses in a way the oppressive institutions of the state never could.

The situation in Nepal is fast approaching a crisis point. The Constituent Assembly was formed for one purpose, the writing of a new constitution. The deadline for this constitution to be written is the 28th of May, 2010. At the time of this pamphlet's publication, that is just over two months away. There are no clear guidelines in place for what will happen if the deadline passes and nothing has been prepared. At the very least, all existing government structures and certainly all positions such as prime minister, president and so on will be called into question. The government ministers were appointed on the basis of votes taken by members of the Constituent Assembly, which will have outlived the period it was supposed to exist once the deadline passes.

The political struggle in Nepal can essentially be said to revolve around the drafting of a new constitution. Everything rests upon this, the Constituent Assembly exists for that purpose alone and the politics of the nation are consumed by this question. What is a constitution? A constitution, as the Maoists have put it, is "the basic law of the nation. This makes law on the form of the state, system of leadership, fundamental rights of the people, sovereignty of the nation etc."

A struggle around the drafting of a new constitution is not just a war of words. It is a struggle around how everything should be, a struggle around who should hold power in society and how they should exercise it. It is a struggle that necessitates the drafting of a new social contract, and thus triggers a determined

8. http://www.telegraphnepal.com/news_det.php?news_id=6223

resistance from those who benefit from the current arrangement. The struggle over a new constitution in Nepal is a struggle between radically different visions of society – the Maoists’ vision of a “People’s Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal” and the counter-revolutionaries’ vision of a “Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal”.

Two visions of society

The word “People’s” is important as it sums up the difference between the two visions. The Maoists want a radically new and different system of democratic government in which the workers and peasants hold political power, and in which the rights to food, shelter, employment, healthcare, basic freedoms and so on are constitutionally guaranteed, requiring society to be organised in such a way as to ensure these constitutional guarantees are met. The supporters of the status-quo oppose all this, and seek to preserve the existing state of affairs with some cosmetic changes.

Recently the Constitutional Committees of the Constituent Assembly made their final votes on the various proposals put forward. The Maoists put forward the majority of the proposals, with ideas such as ensuring the right to food and the right to employment. Almost every proposal they put forward was defeated. They do not hold an absolute majority in the Assembly. What they do have though is veto power over the constitution. It requires a two-thirds majority to pass, and the Maoists have 40% of the Constituent Assembly. Not a single word can be passed without their approval, and there is nothing to indicate that they have any intention of allowing a constitution to be passed that does not deliver fundamental and far-reaching changes that will improve the lives of ordinary people. Their threats to declare the constitution from the streets are not empty or insignificant. It is highly likely that the deadline for passing the constitution will pass, and when that happens everything will be up in the air. There will be calls to dissolve the Constituent Assembly, to impose presidential rule backed up by the military, and everything from the Interim Constitution to the Comprehensive Peace Accords will be thrown into doubt.

The struggle over the constitution is a life and death struggle which has the attention of millions of Nepalis; it is a struggle between visions of two very, very different worlds.

At the beginning of February this year, the standing committee of the Uni-

fied Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) met to discuss their plans for revolution. There was reportedly a sharp debate carried out over the issue of whether or not to launch an insurrection immediately or if the constitution is not passed. After several days of debate and discussion, the party united around a political line of pushing for the peace process to be taken to its conclusion, army integration to be carried out, and for a pro-people constitution to be written. Chairman Prachanda was reported as stating that “the people hold the right to revolt if a conspiracy against the writing of a people’s constitution prevails”. The party leadership have been quite clear that if a ‘people’s constitution’ is not passed, the Maoists will organise a revolt. And at this point in time, a ‘people’s constitution’ is looking highly unlikely.

Great things are happening in Nepal. The world has not seen a successful revolution in a very long time, and most people born in the past few decades have grown up without ever seeing what a communist revolution looks like and how it changes things. To most people in the West today, communism conjures up an image of grey, bureaucratic oppression, and is hardly an idea associated with freedom, equality and the struggle against injustice. If the revolution in Nepal succeeds, it will be of great help in changing this. People need to see what happens when the poor and oppressed throw off their chains and seize control of their destinies.

Alastair Reith
March, 2010

Eyes on the Maobadi: Four Reasons Nepal's Revolution Matters

Something remarkable is happening. A whole generation of people has never seen a radical, secular, revolutionary movement rise with popular support. And yet here it is – in Nepal today.

This movement has overthrown Nepal's hated King Gyanendra and abolished the medieval monarchy. It has created a revolutionary army that now squares off with the old king's army. It has built parallel political power in remote rural areas over a decade of guerrilla war – undermining feudal traditions like the caste system. It has gathered broad popular support and emerged as the leading force of an unprecedented Constituent Assembly (CA). And it has done all this under the radical banner of Maoist communism — advocating a fresh attempt at socialism and a classless society around the world.

People in Nepal call these revolutionaries the Maobadi.

Another remarkable thing is the silence surrounding all this. There has been very little reporting about the intense moments now unfolding in Nepal, or about the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) that stands at their centre. Meanwhile, the nearby Tibetan uprisings against abuses by China's government got non-stop coverage.

There are obvious reasons for this silence. The Western media isn't thrilled when people in one of the world's poorest countries throw their support behind one of the world's most radical movements.

But clearly many alternative news sources don't quite know what to make of the Nepali revolution either. The Maobadi's mix of communist goals and non-dogmatic methods disturb a lot of leftist assumptions too. When the CPN(Maoist) launched an armed uprising in 1996, some people thought these were outdated tactics. When the CPN(Maoist) suspended armed combat in 2006 and entered an anti-monarchist coalition government, some people assumed they would lose their identity to a corrupt cabal. When the Maoists press their current anti-feudal programme, some people think they are forgetting about socialism.

But silent scepticism is a wrong approach. The world needs to be watching Nepal. The stunning Maoist victory in the April 2008 elections was not, yet, the decisive victory over conservative forces. The Maobadi are at the centre of the political stage but they have not yet defeated or dismantled the old government's army. New tests of strength lie ahead.

The Maoists of Nepal aren't just an opposition movement any more – they are tackling the very different problems of leading a society through a process of radical change. They are manoeuvring hard to avoid a sudden crushing defeat at the hands of powerful armies. As a result, the Maobadi of Nepal are carrying out tactics for isolating their internal rivals, broadening their appeal, and neutralizing external enemies.

All this looks bewildering seen up close. This world has been through a long, heartless stretch without much radicalism or revolution. Most people have never seen what it looks like when a popular communist revolution reaches for power.

Let's break the silence by listing four reasons for looking closely at Nepal.

Reason #1: Here are communists who have discarded rigid thinking, but not their radicalism

Leaders of the CPN(Maoist) say they protect the living revolution “from the revolutionary phrases we used to memorize.”

The Maobadi took a fresh and painstakingly detailed look at their society. They identified which conditions and forces imposed the horrific poverty on the people. They developed creative methods for connecting deeply with the discontent and highest hopes of people. They have generated great and growing influence over the last fifteen years.

To get to the brink of power, this movement fused and alternated different forms of struggle. They started with a great organizing drive, followed by launching a guerrilla war in 1996, and then entering negotiations in 2006. They created new revolutionary governments in remote base areas over ten years, and followed up with a political offensive to win over new urban support. They won victory in the special election in April 2008, and challenged their foot-dragging opponents by threatening to launch mass mobilizations in the period ahead. They reached out broadly, without abandoning their armed forces or their independent course.

The Maobadi say they have the courage “to climb the unexplored mountain.” They insist that communism needs to be reconceived. They believe popular accountability may prevent the emergence of arrogant new elites. They reject the one-party state and call for a socialist process with multi-party elections. They question whether a standing army will serve a new Nepal well, and advocate a

system of popular militias. And they want to avoid concentrating their hopes in one or two leaders-for-life, but instead will empower a rising new generation of revolutionary successors.

Nepal is in that bottom tier of countries called the “fourth world” – most people there suffer in utter poverty. It is a world away from the developed West, and naturally the political solutions of the Nepali Maoists may not apply directly to countries like the U.S. or Britain (or New Zealand). But can't we learn from the freshness they bring to this changing world?

Will their reconception of communism succeed? It is still impossible to know. But their attempt itself already has much to teach.

Reason #2: Imagine Nepal as a Fuse Igniting India

Nepal is such a marginalized backwater that it is hard to imagine its politics having impact outside its own borders. The country is poor, landlocked, remote and a bit smaller than the South Island. Its 30 million people live pressed between the world's most populous giants, China and India.

But then consider what Nepal's revolution might mean for a billion people in neighbouring India.

A new Nepal would have a long open border with some of India's most impoverished areas. Maoist armed struggle has smouldered in those northern Indian states for decades – with roots among Indian dirt farmers. Conservative analysts sometimes speak of a “red corridor” of Maoist-Naxalite guerrilla zones running through central India, north to south, from the Nepali border toward the southern tip.

Understanding the possibilities, Nepal's Maobadi made a bold proposal: that the revolutionary movements across South Asia should consider merging their countries after overthrowing their governments and creating a common regional federation. The Maobadi helped form the Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organizations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA) in 2001, which brought together ten different revolutionary groupings from throughout the region.

A future revolutionary government in Nepal will have a hard time surviving alongside a hostile India. It could face demands, crippling embargos and perhaps even invasion. But at the very same time, such a revolution could serve as an inspiration and a base area for revolution in that whole region. It could impact the world.

Reason #3: Nepal shows that a new, radically better world is possible

Marx once remarked that the revolution burrows unseen underground and then bursts into view to cheers of “Well dug, old mole!”

We have all been told that radical social change is impossible. Rebellion against this dominant world order has often seemed marked by backward-looking politics, xenophobia, lowered sights and Jihadism. And yet, here comes that old mole popping up in Nepal — offering a startling glimpse of how people can transform themselves and their world.

Some of the world’s poorest and most oppressed people have set out in the Nepali highlands to remake everything around them — through armed struggle, political power, and collective labour. Farming people, who are often half-starved and illiterate, have formed people’s courts and early agricultural communes. Wife-beating and child marriage are being challenged. Young men and women have joined the revolutionary army to defeat their oppressors. There is defiance of arranged marriage and a blossoming of “love matches,” even between people of different castes. There is a rejection of religious bigotry and the traditions of a Hindu monarchy. The 40 ethnic groups of Nepal are negotiating new relations based on equality and a sharing of political power.

All this is like a wonderful scent upon the wind. You are afraid to turn away, in case it might suddenly disappear.

Reason #4: When people dare to make revolution – they must not stand alone

These changes would have been unthinkable, if the CPN(Maoist) had not dared to launch a revolutionary war in 1996. And their political plan became reality because growing numbers of people dared to throw their lives into the effort. It is hard to exaggerate the hope and courage that has gripped people.

Events may ultimately roll against those hopes. This revolution in Nepal may yet be crushed or even betrayed from within. Such dangers are inherent and inevitable in living revolutions.

If the Maoists pursue new leaps in their revolutionary process, they will likely face continuing attacks from India, backed by the U.S. The CPN(Maoist) has long been (falsely!) labelled “terrorists” by the US government. They are portrayed as village bullies and exploiters of child-soldiers by some human rights organizations. Western powers have armed Nepal’s pro-royal National Army with modern weapons. A conservative mass movement in Nepal’s fertile Terai agricultural area has been encouraged by India and Hindu fundamentalists.

Someone needs to spread the word of what is actually going on. It would be intolerable if US-backed destabilization and suppression went unopposed.

Here it is: A little-known revolution in Nepal.

Who will we tell about it? What will we learn from it? What will we do about it?

Mike Ely

Mike Ely is part of the Kasama Project (kasamaproject.org) and has helped create the new Revolution in South Asia (<http://southasiarev.wordpress.com/>) resource.

Why you should join the Workers Party

1. We are revolutionary socialists

We all live in a capitalist society, which means that the working-class majority experience exploitation and poverty in order to guarantee profits and luxury for the ruling-class minority. The capitalists have many weapons at their disposal – not just the army, police, courts and prisons, but a system of ideas, developed over centuries, that shape people’s beliefs about what is normal, natural, and possible. These prevailing ideas tell us that we can do no more than tinker with the current system. However, the current economic crisis shows more clearly than ever that society must be radically reorganised if it is to serve the interests of the working-class majority. To challenge the entrenched power of the ruling class, workers cannot rely on parliament or parties like Labour, which support the existing system. We need to build a movement which can develop alternative, anti-capitalist ideas to create a revolution.

2. We support workers’ resistance

The fundamental basis of our politics is class struggle. For us, socialism – a society in which the means of producing wealth are owned collectively and run democratically for the benefit of everyone – can only come about when we, the people who produce the wealth, liberate ourselves from capitalist exploitation. The Workers Party does everything it can to support all workers’ struggles – from the smallest work stoppage to a full-on factory occupation – as these are the basic forms of resistance to capitalist rule. As workers start running their workplaces and industries on their own, they will start to ask, “Why can’t we run the whole country – and more?” We take inspiration from historical examples of workers’ control such as the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution, and study their successes and failures.

3. We support trade union activism

Because we believe that only the working class can create socialism, we are active in the basic organisations of the

working class, the trade unions. Currently, unions are generally dominated by middle-class bureaucrats who see themselves as peacemakers between workers and bosses. We work towards transforming unions into strong, democratic, fighting organisations, controlled by their members. Such unions will mobilise workers for struggle in the workplace and society through strikes, workplace occupations and other forms of militant action. In an economic crisis they are more important than ever. We join in the struggle to extend the union movement to the majority of workers who are not yet organised, especially the campaigns by Unite Union to involve youth and workers who have insecure conditions. We stand with workers in struggle for better rights and conditions, and initiate discussion on revolutionary ideas through strike bulletins and electronic media.

4. We support student-worker solidarity

On campus and in schools, Workers Party members are actively trying to rebuild the radical student movement. We oppose fees, demand living grants for students, and fight for free speech. We encourage students to link their struggles with those of the working class. Workers ultimately pay most of

the bill for education, even in a semi-private university system such as we have. Workers will be won to the idea of free education from kindergarten to university if they see students willing to support their struggles.

5. We have an internationalist perspective

Workers all over the world have far more in common with one another than with the bosses of “their own” country. To fight effectively, workers in every country must support the struggles of workers in every other country. This is what we mean by internationalism. We are for open borders as the best way to unite the workers of the world. We have been involved in successful campaigns to prevent the deportation of refugees and we urge the union movement to be migrant-worker friendly. We oppose the reactionary nationalism of campaigns like “Buy NZ-made”, and instead advocate protecting jobs through militant unionism.

6. We oppose imperialism

The fight against imperialism is a vital part of the fight against capitalism. Imperialism is the system whereby rich

countries dominate poor ones. New Zealand is a junior partner in the world imperialist system. The Workers Party opposes any involvement in imperialist wars such as those being fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, even if the involvement is under the banner of so-called “peace-keeping”. We demand an immediate end to the interference in the affairs of Pacific Island nations by New Zealand and its ally Australia. We want an end to all involvement in imperialist military alliances and the dismantling of their spy bases. We try to identify the most politically progressive anti-imperialist groups to offer them our active support – for instance, our solidarity campaign for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

7. We fight oppression

We are serious about actively fighting oppression based on nation, race, gender or sexuality – here and now, not just “after the revolution”. But we believe class is central to all such oppression, and therefore those struggles are linked to the broader class struggle. We support militant direct action by Maori for real equality; conversely, we see the Treaty process as a bureaucratic means to undercut such resistance and nurture a Maori middle class which will benefit very few.

8. We stand for freedom

We believe that socialism means the maximum possible freedom for the many not the few. We directly challenge infringements on basic human rights such as the undemocratic use of trespass orders by universities and employers against activists and trade unionists. We have consistently opposed the so-called “terror raids” on left-wing and Maori activists dating from October 2007. We also practise what we preach in our own party, where members have the right to disagree and debate their differences, provided they are involved in a basic level of party activity.

9. We hold capitalism responsible for the environmental crisis

The capitalist drive for unlimited profit threatens to destroy the whole basis of life on Earth. In contrast to the capitalist parties (including the Green Party) who demand that workers reduce their living standards for the sake of the planet, we say that it is the capitalist system that must be challenged, since most environmental damage is a result of production, not consumption. We look to examples of working-class actions like the “green bans” initiated by New South Wales building labourers in

the 1970s for inspiration on how workers can change the priorities of society.

10. We are building a revolutionary party

We believe that the working class and oppressed can only achieve liberation as a conscious project, based on ideas which are debated, tested against reality, and constantly reviewed and improved. The working class can only learn from history – including previous workers' struggles, victorious or defeated – through a conscious political movement which preserves these lessons. To create a mass socialist movement, workers who have already drawn revolutionary conclusions must organise together in a political organisation. This kind of party is still some way off in New Zealand. But we believe that Workers Party activists and our political ideas will be central to that movement of the future. Help us build it now! Our members and supporters in the trade unions, the student movement, and many other struggles organise together, on the basis of common ideas, as part of a concerted fight for a classless society without oppression or exploitation. If you agree with our basic ideas, join us. If you don't, work with us, debate with us, and continue the discussion!



You can now actively support the Palestinian Resistance by buying one of our shirts, with all proceeds going to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a group actively involved politically and militarily resisting Imperialism and Zionism in the occupied territories.

<http://wpnz-pflp-solidarity.blogspot.com/>

www.workersparty.org.nz

The Workers Party website is where you'll find interesting commentary on a daily basis, and in-depth articles posted several times a week.

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