

Nepal: Maoists split over strategy

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The biggest party in Nepal's Constitutional Assembly, the UCPN (Maoist) underwent a significant split in June after the dissolution of the Assembly itself at midnight on May 28th. After a prolonged struggle and debate within the leadership, the party's senior chairman, Mohan Baidya, formed a new party, resurrecting the former name of the party, CPN (Maoist) in a bid to assert its continuity and credentials. Baidya, also known as Kiran, accused the leadership of UCPN(M) of 'giving up the revolutionary spirit?', dropping the party's long-standing demand for a federal constitution based on the country's ethnic groups, and making concessions to 'Indian expansionism?.'

The new party claims to have nearly 35 percent of the party's ex-lawmakers and more than 30 percent of the 148 members of the former Central Committee. Already there is news of moderate clashes between the cadres of the two rival Maoist groups across the country as well as entry of more cadres into the newly formed party from the mother party. By taking a parliamentary course the Maoist leadership brought the great Nepalese revolution to a dead end and this is what lies behind this significant split in its own party.

To maintain its power, the UCPN (Maoist) under its chairman Prachanda and his vice-chairman and Prime Minister, Bhattarai, has formed a 'Federal Democratic Republican Alliance' (FDRA) with 20 fringe pro-federal parties on August 9, thereby marginalising both of the old rival ruling parties, the conservative Nepali Congress and the reformist CPN (UML). The Alliance has clearly depicted these two parties as anti-federalists.

Like the Mensheviks in Russia, when the Maoist chairman Prachanda formed the government under his leadership he argued that, because Nepal is a very backward country, a 'semi-feudal, semi-capitalist economy?' in his words, socialism is a matter for the distant future. So they would now proceed to develop capitalism in Nepal and wait until capitalism 'develops?' the country, instead of going directly for the use of socialist measures promote development. Now, with another acclaimed figure of the party, Dr. Bhattarai, leading another coalition government he, even more than the bourgeois leaders, has openly promoted private and foreign investments in the country. He has plainly led the country into the ever stronger grip of the capitalists, mainly the Indian capitalists. This is surely a turn towards a reformist line rather than a communist line which demands nationalization of the means of production, namely land and industry under workers? and peasants? control.

History has proved several times that the opportunist Maoists, when they reach the top post, follow a reformist line. The Nepalese Maoists were not an exception. They not only disarmed their fighters but also compromised with other parties and tried hard to assure them that they will not give up their parliamentary path. They gave up their stated goals for transitory success without keeping in mind the dreadful long term dangers. Apart from that, the leadership took decisions without agreement within their own party and demonstrated how undemocratic they can be and uncovered the real contradiction in their pitching and implementation of democratic centralism within the party. As a result, it is possible that there will be further

splits in the mother Maoist party.

Maoism is a faulty political ideology which calls for an armed insurrection against the state by the means of guerilla warfare in the remote countryside and is different from the communist ideology which believes in the armed but direct action of the masses in the main industrial, commercial, political and military centres of the nation. The Maoists in Nepal conducted a decade long guerrilla warfare against the state but ended up allying with the Parliamentary forces against the Monarchy. Although they were able to force the overthrow of the monarchy, and bring about the formation of a new constitutional assembly, the secularisation of the nation and decentralisation of the state on the basis of federalism, they have bitterly failed to preserve the gains of their struggle because of their bourgeois ideology. After the dissolution of the constitutional assembly they now look to stay in power as long as there is a constitutional crisis and vacuum.

However, the UCPN (Maoists) cannot stay in power without coming into conflict with the President, Dr Yadav, who is a member of the Congress party. He has already declined to approve the decrees presented by the government to him for his endorsement. The UCPN (Maoist) argue that, since there is no parliament, they can run the country through such decrees. The anti-revolutionaries and pro-Monarchists who succeeded in their conspiracy of dissolving the legitimate CA are now eager to promote this confrontation between the PM and the president, which they want to see end with the ousting of the PM by the president.

In effect, Nepal is now facing constitutional paralysis. The Maoists claim that the old ruling parties do not want to budge on the key issue of federalism because it was a Maoist agenda but, since the Maoists had a majority for federalism in the Assembly, they will have to accept defeat. Now the country has very few legal options to come out of the impasse; revival of the dissolved Assembly, election of a new one or new parliamentary elections. The last option seems to be unpopular and unacceptable to the desperate masses who have longed for a new constitution, a quick end of the political game and revival from extreme hardships. A fresh Assembly election was slated for November but there was no consensus among the political parties on that. Now the only remaining option seems to be the revival of the dissolved Assembly which itself is a very contentious issue. Without forging a consensus among the main parties on key issues of the future constitution it is unlikely that it would be able to deliver a new constitution, having already failed to draft one, despite several term extensions.

The Maoist government has acted within the framework of the bourgeois state and defended the vital interests of the rich landowners and the bourgeoisie. It is no surprise that the second coalition government headed by the Maoist party has not been able to transform or develop the nation. They have failed to address the underlying problems facing the people, which give rise to continuous strikes, while electricity, fuel and water crises, pollution and chaotic transportation service have added to the severity of life throughout the nation. The underlying problems of the oppressed and exploited masses can only be addressed by revolutionary measures; a thorough-going land reform to put agriculture under the control of the peasants themselves, the socialisation of all modern industry and commerce and their development by means of democratic planning.

Now it has become all too clear that the Maoists have abandoned the revolutionary struggle; here the failure of the guerilla strategy has been exposed; a space can open up for the development of a real revolutionary party in the country.