

The 13 Years of People's War in Nepal*

Revolutionary Front for the Defense of People's Rights (FRDDP)

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Note from Serve the People (Brazil): We are publishing an important analysis from FRDDP, dating back to 2006, regarding the People's War in Nepal and the Prachanda's betrayal. We caution the reader that this analysis is from 2006, and since then, many other revisionist and opportunist factions have emerged, initially opposed to Prachanda. However, the text still holds value as a basis for analyzing the current situation.

The 13 Years of People's War in Nepal

February 13th marked the 13th anniversary of the beginning of the People's War in Nepal, led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), which, in 10 years of war, had succeeded in liberating nearly 80% of the country from semi-feudalism and imperialism. However, the Nepalese revolution was interrupted when, in April 2006, the CPN(M) reached peace agreements with the reactionary forces of King Gyanendra. The objective outcome was the disarmament and cantonment of the People's Liberation Army, the return of land confiscated from peasants during the course of the People's War, among other things, in exchange for the creation of an interim government with the participation of the communists and the convening of elections for the Constituent Assembly. The defeats suffered by the rebellious masses as an immediate result of the agreement unquestionably exposed the capitulation of the leadership of the CPN(M) to the ruling classes, especially to imperialism. After months of deadlock, elections were held in 2008, with the CPN(M)

*<https://serviraopovo.com.br/2023/09/18/os-13-anos-da-guerra-popular-no-nepal-frente-revolucionaria-de-defesa-dos-direitos-do-povo-frddp-2006-2/>

winning a decisive victory. Its top leader, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, known as President Prachanda, was elected as the Prime Minister of the coalition government, putting an end to the 240-year-old monarchy. The policies of the new government, which focused on mere reforms of the old state, generated a crisis and sparked debates within the party, among the Nepalese masses, and among revolutionaries worldwide regarding the direction of the Nepalese revolution.

Ten Years of People's War

The People's War in Nepal was initiated on February 13, 1996, led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). According to their revolutionary program, the objectives were to overthrow the monarchical regime, defeat imperialism and Indian expansionism in the country, and construct a Republic of New Democracy with uninterrupted progression towards Socialism, towards the final goal of Communism.

The reactionary forces wasted no time in launching savage attacks, but they were unable to prevent the revolution from deeply rooting itself in the mountainous region of the western part of the country, between the fertile plains in the south along the Indian border and the inhospitable Himalayan ranges to the north along the Chinese border. The underdeveloped rural regions of Rukum and Rolpa, each with a population of a few hundred thousand inhabitants, the vast majority of whom were poor peasants, belonging primarily to one of the many minority nationalities of Nepal, quickly transformed into strongholds of resistance and rear support for the people's war and became a symbol of the revolution throughout the country.

In the clean rural areas of the old government's police apparatus, new forms of popular power began to emerge. Organizations blossomed among different sectors of the population - peasants, women, workers, students, and teachers. From the beginning, significant social transformations started to occur in the countryside.

A vast number of oppressed people welcomed the revolution and increasingly joined its organized ranks. The peasant women, who, like the men, endured extreme suffering in western Nepal, also bore the burden of the most oppressive feudal traditions. For instance, girls at the age of 12 were often forced into arranged marriages. With the people's war attacking feudal bases and traditions rapidly, women, not just from the countryside, began

to flock to the revolution, becoming fighters and learning to read and write. Many of them became commanders and prominent political leaders. True women's emancipation came through the revolution.

In just a few years, the revolution brought about dramatic changes among the oppressed nationalities, dismantling the caste system and mobilizing the masses of the Dalits. Equality of languages and cultures was promoted. The CPN(M) placed great importance on the establishment of new local and regional political-administrative bodies where the formerly oppressed began to play a leading role.

When the war began in 1996, a form of legal slavery still existed in some parts of the country, notably in the Terai region (southern plains). Some peasants didn't even have the formal right to leave their masters' fields. The revolution spread the slogans "*Land to those who work it,*" and the poor peasants of the plains also began to increasingly support the revolution.

In a relatively short period, the people's war rapidly advanced, progressing through its strategic stages of balance and offense, delivering devastating blows to the reactionary forces, isolating the authorities of the old monarchic feudal-comprador state to the Kathmandu Valley zone.

The Advance of the People's War Generated an Irreversible Crisis Within the Ruling Classes

The new organs of power grew. For example, popular courts were established that involved villagers in the resolution of disputes and the enforcement of revolutionary order. Child marriages were made illegal, and younger individuals increasingly began to choose their own partners without regard to caste. Caste-based discrimination was prohibited, and significant changes occurred in how people related to each other. Alcoholism, a major problem in the country, was the subject of education campaigns. The production and sale of alcohol were restricted. In one of the most massive actions of the revolution, thousands of women surrounded and set fire to a large alcohol factory in Kathmandu, destroying it.

The guerrilla army grew rapidly and in 2001, it became the People's Liberation Army (PLA), gaining strength, experience, and organization. Thousands of revolutionary soldiers fought long battles against fortified enemy positions protected by airpower and heavy artillery. By winning these types

of battles, as well as numerous others of smaller scale, the PLA captured modern weapons provided to the reactionary Nepalese state by India, the USA, and Europe. Increasingly, the enemy could only move using airborne troops or marching in columns of hundreds of soldiers. Even in the fertile plains where the real armed forces had important facilities, the authority of the revolution gradually gained influence. The death of hundreds and thousands of fighters, instead of dampening the spirits of the masses, pushed them further into the ranks of the revolution.

From the beginning, the CPN(M) struggled not to let the revolution become isolated in rural areas, even though the inhumane terror of the enemy made it very dangerous for any known Maoist to venture into urban areas. Nepal is a relatively small country, and news of how the revolution was transforming the countryside infiltrated every corner of society.

As the People's War grew in strength, the contradictions of the old Nepalese state, centered around the monarchy and the Royal Nepali Army, worsened. This led the state to adopt measures that pushed an increasing part of the urban population into active opposition. Furthermore, significant divisions emerged among the ruling classes of Nepal as they failed to devise a strategy to halt the popular insurgency. In June 2001, King Gyrendra and most of the royal family were mysteriously assassinated within the palace. Gyrendra's brother, Gyanendra, who was held responsible for the massacre, ascended to the throne. After a brief period of ceasefire and negotiations with the CPN(M), Gyanendra mobilized the full might of the Royal Nepali Army (RNA) against the revolution, which had primarily faced the national police until then. This, too, failed, and the revolution continued to advance.

Revolutionary Crisis and Negotiations

Facing the real possibility of losing everything, the king decided to engage in a desperate gamble. He closed the parliament, placed the leaders of legal political parties under house arrest, and imposed a "state of emergency." However, the plan did not yield the expected results and backfired on the king. The PLA managed to withstand the intensification of RNA's attacks, and the war entered a phase of balance of power. Furthermore, Gyanendra's inability to achieve a decisive victory deepened divisions within the ruling classes. Discontent and anger towards the "state of emergency" and the abolition of all rights increased throughout the country.

In this context, political parties like the Nepalese Congress and opportunistic parties like the revisionist CPN-UML, which were guilty of a bloody collaboration with the monarchy and the army, revolted against the king. The increasing strength of the people's war and agitation within the ranks of the ruling classes led, in April 2006, to a massive uprising of the masses in all cities and towns of Nepal, especially in the capital Kathmandu. This forced the king to lift the "state of emergency" and reinstate the parliament.

In these circumstances, a ceasefire was declared between the PLA and the Royal Nepali Army (whose name was changed to the Nepali Army with the end of the monarchy). Several rounds of negotiations took place between the seven legal political parties (mainly the Nepali Congress and the UML) and the CPN(M), leading to an agreement to end the People's War and form a new interim government to function until the elections for a Constituent Assembly, which were agreed upon as the centerpiece of the agreement. The agreement also stipulated that PLA fighters would be quartered – military camps set up in various parts of the country, separate from the people – and that most of their weapons would be placed under UN supervision. The agreement required the government of Nepal to provide decent facilities and food for the PLA soldiers, but in reality, these fighters have been living in miserable conditions until now.

Capitulation and Coalition Government

The prestige among the popular masses gained by the CPN(M) with the achievements of the people's war was undoubtedly what led to a significant victory for the CPN(M), even though this party did not secure the majority of seats in the Constituent Assembly. Its main leader, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, also known as President Prachanda, was elected as the Prime Minister of Nepal, and the king was deposed, putting an end to 240 years of monarchy and establishing the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. A coalition government was formed based on a reformist program that did not deeply touch the foundations of feudalism. Nevertheless, the Minister of Economy, a leader of the CPN(M), and one of the main figures, Baburam Bhattarai, stated that the goal is the *"modernization of the country and the promotion of economic development."* The integration of the PLA into the Nepali Army (formerly the Royal Army) has been delayed due to the rejection of accepting PLA commanders in command positions. Prachanda himself called on PLA

members and the Young Communist League to review their tasks and dedicate themselves to the nation's construction, as well as urging the Workers' Central and Revolutionary Women's Association to do the same. Within the party, among the Nepalese masses and revolutionary movements in various countries, a heated debate has opened about the direction of the revolution in Nepal.

In January 2009, the name of the CPN(M) was changed to the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) after merging with the Communist Party of Nepal (Centre-Mashal). The incorporation of the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) has also been decided.

The Struggle in the Party

With the UCPN(M) leading the coalition government and slowing down the revolutionary process, especially with the abandonment of the People's War, the restlessness of the masses and party members was inevitable. In both the national press and within the party itself in 2008, contradictory expressions appeared, including from high-ranking party officials. The member of the Political Bureau and Secretary of Organization, comrade Kiran, declared himself against accepting the mere establishment of a bourgeois republic, arguing that the party's program calls for the goal of the New Democratic People's Republic in uninterrupted transition to socialism. Another comrade, Gaurav, a historic leader who spent years in prison in India, expressed similar opinions. Another member of the Political Bureau, comrade Biplav, accused the party of suffering from the "negotiationism" ailment and called for a tactic that advances the revolution according to its programmatic goals. Other leaders resigned from their positions in the Constituent Assembly or high government roles, such as comrade Yadav, another historic leader of Madhesi origin.¹

With the turmoil within the party, a National Cadre Conference was

¹Madhesi - A national minority that inhabits the rich Terai regions, plains that share an extensive border with India. During the negotiations, the CIA and Indian intelligence services operated in this region, creating counter-revolutionary nationalist organizations. These organizations began to accuse the CPN(M) of betraying the promise of autonomy for the region during the election for the Constituent Assembly and the distribution of power in the new government. The actions of this organization led to several defeats for the party in the formation of the coalition government and in the CA [RedLibrary: Constituent Assembly].

called, which took place in November 2008 and was attended by 800 party cadres (the main figures from across the country). The NC [National Conference] was officially convened and announced as a demonstration of democracy within the party. Its objective was to address the struggle between two lines: one represented by President Prachanda, advocating for the establishment of a bourgeois democratic republic (or old democracy) as a necessary step, and the other defended by Comrade Kiran, among others, supporting the fight for a New Democratic People's Republic. What appeared to be a sharp contradiction even before the NC was not exactly that, because despite Kiran's statements in interviews opposing the merger with the CPN (Mashal), accusing it of not being truly communist, and also opposing the removal of the term "Maoist" from the party's name, stating that "*the term Maoist is not an appendix in the party's name,*" they never addressed the issue of how to achieve the People's Republic. They also evaded discussing the situation of the disarmed PLA and its merger with the former royal army, continuing to defend that the party's position was correct up to that point. In other words, they continued to support the "Prachanda Path," the guiding ideology of the CPN(M), which expressed significant revisions of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, differing and even opposing in some aspects from the doctrine that the CPN(M) had upheld when initiating the revolutionary armed struggle, the People's War, at least until the year 2001. It was during a party event that controversial resolutions were adopted on a range of ideological, theoretical, and strategic and tactical issues. The II National Conference sanctioned the Prachanda Path with "A Great Leap Forward: an inevitable historical necessity."

The current situation of the revolution in Nepal is not just a result of tactical maneuvers by the party leadership, arguing that there is currently no regional and international balance of power to carry the revolution through to its conclusion. It is a direct consequence of the ideological, theoretical, and political formulations that have prevailed in the central leadership of the party since the party events of 2001 and beyond, through what was called "*The Great Leap Forward: an inevitable historical necessity.*"² In this document, unlike previous analyses, the leadership of the CPN(M) begins to

²Party resolution document of the Central Committee of the CPN(M) from 2001, taken from "Some important documents of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)," published in English on the CPN(M) website pcnm.org [Note from RedLibrary: This website is no longer live and seems to not have been archived.]. The English translation is ours [FRDDP].

make statements of the following type:

“Due to the unique economic, political, cultural, and geographical conditions and the undeniable dominance of Indian monopolistic capitalism, it will be very difficult for the national democratic revolution to be successfully completed in just one country in the region. Even if it does succeed, given the particular resulting contradictions, it will be almost impossible for the victorious revolution to survive.”³

It is the resurrection of the old Trotskyist and anti-Marxist song of the impossibility of revolution and socialism in one country.

And that “The foundation of the Party, its manifesto, preliminary policies, and program constitute the unity or thesis. In the process of development, the various tendencies, internal conflicts, ups and downs, divisions, and fractions constitute the struggle or antithesis in the Nepalese communist movement. The grand People’s War led by the CPN (Maoist) for the past five years is the manifestation of transformation and synthesis or the new unity on a new basis. The entire process of the Nepalese communist movement can also be seen as the negation of negation.”⁴

Here, according to the Prachandist dialectic, so staunchly defended as a new synthesis of dialectics by Basanta, also from the Political Bureau of the party, the dialectical law of the negation of negation explains the process of the Nepalese communist movement in such a way that we could then assert that, in the course of the same process, the People’s War becomes the thesis, negotiations and agreements become the antithesis, and the current coalition government becomes its synthesis. This assertion challenges and sets aside Mao Zedong’s statement that the fundamental and unique law of dialectics is contradiction, that is, the unity and struggle of opposites or simply the unity of opposites. According to this law, the struggle against revisionism developed by the CPN(M) [then known as CPN (Unity Centre)] led the communist movement onto the path of revolution through People’s War, and the difficulties in the course of the war (including the complexity of the regional

³Page 88.

⁴Page 105.

and international situation, among other factors) did not lead that party to persist on the revolutionary path; instead, the Nepalese communist movement returned to revisionist positions. Historical experience in proletarian revolution proves that, no matter how challenging the conditions may be, a genuinely revolutionary party must persist, as there has never been an easy path to any true revolution.

The essential question of the revolution of Nepal problem, like any other proletarian revolution, lies in the issue of the vanguard party's line. The historical experience of proletarian revolution systematized by Mao teaches us that in both the revolution and the construction of a new society, it is necessary to correctly address the question of whom to support, whom to ally with or win over, and against whom to fight. The revolutionary vanguard must conduct a correct class analysis at every moment or phase of the revolution to establish these three criteria correctly. From what we can see, the CPN(M) resolved this question well and was able to initiate people's war by relying on the broad popular masses in both rural and urban areas. However, at a certain point, as the people's war reached a balance of forces and faced new challenges and difficulties with the intensification of the struggle, serious errors were made in the class analysis. Despite declaring continued support for the popular masses, the party leadership no longer appears to trust them as before and seeks to rely on the urban petty and middle bourgeoisie (national bourgeoisie) and align itself with the comprador classes domestically and with imperialist agencies (UN, WB, IMF, etc.) internationally.

For this very reason, the NC of the party in December 2008, contrary to what it appeared to promise, ended up in a broad composition around the line that the party should focus its efforts on defending the integrity and nationality of the country. In other words, a tangle that well expresses the ideological situation of the party leadership, which becomes evident when examining the resolution adopted to characterize the central controversy, with the name People's Democratic Republic of Nepal. Likewise, regarding the issue of merging with other parties, which was discussed and then approved by the Central Committee as a decision for the merger and adoption of the name Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Appeasing both Greeks and Trojans, buyers, and imperialists. Less so for the revolution.

The most significant consequence of the struggle within the party so far has been, according to not very clear information, that the historical leader of the party, Yadav, withdrew along with over a hundred members and declared for the immediate reconstitution of the CPN(M). The Red Star newspaper,

the official voice of the UCPN(M), in its English edition from February, reports that Yadav was expelled. What is certain is that the revolution in Nepal will continue in one way or another, through challenging paths.