

On Developments in Nepal and the Stakes for the Communist Movement: Letters to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, 2005-2008 (With a Reply from the CPN(M), 2006)

Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

January 29, 2009 Letter from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

November 4, 2008 Letter from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

March, 2008 Letter from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

October 2005 Letter from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

July 1, 2006 Letter from the Central Committee, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) to the Central Committee, Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

Appendices to October 2005 Letter from the RCP,USA to the CPN(M)

“The Creative Development of MLM, Not of Revisionism”, excerpt from a talk by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA.

“Some Further Thinking on: The Socialist State as a New Kind of State”, excerpt from a talk given by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, to a group of Party members and supporters in 2005.

Article from *Revolution* #160, March 28, 2009.

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Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

January 29, 2009

Dear Comrades,

As you know we have been following the developments in your country and within your party with great concern and interest. During the long years of the People's War we consistently upheld and propagated your struggle within the revolutionary movement and among the masses of people in our country, and participated in doing so on an international level. We did so wholeheartedly, convinced that the struggle in Nepal was a blow not only against the reactionary ruling classes of Nepal itself, but could become an advanced outpost of struggle against the world imperialist system and that, under the leadership of a genuine communist vanguard party, this revolution had the basis not only for liberating Nepal but to contribute to the spread of revolutionary communism in the region and the world.

We are writing this letter to inform you that we have come to the conclusion that it is now necessary to open up to the public the struggle that we have been waging with you for several years now over key questions of communist principle and the differences that have now sharply emerged.

Ever since October 2005 we have been increasingly alarmed at the developments of line that your party has taken. Proceeding from what is our understanding of proletarian internationalism, we have made many efforts to carry out struggle over the crucial questions of ideological and political line involved. In particular we have written three major letters at key junctures presenting in a frank manner our understanding of the matters of principle that have emerged in relation to the development of the revolution in your country; we have not addressed these on the level of specific tactical measures that you have taken at different junctures, but with regard to the overall ideological and political line that has been guiding the practice of your party—and which are now pushing the revolution into the abyss.

We wrote one letter in October 2005, a second one on March 19, 2008 and a third on November 4, 2008. Of these three letters, you chose to respond only to the first; we are very disappointed and dismayed that you did not consider that the later two letters of 2008 even merited a response. The questions that we and others have raised clearly focus on questions that need to be

discussed within RIM and the international communist movement and are of concern to all who want to do away with imperialism and reaction, and work toward a communist future.

It should be obvious why the change in the leading political and ideological orientation of your party and the policies adopted have caused a great deal of questioning and confusion among friends of the Nepal revolution in our country and elsewhere. Despite the concerns of sections of the masses and repeated requests to know our opinion, we have been very careful to avoid open criticism of your party in our press and in other public forums up until now. We have felt that this was the correct approach for us to take because you had made clear to us your preference that this struggle not take place in the public arena and because it was our sincere hope that keeping this struggle internal to the ranks of our respective parties and the parties and organizations of our movement would create the most favorable conditions for your party, and especially its leadership, to engage in serious study, debate and struggle over the questions that we and other comrades in the international movement have been raising.

We are forced to conclude that this policy of keeping our struggle internal is no longer appropriate under the present circumstances. When the party leadership has shown no interest in pursuing struggle over cardinal questions of ideological and political line and where the leading line and policies of the party itself are accelerating in the wrong direction, to keep silent would objectively represent acquiescence in this very path. On the contrary, the circumstances require a vigorous public discussion of the central ideological and political questions involved.

We do not take this decision with joy of heart but rather out of the deepest concern for the future of the revolution in Nepal and its implications for the proletarian revolutionary struggle internationally.

Just as we had decided that it is now correct to take this course of action, an article written by Roshan Kisson appeared in your English language journal *Red Star* (#21) in which there is an open repudiation of the whole of Marxism, beginning with Marx himself, an open rejection of the whole experience of the proletarian revolution up to this point, and an open proclamation that the revolution in Nepal can do no more than build a modern capitalist state, leaving the question of the struggle for socialism and communism to future generations.

As part of the anti-communist diatribe in *Red Star* #21, Kisson launches a vicious and unprincipled attack and personal slander on the leader of our party, Chairman Bob Avakian, which is reprehensible and unacceptable. We strongly protest the completely anti-communist content of this article. To publish such an article in a journal that is seen all over the world as a vehicle for dissemination of your line and views constitutes promoting views that are completely in opposition to the goals and methods of communists that should be upheld by the international communist movement.

We will proceed with publishing the three major letters mentioned above along with the only response we have received from you, unless we hear from you by February 15, 2009 with a compelling reason for not doing so.

Our proletarian internationalist greetings,

Central Committee
Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

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4 November 2008

Letter from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

To the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and all Parties and Organizations of RIM

Dear Comrades,

On March 19, 2008, our Party sent a circular letter to the comrades of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) as well as to the other parties and organizations of RIM expressing our deepest concern over the political and ideological orientation of the CPN(M) and the basic path it has been following for the last three years. The central point in that letter was our belief that despite the great struggle and sacrifices of the ten years of People's War and its tremendous achievements, the state system being established and consolidated in Nepal is not new democracy, the particular form of the dictatorship of the proletariat appropriate in countries like Nepal, but rather a bourgeois state, a "federal democratic republic" which will preserve and enforce the existing capitalist and semi-feudal relations of production prevalent in Nepal.

The People's Liberation Army is to be destroyed through "integration" into the reactionary state army and/or dissolved by other means, land distributed by the revolution to the peasantry is to be returned to previous owners, Western imperialist powers and reactionary states such as China and India are being hailed as great friends of the Nepalese people, and astounding theoretical propositions are being put forward such as the "joint dictatorship of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie"¹. Instead of arguing for a program of carrying forward the revolution, CPN(M) leaders and government officials have loudly advocated positions and policies that so flagrantly go against the principles of proletarian revolution and the interests of the masses in Nepal and around the world that any genuine communist is shocked, saddened and angry to hear them on the lips of comrades of our Movement.

Yes, we have heard that the assurances from some that all of this is but a "transitional state" that can be transformed into a genuine people's state—or, sometimes we are told, it is but a clever ploy to "deceive the enemy" while preparations continue to bring the revolution to a victorious conclusion. But in fact each step taken down this road is making it more difficult ideologically, politically, organizationally and militarily to get back on the revolutionary path. Today many

¹ See Red Star, Number 15, "Fall of Koirala Dynasty".

more communists, in Nepal and elsewhere, are coming to recognize that the formation of the “federal democratic republic” is not a “stepping stone” toward achieving the communist objectives but a giant step *backwards*, away from revolution and away from the achievements of the People’s War, and a giant step toward firmly reconsolidating Nepal’s position in the reactionary world imperialist system.

The Problem is the Line of the Party

It is excellent that many comrades are now recoiling when they stare into the abyss into which the revolution in Nepal is falling. The question is to understand how things reached this point and, most importantly, what is necessary to fundamentally reverse this course and save the fruits of the revolution in Nepal that are being so rapidly destroyed. The current situation is no accident, no mere excess in carrying out an otherwise correct policy. It is not just one more "maneuver to the right" that can be easily corrected by a following "maneuver to the left". The current display of class collaboration is a direct result of the ideological and political line that has been leading the Party over the last period, particularly since the immediate goal of the Party was defined as the establishment of the “transitional state”, that is, a bourgeois democratic republic.²

The immediate task facing all communists who hold the revolution in Nepal dear is to *repudiate* and fight against the wrong line in the CPN(M). Once again we will quote the words of Mao Tsetung: “If one’s line is incorrect, one’s downfall is inevitable, even with the control of the central, local and army leadership. If one’s line is correct, even if one has not a single soldier at first, there will be soldiers, and even if there is no political power, political power will be gained. This is borne out by the historical experience of our party and by that of the international communist movement since the time of Marx.... The crux of the matter is line. This is an irrefutable truth.”³

Today the question of the future direction of Nepal is being battled out in the domain of political line and ideology. *If a correct revolutionary communist line can triumph within the party*, the energy and aspirations of people that have been unleashed by the People’s War can be harnessed and led, and there is a real possibility that nationwide victory can be won and the pathway

2 A decisive turning point in this process was in October 2005 when a line struggle in the Party reached a culmination at the Central Committee meeting. One of the important subjects in that two-line struggle was whether or not the revolution must pass through the stage of anti-monarchical struggle and the establishment of a bourgeois democracy (“transitional state”). In typical eclectic fashion, this thesis was rejected theoretically by saying that such a sub-stage was not an absolute requirement but at the same time this thesis was made the guiding line for the practice of the party as a “tactic”, which opened the way to the series of agreements with the parliamentary parties and effectively made the immediate goal of the revolution the formation of a bourgeois republic.

3 From the 10th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, adopted August 28, 1973.

opened to socialism. On the contrary, if the present line of the CPN(M) leadership is not repudiated, this great opportunity for the people in Nepal and for the communist movement more generally will be lost. We are not in a position to speculate or propose specific tactical steps, and we do not see that as the role that comrades in the international movement can or should be playing. We must all focus our attention on major matters of ideological and political line and not on secondary matters of tactics or so-called “maneuvering”. Most fundamentally this means reaffirming, ideologically and in its political line and specific policies, that the revolution in Nepal is seeking to establish socialist relations in the country as part of the whole world process by which the capitalist-imperialist world order will be overthrown and supplanted by socialism and ultimately communism. Yes, the revolution in Nepal must pass through the transition of new democracy, but the purpose of the new-democratic revolution is exactly a *transition* toward socialism, and not toward an acceleration of capitalism in Nepal and its further integration into the world imperialist system.⁴

This essential point—the need to maintain the goal and orientation of fighting for new democracy and not substituting the goal of classless, “pure” democracy (which can only mean bourgeois democracy, whether federal and proportional or not)—was a major theme of our October 2005 letter to the Party, which the CPN(M) leadership dismissed as merely being the “ABCs of Marxism” with no importance for analyzing the specific questions of tactics and policy facing the Party. But these “ABCs”, or more correctly put, these basic truths of Marxism, confirmed in the course of generations of revolutionary struggle all over the world, remain crucial to the success or failure of the revolution, and the *rejection* of these basic truths by the CPN(M) leadership is what is leading the revolution over the cliff.

New Democracy and Socialism are Stepping Stones on the Road to Communism

New democracy requires a joint dictatorship of the revolutionary classes under the leadership of the proletariat and its vanguard, that is to say, *a specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat* appropriate to the stage of the democratic revolution. While the system of new democracy recognizes and protects the interests of the national bourgeoisie, it targets as an enemy the comprador and bureaucrat capitalist sector which is, after all, the *dominant form* of capitalism in Nepal. In its international policy, new democracy aligns itself with the masses of people struggling against imperialism and reaction and opposes the world imperialist system. Economically, as Mao put it, new democracy “opens the door to capitalism”, but “it opens the door to socialism even wider” by quickly establishing state ownership over those sectors controlled by the imperialists, allied reactionary states and the bureaucrat-comprador bourgeoisie and feudal elements. In the countryside new democracy means the thorough and revolutionary implementation of “land to the tiller” by mobilizing and relying on the oppressed masses of the

⁴ See Mao Tsetung on this subject, especially “On New Democracy,” *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 339.

peasantry. Culturally, New democracy means mobilizing the masses and unleashing them to thoroughly uproot backward institutions such as caste discrimination, child marriage, the oppression of women, the oppression of nationalities and so forth. Indeed, to a large extent new democracy means completing on a nationwide level the revolutionary democratic transformations that the Party had begun in the base areas.

In all of these aspects the new-democratic system represents something quite different from bourgeois democracy. Bourgeois democracy accepts the capitalist system in a given country and internationally. It offers “equal rights” (especially the right to vote) to everyone *within the framework* of the existing ownership system and the existing relations of production. Bourgeois democracy will always seek to *demobilize the masses* and oppose and repress the efforts of the masses to assert their own interests. And we know that in a country like Nepal, bourgeois rule, however “democratic”, inevitably involves a great degree of compromise with semi-feudal relations, as is seen so clearly in neighboring India. The “rule of (bourgeois) law” so central to bourgeois democracy means that government officials become the agents and enforcers of *bourgeois* law. Isn’t this an important lesson of the “Yadov affair”, when comrade Matrika Yadov, the CPN(M) Minister of Land Reform and Management in the new government, resigned over his refusal to accept the use of state violence to evict the peasantry off of land that had been redistributed to them by the revolution?⁵ This shows quite clearly how the government cannot help but function as an *agent of the reactionary production and social relations*, and it is a good illustration of Marx’s point that “the proletariat cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes” but must “smash it” and establish its own state.⁶

Today when the choice before the Party and the masses is sharpening up as one between a “people’s republic” and a bourgeois republic (in the form of the “federal democratic republic”), it is essential for the communists themselves to be clear on the fundamental meaning of these two, opposite, kinds of states. It is important to be vigilant as well that the very conception of “people’s republic” (or new-democratic republic) is not gutted and reduced to just a different label on the bourgeois democratic republic. It is important to firmly grasp that the new-democratic republic must be part of the world proletarian revolution and that it must serve as a transition to socialism and communism.

This goal must not be left at the level of an empty declaration of faith. We should not forget that even the most brazen capitalists in China still hide behind the banner of the “Communist” Party. Taking the socialist road requires understanding clearly what socialism and communism actually mean. It is not about the “perfection of democracy” in a way detached from the class struggle.⁷ It

⁵ See *Red Star*, Number 16.

⁶ Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*.

⁷ In our October 2005 letter speaking to the “New State” article, we argued that the ideology of classless democracy (or “pure democracy”) corresponded to capitalism where goods must be exchanged according to “equal” value and

is about achieving a society without class distinctions through the overcoming of the “four alls” Marx spoke about and which became popularized in the GPCR of China. Marx wrote that the communist revolution must aim at the elimination of: all classes and class distinctions generally, all the relations of production on which they rest, all the social relations corresponding to them, and all the ideas that result from these social relations.

The vehicle for assuring this transition from one social epoch to another is the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. Only if state power is firmly in the hands of the proletariat at the leadership of an alliance with the other revolutionary classes will it be possible to protect the interests of the masses, as we have seen in the entire course of the People’s War. If state power is in the hands of the masses countrywide led by a vanguard party clear on its goal, the initial transformations carried out in the base areas can be consolidated throughout the country and, most importantly, this state power can be used to begin the long and difficult but truly liberating process of *transforming* the economic and social relations between people in the direction of socialism and communism.

The fundamental issue at stake in the debate over the *form* of the state and the role of “multiparty democracy” in Nepal today is actually about whether the dictatorship of the proletariat (at the stage of new democracy) will be established. Indeed, as the Chinese comrades pointed out during the epoch of Mao, *all* of the great struggles between Marxism and revisionism have been focused on the question of establishing and persevering in the proletarian dictatorship, and this is the case in Nepal today.

There are important and difficult questions concerning the *form* of people’s rule: What role should be allowed for competing political parties? How can the rights of the masses be guaranteed in deeds and not only in words? How can the revolution mobilize all positive factors in society to advance? And yes, there have been serious errors in the history of the communist movement in this regard, although our party does not accept the one-sided negation of the previous experience of the communist movement that is trumpeted by the international bourgeoisie and, unfortunately, echoed by the leadership of the CPN(M). But one thing is quite certain: it will be impossible to address the genuine questions correctly *unless* comrades understand the desirability and the possibility of achieving a wholly different type of society (socialism and communism) and therefore the need for the state to serve as a *vehicle* for carrying out this transformation, step-by-step and in conjunction with the masses the world over.

where this formal equality covers over the actual exploitation of the working class (the exchange of a “fair day’s pay” for a “fair day’s work”). See Bob Avakian’s book *Democracy Can’t We Do Better than That?*, as well as his polemic against K. Venu “Democracy: More Than Ever We Can and Must Do Better than That”, which appeared in the journal *A World to Win*, Number 17. Many of these and other writings of Bob Avakian and the RCP are available for downloading at the web address: www.revcom.us or www.bobavakian.net.

If the essence of the state is the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, if it is understood to be a vehicle for thoroughly uprooting class society and all of the evils that flow from it, then and only then will it be possible to answer the question of what type of democracy is required and what forms it might take. Again, the Yadov affair is instructive—what about the rights of the peasants to own the land they till? These rights count for nothing in the kingdom of “pure democracy”. And where is the state power to back up the rights of the peasantry, even if they were formally recognized? But it is not only a question of which classes enjoy democracy under the proletarian dictatorship and which classes are the object of this dictatorship. The proletarian dictatorship can and must also guarantee the democratic rights of those intellectuals and other middle class strata whose class position between the masses and the exploiting classes tends to reinforce illusions of “pure” democracy.

More importantly, in a society that is truly advancing on the socialist road, it is possible and necessary to unleash the critical spirit among intellectuals and others and welcome the criticism that such forces will have of the socialist society and proletarian rule, in the spirit of applying the dynamic Bob Avakian has called “solid core with a lot of elasticity”. In fact, the stifling of dissent, the absence of rights, and bureaucratic stultification is a feature of revisionist rule (even a quick look at contemporary China shows this easily). The socialist society that revolutionary communists must construct will be a far livelier and more invigorating place for the masses and for the intellectuals than any of the reactionary societies in the world today, whether they be “liberal democracies” like India or the U.S. or revisionist prisons like China or North Korea.

Every state consists of a dictatorship led by a specific class (in alliance with others) and every state requires a specific kind of democracy that corresponds to the interests of the ruling class and the kind of society it is building. This is why Lenin correctly stressed that the proletarian dictatorship is a million times more democratic than the most liberal of bourgeois democracies. The crucial question is *democracy for whom and for what aim?* What is needed is democracy among the broad ranks of the masses and dictatorship over the small number of exploiters, a democracy that energizes society and mobilizes all of the diverse and contradictory features that can help propel the society forward along the socialist road toward communism. The kind of dictatorship and the kind of democracy needed are those that reflect the truth Lenin was getting at when he said communism springs forth from “every pore”. We do not need the empty shell of bourgeois democracy where the exploiting classes and their socio-economic system set the terms and the limits of political life and discourse and that reduces the masses’ participation in politics to an occasional vote or demonstration.⁸

⁸ Bob Avakian has done important work on the subject of democracy as well as re-envisioning the process of socialist revolution including bringing forward the concept of “a solid core with a lot of elasticity”. In addition to the works on democracy cited above, see his discussion of the socialist revolution in, among other recent writings, “Making Revolution and Emancipating Humanity” in *Revolution and Communism: A Foundation and Strategic Orientation* (2008).

The Election Miracle?

The most significant event that took place since we sent our letter of March 19, 2008 has been the Constituent Assembly elections, the emergence of the CPN(M) as the largest party in the country and the subsequent formation of a government with Comrade Prachanda at its head.

One leading comrade of the CPN(M) described this as "the election miracle". And indeed, we ourselves, like many other observers, were surprised by the result.

We had written in our March 19 letter: "The most likely result is that the CPN(M) will be defeated 'fairly' at the elections... If in the extremely unlikely event that the Party did come to occupy the key positions of government through this electoral process the very alliance required, the entanglement in bourgeois political institutions and with the 'international community' will ensure that there is no transfer of power to the proletariat and the oppressed classes and no basis for the state to carry out the revolutionary transformation of society."

What our party had predicted as "extremely unlikely", that is the emergence of a CPN(M)-led government, has come into being.

We were wrong to introduce a specific prediction of the election result in our previous letter. Not only did this prediction turn out to be wrong, it weakens the essential and correct point we were making in that letter including in the paragraph cited above—that the Constituent Assembly (CA) process could not lead to the peaceful transfer of power to the proletariat and masses of Nepal and would instead *legitimize* the reactionary bourgeois state. Advancing an election prediction, whether or not it turned out to be correct, feeds into the very pragmatism that is such a problem in the Party—judging tactics and policy by whether they "work" (or seem to work) rather than by whether they correspond to fundamental objectives.

The "mandate" that the Party obtained through the CA vehicle is not a mandate for completing the new-democratic revolution. While it is true that the revolutionary masses of Nepal voted for the CPN(M) out of the love and respect won in the course of the People's War, the deferential treatment of the CPN(M) by the bourgeoisie, imperialists and India came not from having waged a People's War but from having *stopped* one. Any support from the middle classes and others for the Party on this basis (having stopped the war) will not further propel the Party toward completing the revolution but act as a brake on it.

“Without A People’s Army the People Have Nothing”

The form of the state has been changed from monarchy to republic, but this does not represent

the fulfilling of the new-democratic revolution. Far from it. The current state represents *the perfecting of the old reactionary state*, shorn of its monarchical costume, and this is true regardless of what political party sits at the top this state – this is a theme which we developed at length in our letter of March 19, 2008. This new state system is objectively the continuation and perfecting of the old state, and as such it has no choice except to enforce the old reactionary economic and social relations, and it can never be a vehicle for their destruction. Meanwhile the very structures of power that had been established during the People’s War to enforce the class interests of the masses of the people have been dismantled. Without a new state power in the hands of the masses it is impossible for society to be revolutionized: as Lenin put it, without political power all is illusion.

Nowhere is this clearer than when examining the pillar on which this state stands—the (formerly Royal now republican) Nepal Army. All of Marxism as well as contemporary social experience teaches again and again that it is the armed forces that are the central and decisive element of any state. The People’s Liberation Army, which had been the pillar of the new state that was being forged in the base areas, has been confined to cantonments and is now threatened with liquidation through the process of "integration" into the old reactionary army. Without the PLA it will be impossible to protect the transformations that have already taken place in the base areas, to say nothing of extending them throughout the whole country. We should never forget Mao's words that, “without a People's Army, the people have nothing”, nor the great sacrifices that were required to build up a powerful PLA in Nepal.

Any idea that the Nepal Army, even if it swallows up and digests part of the PLA, can be transformed into a People's Army, that it will become, in essence, anything other than what it always has been, is worse than ridiculous, it is extremely dangerous. As noted earlier, the role of the Nepal Army will be to continue to *enforce* the dominant social and production relations that keep the masses enslaved.

Nor can we accept the argument concerning the “two sides” of the Nepal Army—that it has always been undemocratic in its defense of feudal oppression (true) but that it has defended the interests of the nation (untrue).⁹ The fact is that the (Royal) Nepal Army has been the pillar of defending the decrepit reactionary social system, which, at least in the modern period, has been entirely dominated by the world imperialist system. To talk of “preserving the independence” of a comprador, bureaucrat capitalist state has a very restricted meaning. No fundamental national independence can come about unless and until this old system is uprooted and the whole network that keeps Nepal ensnared in the world imperialist system is broken. Doesn’t the role of the (Royal) Nepal Army in providing soldiers for UN “peacekeeping missions”, which the new government has most unfortunately pledged to maintain, show the real

⁹ See Red Star, Number 14, “The Essentials for Fusing Two Armies”.

relationship between the reactionary army and the world imperialist system?

Time and again we have seen the inseparable link in the oppressed countries between achieving the social emancipation of the masses and waging the struggle against imperialism—and quite often communists have fallen into the error of supporting this or that reactionary state because of its alleged anti-imperialist character. We should not forget the tragic experience of the comrades of Iran giving support to the Khomeini regime because of a mistaken view of Khomeini’s “anti-imperialist aspect”.¹⁰ Exactly because imperialism is a world system that is ever more deeply penetrating all aspects of the social and economic structure, it is impossible for meaningful social transformation to take place without a radical rupture with imperialism, and, conversely, reactionary so-called “anti-imperialist” states have a strong tendency to compromise, capitulate or collapse in the face of imperialist aggression and bullying. The achievement of genuine national independence is inseparable from the liberation of the masses and can never be obtained by a reactionary army.

No, the task of “smashing” the old state apparatus, the seizure of political power by force, has been and remains the crucial first great task of the revolution in Nepal, as in all other countries. We have not been convinced that the line of fighting for a “transitional state” has in any way hastened or facilitated the fulfillment of this task. On the contrary, the “transition” that we have seen is a transition to a more fully consolidated bourgeois order and, unfortunately, raises the danger of the transformation of the CPN(M) itself from a force that led the masses in fighting against the old order into a force for the preservation of this old order in its present Republican skin.

Part of the Rebirth of Revolutionary Communism or Part of its Burial?

The current conjuncture of the revolution in Nepal must be seen in this context of the crossroads now facing the entire international communist movement. It is coming at a time when, thirty years after the defeat of proletarian rule in Mao's China and after decades of relentless anti-communist assault by the imperialists and their apologists the world over, the whole international communist movement has reached a low point in the effectiveness of its struggle and, most importantly, in its ideological clarity and its resolve to fulfill its revolutionary objectives.

As it was put in a recent *Manifesto* from our Party,

“The temporary defeat of socialism and the end of the first stage of the communist revolution has ...among other things... led to lowered sights and low dreams. Even among many people who once would have known better and would have striven higher, it has led, in the short run, to

¹⁰ The comrades of the Communist Party of Iran (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) have summed up at length the error of their predecessor organization, the Union of Iran Communists, in this regard.

acceptance of the idea that—in reality and at least for the foreseeable future—there can be no alternative to the world as it is, under the domination of imperialism and other exploiters. That the most one can hope for and work for are some secondary adjustments within the framework of accommodation to this system. That anything else—and especially the attempt to bring about a revolutionary rupture out of the confines of this system, aiming toward a radically different, communist world—is unrealistic and is bound to bring disaster.”¹¹

The necessity and desirability of completely sweeping away capitalist exploitation and radically transforming the whole planet is greater than ever before but the possibility of such a revolutionary transformation is not seen or is denied. Complex new problems in making revolution have emerged—for example the massive trend toward urbanization in the oppressed countries—while the very conditions of capitalism and imperialism's breakneck “triumphal” development of the last several decades has actually further prepared the ground for the victory of the proletarian revolution by furthering the great class cleavages, by tying the destinies of the masses of people in different countries even more tightly together, and by ever more clearly revealing the world capitalist system as an obstacle to the further advance of human society.

We must prepare and lead a whole wave of proletarian revolution that can show both in its vision and in its practice how it will be possible to take society to a completely different place. It is in this light that the revolution in Nepal must be seen. If it can clarify its objectives and overcome its current predicament, the revolution in Nepal will rekindle hopes in the ranks of the genuine communists and conscious revolutionary masses the world over. The People’s War fueled the hope that, after several decades in which the imperialists and the reactionary ruling classes have controlled every country on the earth, a new state was being born where the masses of the people led by the proletariat and its vanguard communist party would hold power. The People’s War cracked open the door to see how political power in the hands of the masses could be used to thoroughly uproot the old semi-feudal and capitalist social relations and build a radically different society opposed to the world imperialist system, a beacon for the revolutionary masses in the volatile South Asian region. But the revisionism and eclecticism from the leadership of the CPN(M) is snuffing out this very hope and instead is reinforcing the message of the international bourgeoisie that there is no real alternative to the imperialist system, that the only real possibility is to improve the position of the country (or really that of its ruling class) *within* this imperialist system.

In this letter we will only briefly protest against the present international line of the CPN(M) leadership. It has been shown over and over again that the international orientation of a political party is not a minor matter somehow unconnected to its overall ideological and political line. Today we see the CPN(M) leadership presenting imperialist and reactionary enemies as friends

¹¹ *Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage, A Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, September 2008.

and even treating some of them as “strategic allies” of the revolution. How are we to understand the many speeches and articles justifying the suppression of the masses in Tibet¹² or worse, those extolling the “wonders” that China has accomplished under revisionist rule? And not a word¹³ about the tens of thousands of Chinese children poisoned by the milk adulterated by the capitalists or those buried under the rubble of schools built by unscrupulous contractors.

We often hear comrades of the CPN(M) justify this or that tactic on a national or international scale in order to “make use of contradictions among the enemies”. Certainly this is a necessary and correct part of revolutionary tactics, but only if those tactics flow from the fundamental strategic interests of the proletarian revolution and if those tactics do not violate revolutionary communist principles.

New Synthesis or Tired Old Bourgeois Democracy?

One of the great tragedies of the great right turn in the CPN(M) has been that instead of helping the revival of the communist movement internationally by showing the viability of a revolutionary communist orientation, which the People’ War objectively did in large measure, the Party’s present line and practice is only strengthening the “anti-communist verdict” that the imperialists and reactionaries have tried to impose throughout the world, especially following the defeat in China and the collapse of the USSR.¹⁴

Now, when the first wave of proletarian revolution that began with the Paris Commune and continued through the Cultural Revolution in China has ended and a new wave of proletarian revolution has yet to break forth, questions of ideology have taken on a particular importance. Bob Avakian has stepped forward to the challenge of summing up the tremendous experience of the first wave of proletarian revolution, its grievous shortcomings as well as its heroic accomplishments, and has brought forward a new synthesis. To quote from our party’s *Manifesto*, “there is an analogy to what was done by Marx at the beginning of the communist movement—establishing in the new conditions that exist, after the end of the first stage of the communist revolution, a theoretical framework for the renewed advance of that revolution. But today, and with this new synthesis, it is most emphatically not a matter of ‘back to the drawing

¹² We are well aware of the fact that the US imperialists and others are making use of the reactionary nature of the Tibetan leadership, especially the Dalai Lama, to put pressure on China and manipulate the discontent of the Tibetan masses. But this does not change the fact that real national oppression exists in Tibet, nor does it justify the vicious repression by the Chinese authorities.

¹³ Here we can only speak of the English language materials of the CPN(M). If such exposure of the true nature of capitalist China has appeared in Nepali publications we would like to have them pointed out to us.

¹⁴ Although the USSR had long previously become a revisionist, social-imperialist superpower, the fact that its leaders still referred to themselves as “communists” made the collapse of this regime and the unchallenged hegemony of the US and other “Western democracies” an occasion for further anti communist “summation” from the Western imperialists and other reactionaries.

board’, as if what is called for is throwing out both the historical experience of the communist movement and the socialist societies it brought into being and ‘the rich body of revolutionary scientific theory’ that developed through this first wave. That would represent an unscientific, and in fact a reactionary, approach. Rather, what is required—and what Avakian has undertaken—is building on all that has gone before, theoretically and practically, drawing the positive and the negative lessons from this, and raising this to a new, higher level of synthesis.”

But unfortunately, the leadership of the CPN(M) has adopted an opposite approach that accepts the unscientific anti-communist verdicts of the international bourgeoisie and renounces the dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transition toward socialism and communism. Instead, the very old ideology of bourgeois democracy is being presented as “Communism of the 21st Century” and the actual communism of the 21st century as it is concretely emerging is being ignored, belittled or opposed.

“Emancipators of Humanity” Or Builders of a New Switzerland?

One of the central points that Bob Avakian has been emphasizing as part of the new synthesis that he has been bringing forward is the crucial importance of communists seeing themselves and training the proletariat to be “emancipators of humanity”. This is far different from seeing the role of the revolution as simply improving the lot of the specific section of the masses who have supported it. Yes, the revolution must and will dramatically improve the lives of the masses of people and, in fact, capitalist development will not bring about a better life for the majority. In desperately poor Nepal the question of lifting the heavy burden of poverty is a crucial part of any revolutionary transformation.

A basic question is whether development must come by being *more integrated* into the capitalist and imperialist system—that is by welcoming and organizing more capitalist exploitation—or whether the socialist road is actually possible: building a viable and emancipatory social and economic system that in a fundamental sense is *opposed* to the world capitalist system.

This is one of the reasons we find it so strange to see the CPN(M) promising the “ten, twenty, forty” to the masses (doubling the gross national product in ten years, doubling it again in the following ten years and “reaching the level of Switzerland” within forty years). Not only would this imply a growth rate far greater than has ever been achieved before, such as in China under Mao, but it implies that the imperialists will actually *help* bring these developments about. In fact, repeated experience in the real world shows that wherever the imperialist system reaches, backwardness and poverty are far from eradicated, even if “bubbles” of development grow and benefit a minority of urban dwellers.

Now, bit-by-bit, it is being revealed that this transformation will be possible by becoming the

“dynamic link” between India and China. So what is this really saying? It is saying that by making Nepal a functioning, “dynamic” part of the world imperialist system, somehow the country will benefit from the capitalist development of India and China and their interrelation. This dream is both impossible and reactionary. Even if the reactionary states and the imperialists were persuaded to accept this model, it would certainly be a relative handful of the wealthy in Kathmandu Valley who would be part of this “dynamic link”, while the great majority of the population would be left to rot in the countryside or in the slums. With China and India both hellholes for the masses of people in the countryside and the slums, why would the “dynamic link” between them be any different? Is this really what is in the interests of the masses in Nepal? How does this model fit with the task of promoting revolution in India, China and elsewhere?

Not only is this vision based completely on a model of vigorous uninterrupted capitalism, this goal of becoming a Switzerland is itself quite revealing. After all, what is Switzerland? It is a small highly parasitic and reactionary imperialist state that has grown very wealthy due to its particular position as a major center of banking and finance of the world imperialist system, located in the heart of imperialist Europe. Does such a goal and vision have anything to do with achieving communism? In other words, a country can only become a “Switzerland” based on achieving a privileged position in the imperialist world and *sharing* in the plunder of the majority of mankind. Is this really what the masses in Nepal have fought for? How does this goal help emancipate humanity?

It is ironic that at the very moment the CPN(M) leadership is seeking a development model based on the continued and uninterrupted development of imperialism, the crisis of world capitalism is exploding all around them. Capitalist China and India will also suffer as the contradictions of world capitalism catch up with it, and even the dream of a Nepalese “dynamic hub” between these two reactionary states could well explode in a puff of smoke.

It is impossible to overestimate the role a genuine proletarian revolutionary state could make in *transforming* the still mainly unfavorable international situation. Such a regime may not be able to set growth records for capitalist development, but it could take giant steps forward, and quickly, to solve many of the most basic problems of the masses, such as food security, employment within the country, sanitation, basic health services in the rural areas, and much more. The existence of such a state, even a small one like Nepal, would rekindle hope among the oppressed masses, especially in the region, and demonstrate that a revolutionary path is possible.

So the choice is between pursuing a path of integration into the capitalist system, which *might* benefit relatively small strata, or pursuing a development path based on the interests and needs of *the great majority* of the people *in opposition* to the world capitalist system. Yes, this latter, socialist, road is difficult, and there is no guarantee of how events will unfold. But we *are*

guaranteed that a capitalist Nepal can only mean misery for the majority, and a state based on this economic system cannot help but be one more link in the web of relations that keep the world enslaved to the world imperialist system.

When we say that the dominant line of the CPN(M) leadership represents a “bourgeois” orientation, we are not hurling insults or impugning the character of the comrades. We are simply stressing what we consider to be a scientific evaluation of the incorrect line they are leading: the conception of “pure democracy” standing apart from and “above” the cleavage of society into classes corresponds to the capitalist mode of production and not to the communist outlook based on the goal of surpassing class divisions. And so we are not at all surprised that the Party leadership is now loudly proclaiming the benefits of capitalism and proposing concrete programs for the acceleration of capitalism in the country. What we have seen in the recent months is nothing other than the first “fruits” of the tree of capitalism under this line and leadership, and you can be sure that other, ever more sour fruits will be sure to follow.

Despite the claims of the CPN(M) leaders that they are aiming eventually to achieve a communist society, in truth they completely confound democracy and communism. They are themselves prisoners of their own world outlook. Furthermore, the CPN(M) leadership is falling into the age-old revisionist error that the achievement of communism depends primarily on the further advance of the productive forces, to be achieved by capitalist ends. This is precisely the line that Mao and the revolutionaries in China fought out in the course of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution against Liu Shao-chi and later Deng Xiao-ping.

Earlier in the history of the Chinese revolution, the question was clearly posed as to whether it would be possible to build socialism in a backward country. Indeed, Mao's whole thesis of new democracy was based very much on showing how it was possible to do so and, of course, he then went about doing so in practice. In the course of the Cultural Revolution Mao raised the slogan “grasp revolution, promote production”, thus correctly showing that the productive forces of society could be unleashed by further revolutionary transformation—the exact opposite of the argument that many are making in Nepal now that development must come by capitalist means.

Two-Line Struggle or “Three Lines”?

One of the particularities of centrism and eclecticism is its refusal to make a clear-cut demarcation between Marxism and revisionism, but instead to try to carve out a position “half-way” between a revolutionary communist ideology and politics and outright capitulation and opportunism. In Nepal it is this form of centrist revisionism that has become the greater danger, not those who unabashedly proclaim their adhesion to the ideology of multiparty democracy and the glories of capitalism. The tired refrain is that there is the danger of revisionism or rightism “on the one hand”, but there is also the danger of “dogmatism” on the other, and that by

skillfully maneuvering between these two obstacles the Party has gone from victory to victory. Or, there is the recognition-in-words of fundamental principles, the “ABCs of Marxism”, such as the need to smash the existing state apparatus, while the Party’s actual policy goes completely contrary to this goal.

This brings us back to the argument we and other comrades have raised regarding the CPN(M)’s repudiation of the Maoist principle of “one divides into two”. The belief in the possibility and even necessity of reconciling or “fusing” together antagonist opposites has become a deeply engrained part of the CPN(M) leadership’s approach.¹⁵ The fusion of Marxism and reformism is really not a brilliant new contribution to the communist movement. It is just one more unfortunate and tragic case where the communist leadership has lost its bearings.

We should remind comrades that every revisionist party always has a “left” whose role objectively is to provide an outlet for the discontent of the masses and sections of the rank and file, while keeping these same sections bound to the political program of the party leadership. The point is not the lack of sincerity of those who still try to combine justification and support of the CPN(M)’s objectively capitulationist line with language upholding proletarian revolution. The problem is that such language in support of revolution becomes meaningless, a mere deception of oneself and others, unless it is combined with an all-out struggle against the very revisionism that is threatening the advance of the revolution.

Eclecticism and centrism, especially when raised to the level of philosophical approach and principle as is the case with the CPN(M) leadership, do not represent a position that is “half correct” or somehow more correct than an openly revisionist position. On the contrary, it is a form of revisionism in which an anti-Marxist ideology and political line are allowed to flourish and are actually determining the course of political action, while better sounding *words* serve to cover over this reality and confuse the masses and comrades. Lenin’s words, which the Chinese comrades often referred to during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, are cruel but unfortunately right on target: “In falsifying Marxism in opportunist fashion, the substitution of eclecticism for dialectics is the easiest way of deceiving the people. It gives an illusory satisfaction; it seems to take into account all sides of the process, all trends of development, all the conflicting influences, and so forth, whereas in reality it provides no integral and revolutionary conception of the process of social development at all.”¹⁶

Yes, there is a marked tendency toward dogmatism in the ranks of RIM and the ICM more generally. But the CPN(M) “solution” is not the antidote to the dogmatic disease. A dogmatic refusal to make a “concrete analysis of concrete conditions” as Lenin referred to “the living soul

¹⁵ See the argument that the CPN(M) made on this question in their reply to our October 2005 letter and the criticism of this point in both our letter of March 19, 2008. This point has also been made by some RIM comrades.

¹⁶ Lenin, “The State and Revolution”, Collected Works, Vol. 25, p. 405.

of Marxism” has often gone hand-in-hand with revisionist political positions.

Rather than look to find a “middle ground” between two opposite forms of revisionism, be it the classic rightist form or sterile dogmatism, and end up incorporating the worst features of each, we propose that comrades focus their attention on what is in common between these “mirror opposite” forms of revisionism. The *Manifesto* recently issued by our Party points to the following *common features* of both forms of revisionism prevalent in the ICM as a whole:

“** Never taking up—or never engaging in any systematic way with—a scientific summation of the previous stage of the communist movement, and in particular Mao Tsetung's path-breaking analysis concerning the danger of and basis for capitalist restoration in socialist society. Thus, while they may uphold—or may in the past have upheld—the Cultural Revolution in China, they lack any real, or profound, understanding of why this Cultural Revolution was necessary and why and with what principles and objectives Mao initiated and led this Cultural Revolution. They reduce this Cultural Revolution to, in effect, just another episode in the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat—or, on the other hand, reinterpret it as some kind of bourgeois-democratic ‘anti-bureaucracy’ movement, which in essence represents a negation of the need for a communist vanguard and its institutionalized leading role in socialist society, throughout the transition to communism.

“** The common tendency to reduce ‘Maoism’ to just a prescription for waging people's war in a Third World country, while again ignoring, or diminishing the importance of, Mao's most important contribution to communism: his development of the theory and line of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, and all the rich analysis and scientific method that underlay and made possible the development of that theory and line.

“** Positivism, pragmatism, and empiricism. While again, this may take different expressions in accordance with different particular erroneous viewpoints and approaches, what is common to them is the vulgarization and degradation of theory—reducing it to a ‘guide to practice’ only in the most narrow and immediate sense, treating theory as, in essence, a direct outgrowth of particular practice, and attempting to establish an equivalence between advanced practice (which itself, especially on these people's part, involves an element of subjective and arbitrary evaluation) and supposedly advanced theory. A scientific communist, materialist and dialectical, viewpoint leads to the understanding that practice is the ultimate point of origin and point of verification of theory; but, in opposition to these narrow, empiricist distortions, this must be understood to mean practice in the broad sense, encompassing broad social and historical experience, and not simply the direct experience of a particular individual, group, party, or nation. The very founding, and the further development of, communist theory itself is a powerful demonstration of this: From the time of Marx, this theory has been forged and enriched by drawing from a broad array of experience, in a wide range of fields and over a broad expanse of historical development, in society and nature. Practice as the source of theory and the maxim that ‘practice is the criterion of truth’ can be, and will be, turned into a profound untruth if this is

interpreted and applied in a narrow, empiricist, and subjective manner.

“** Very significantly, these ‘mirror opposite’ erroneous tendencies have in common being mired in, or retreating into, models of the past, of one kind or another (even if the particular models may differ): either clinging dogmatically to the past experience of the first stage of the communist revolution—or, rather, to an incomplete, one-sided, and ultimately erroneous understanding of that—or retreating into the whole past era of bourgeois revolution and its principles: going back to what are in essence 18th century theories of (bourgeois) democracy, in the guise, or in the name, of ‘21st-century communism’, in effect equating this ‘21st-century communism’ with a democracy that is supposedly ‘pure’ or ‘classless’—a democracy which, in reality, as long as classes exist, can only mean bourgeois democracy, and bourgeois dictatorship. All this while ignoring, treating as outdated, or dismissing as dogma (or consigning to the meaningless category of the ‘ABCs of communism’, which are acknowledged as an abstraction and then put to the side as irrelevant to the practical struggle) the fundamental, scientific communist understanding, paid for literally and repeatedly in the blood of millions of the oppressed from the time of the Paris Commune, that the old, reactionary state must be smashed and dismantled and a radically new state must be brought into being, representing the revolutionary interests of the formerly exploited in transforming all of society and emancipating all of humanity, or else any gains of the revolutionary struggle will be squandered and destroyed, and the revolutionary forces decimated.”¹⁷

In Summation: Fight to Save the Revolution!

It is true that now that the Party has dug itself such a big hole it will be difficult to dig out. But however difficult this task may be, the only solution is a real radical rupture, a revolution in thinking, a determined and protracted effort to criticize and repudiate the revisionist orientation that has been increasingly dominating the Party ideologically, politically and organizationally. Anything short of such a determined effort, any attempts to maneuver and “finesse” away from the abyss without confronting the magnitude and source of the problem will not only fail to avoid the impending disaster but will actually be ideologically and politically paralyzing. “Half-solutions” are no solution at all and, on the contrary, part of the problem.

We are not in a position to comment on what tactics or immediate steps the CPN(M) should take in the present situation. But we are convinced that if fundamental clarity is achieved on the vital questions of the state and revolution, the comrades in Nepal can find appropriate means to reverse the current path. The CPN(M) enjoys a tremendous reservoir of support from among the

¹⁷ We strongly encourage comrades to study *Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage, A Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, which includes our party’s understanding of the overall situation of the international communist movement in today’s juncture and discusses the lessons of a major struggle within our own party to uphold and advance communist principles.

masses of the people of the whole country. The People's War ignited the hopes of the long downtrodden and unleashed them. The *masses* of the poor peasantry, the oppressed nationalities, women and oppressed castes need the revolution to go forward and will never be satisfied by a few representatives in parliament or government. The PLA is in peril, but it has not yet fallen victim to the conspiracies to dissolve it. And despite the efforts of the Party leadership to pander to the *backward* ideas of the urban middle classes (especially their illusions about "pure democracy"), experience has shown that the educated youth, intellectuals and others from the middle strata can be won to the side of the revolution on a *positive basis* by showing how their interests can best be fulfilled not by aborting the revolution but by carrying it through to its victory. Despite the great damage of the wrong line in command of the Party, a strong objective basis remains to rescue the revolution and carry it through to the establishment of a revolutionary state led by the proletariat and its vanguard.

On the other hand, unless the Party abandons its current confusion on the nature of the state, on the class nature of dictatorship and democracy, on the confounding of the socialist road and the capitalist road, and the confusion of friends and enemies on the international scale, all efforts to rectify the present state of affairs will be in vain. It will not be possible to reduce the fever without attacking the underlying sickness that is causing it.

The main form that revisionism has been taking in Nepal—and a major problem in our Movement as a whole—has been eclecticism and centrism. While some leaders of the Party have all along expressed their support for the political system of bourgeois democracy and their belief in the necessity for the country to pass through a whole stage of capitalism, the greater problem has been those in the Party leadership who have floundered ideologically—confusing bourgeois democracy with the new-democratic dictatorship, combining two into one, confusing strategy and tactics, confounding secondary and principal aspects of a contradiction, talking one language in private and another in public, and in general saying one thing and doing another.

The problem can be overcome, but only if a *radical rupture* takes place with the current dominant centrism and eclectics. This means that a pressing and immediate task is the ideological reaffirmation of the basic goals of the proletarian revolution as distinct from bourgeois democracy, reaffirming the new-democratic revolution as the vehicle for achieving this in Nepal, and reaffirming the basic means to accomplish the revolution. On this basis it will be possible to sweep away the cobwebs of revisionism, eclecticism and centrism and really meet the challenges of communism of the 21st century. It is worthwhile recalling that one of the main focal points of the final ferocious struggle against the capitalist roaders in China was the debate over the dictatorship of the proletariat. Chang Chun-chiao, one of the main leaders of Mao's revolutionary headquarters in the party, spoke sharply to some of the other party leaders who were not playing a good role in the struggle. He pointed out: some of you consider the study of the dictatorship of the proletariat to be a "flexible task", but the capitalist roaders understand

very clearly that it is an “inflexible task” with life and death implications for the revolution. Similarly, the current debate concerning the path forward in Nepal is no less vital.

Our comrades in Nepal are caught in a swamp and in dire danger of drowning. And what has been the reaction of RIM comrades in other countries to this emergency? While a few have tried to assist as best they can, unfortunately some others have thrown flowers to the floundering comrades when what they critically need is a strong rope to pull themselves out of the swamp. The necessary rope exists: it is nothing other than the revolutionary communist ideological and political line, its stand, viewpoint and method. It is a scientific understanding of the world and the revolutionary process, which is constantly developing as it steadfastly upholds and builds upon the achievements as well as summing up the positive and negative experiences of the first wave of proletarian revolution, incorporates discoveries and advances in every sphere of human endeavor and confronts both new problems of revolution and old problems in new forms. The current two-line struggle within the CPN(M) is taking place within the context of the greater question of whether, and on what basis, a whole new wave of world proletarian revolution can be brought forward.

The experience of the revolution in Nepal is very rich indeed, and one can see the real-life implications of political and ideological line, both positively through the ten years of People’s War and more recently negatively in the period of dismantling the people’s power. Nevertheless, the belief that the advanced practice of the Nepal revolution has made it unnecessary to learn from advanced understanding from other comrades is part of the pragmatism and empiricism that has, unfortunately, been a growing part of the CPN(M) leadership’s ideological orientation for some time now. Any effort to resolve the crisis in the CPN(M) only “on its own terms”, and on nationalist or empiricist grounds to ignore or resist the advanced revolutionary communist understanding developing elsewhere is to severely handicap the struggle for a correct line. In particular, we sincerely hope that the comrades of the CPN(M) will give serious attention to engaging with the body of work, method and approach, the new synthesis, that Bob Avakian has been bringing forward.

We will conclude by sending our warm greetings to the leaders, cadres and fighters of the CPN(M) at this crucial crossroads of the revolution and our hopes that the crucial struggle will be carried through to a successful conclusion. The correct political and ideological line is capable of transforming the present direction of the Party and avoiding the abyss. Those who have played a revolutionary role in the past can, if armed with a correct line, cast off the baggage of eclecticism, pragmatism and centrism and retake the revolutionary road. But this will only be achieved by fighting through for the necessary radical rupture. We pledge again to do everything we can to assist you in this struggle, which will not only determine the future for Nepal but is inseparable from the crucial questions that are now facing the entire international communist movement.

Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

4 November 2008

Editor's Note:

These letters are as they originally appeared with the exception of spelling and grammatical corrections and the deletion of a few citations internal to RIM publications.

19 March 2008

To the Participating Parties and Organizations of the RIM

Comrades,

For some time now our Party has been greatly disturbed by the direction the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN[M]) has been taking in terms of its political and ideological positions and the policies that flow from them. Many of our concerns about fundamental questions were expressed in a letter sent to the comrades of the CPN(M) in October 2005. That letter was written before the April 2006 anti-monarchy movement and the subsequent ceasefire, the adoption of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the joining of the interim Nepal government and other developments. However much the CPN(M) comrades laid out that our Party is simply unable to understand their “creative tactics”, in reality our debate with the CPN(M) around points of theory and basic line preceded their practice over the last two years. The CPN(M) has a theory leading to a series of steps down a path whose final outcome is coming into sharper and sharper focus. It is the CPN(M)'s political and ideological line, and not this or that tactic, which was and remains the central focus of our struggle.

One of the central political questions we raised in our debate with the CPN(M) was whether the current stage of the struggle is for the establishment of a new-democratic republic, that is, the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat appropriate in the conditions of Nepal, or whether the revolution must “pass through” the process of consolidating a bourgeois democratic republic. This question that we were debating in theory has, over the last two years, taken on flesh and bones. *Two states* had emerged in the course of the ten year-long People's War: the old reactionary comprador-bureaucrat-capitalist-feudal state led by the monarchy in league with imperialism, and the embryonic new-democratic state that had emerged in the countryside on the basis of the strength of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The objective question facing Nepal is *which* of these states will emerge victorious and be consolidated on a nationwide level and which of them will be defeated. The great tragedy is that the political line and muddled thinking of the comrades of the CPN(M) has to a large degree *delegitimized* the revolutionary state that had emerged in the countryside and *relegitimized* the dictatorship of the reactionary classes linked to the world imperialist system. The Party is now focused on the upcoming Constituent Assembly (CA) whose task is precisely to consolidate a bourgeois democratic republic, with all that that means in the conditions of the oppressed countries.

Over the past two years and more our Party has conducted a continual struggle with the comrades of the CPN(M) within the framework of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) and we will continue to do so to the best of our capacity.

We are convinced that unless the CPN(M) makes a radical rupture with its present course, unless it repudiates a series of conceptions that have been guiding it in the past period, the tremendous accomplishments of the People's War in Nepal will be squandered, and the great hopes that the revolution in Nepal has lit among the masses of that country and many others worldwide will be dashed once again. Indeed, this process of the undoing of the revolution and its transformation into something else is already well advanced.

Despite this heartbreaking trajectory it is late but *not too late* for the comrades in Nepal to radically change directions. This is the pressing and immediate task without which it is impossible to lead the revolution to a successful conclusion.

It goes without saying that the outcome of the struggle now unfolding in Nepal will be felt far beyond the borders of that country. The comrades in Nepal have been an important component of RIM since its formation and our Movement has been deeply engaged with the ideological and political questions as they have emerged in connection with the launching and unfolding of the People's War in that country. As the comrades of the CPN(M) have themselves often put it, the outcome of the revolution in Nepal is a common responsibility of the whole RIM.

It is in this spirit that our Party is continuing the struggle, in order to have a constructive impact on the situation in Nepal and fight for the RIM and all of the parties that make it up to accept their responsibilities to wage a fierce and substantial struggle against the line that has been in command in the CPN(M). After all, RIM has rightfully declared itself the embryonic political center of the world's Maoist forces and has tried to live up to this great task. What meaning would this have if our Movement were to remain silent and passive, or worse yet cheering along, as an important party of our Movement takes decisions of a tragic dimension with such profound consequences for a revolution we hold so dear? Of what meaning is "proletarian internationalism" and "international solidarity" if it does not have as its bedrock the need to cry "halt" when the precious achievements of the revolution are being destroyed?

On one level, the positions and policies of the CPN(M) over the last two years are, or should be, recognizable as a departure from basic Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (MLM) principles and the very basis on which our Movement was formed. The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of November 2006 in which the organs of political power built up through a decade of People's War were dismantled, in which the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was confined to cantonments and most of its weapons locked up under UN supervision, the "legitimization" of the old army, the old parliament and the old state generally, redefining the goal of the People's War as the establishment of a (bourgeois) "federal democratic republic" (under the CPN[M] slogan of "restructuring the state"), the promotion of a whole series of erroneous positions on crucial questions of the nature of the state, elections and so forth—all of this does, or should, cause any communist more than just alarm. And indeed a great many comrades have, in one form or another, expressed their "concerns" or reservations about the direction of events in Nepal. But the particular form of the leading line in the Party, as we will explain, is characterized

essentially by eclecticism in philosophy—the merging and reconciliation of opposites, put simply, to “combine two into one” instead of the Marxist method of “dividing one into two.” The CPN(M) leaders listen politely to the “concerns” of comrades, thank those who offer them, assure others of their commitments to our common communist objectives and then proceed ever deeper into the quicksand. Unfortunately, the main reaction of many comrades of other parties has been to accept the hollow assurances of the Party leadership.

In the most recent period, as the Party has geared up for its Constituent Assembly electoral campaign, the promotion of revisionist positions has reached new heights. When our Party pointed out in our previous letter why we felt that the CPN(M)’s line and policies were wrong and contrary to Marxist principles, we were told that all we had done is repeat the “ABCs of Marxism”. This is true to an important degree: substituting the goal of a “federal democratic republic” for new-democratic revolution led by the proletariat is something that anyone the least familiar with Marxism could fairly easily recognize to be contrary to Marxist principles. Later, we will examine why so many of the parties and organizations of RIM seem to find this departure from the “ABCs of Marxism” tolerable—if not laudable.

As mentioned earlier, our dispute with the comrades of the CPN(M) did not begin with their decision to sign the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the Seven Party Alliance, the main representatives (except the king) of the reactionary classes in Nepal. A discussion within the CPN(M) intensified in 2005, which the Party characterized as a “two line struggle.” In particular one of the protagonists in this struggle, Comrade Baburam Bhattarai, published a comprehensive article entitled “The Question of Building a New Type of State” which, in our opinion, represented a basic departure from a correct Marxist understanding of the state, democracy and the proletarian dictatorship. In hopes of contributing to the discussion that was then underway in the Party, we wrote our criticism of that article, along with our criticism of the proposal for the “demobilizing of the PLA and the Royal Nepal Army” and eventually merging them into one.¹ At more or less the same time our letter was received, the CPN(M) held a Central Committee meeting which resolved the two-line struggle with what represented, in our opinion, the adoption of the line argued in the “New State” article in an *eclectic form*. The explanation in the resolution of that meeting was that the line adopted of going for a “democratic republic” and a “transitional state” was only “tactical” but that the “strategy” remained one of new democracy, socialism and communism.

This eclecticism in politics and ideology is reflected throughout the writings and actions of the CPN(M) in the past period. To make things even worse, there is an increasing tendency to identify the “federal democratic republic,” which is most definitely a *bourgeois* republic, with the elimination of exploitation and classes. The tendency toward combining “two into one” is reflected right down to the publication of photos of their leaders smeared with tikka² coupled with the explanation that “red is the color of the proletariat.”

Later we will return at more length to the vital question of eclecticism and the tending to combine “two into one”. For the moment we will simply recall Lenin’s words:

“Dialectics are replaced by eclecticism—this is the most usual, the most widespread practice to be met with in present-day official Social-Democratic literature in relation to Marxism. This sort of substitution is, of course, nothing new: it was observed even in the history of Greek philosophy. In falsifying Marxism in opportunist fashion, the substitution of eclecticism for dialectics is the easiest way of deceiving the people. It gives an illusory satisfaction; it seems to take into account all sides of the process, all trends of development, all the conflicting influences, and so forth, whereas in reality it provides no integral and revolutionary conception of the process of social development at all.” (“The State and Revolution,” *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 405.)

Troubling Tactics In the Pursuit of a Wrong Ideological and Political Line

Many of the articles and documents of the CPN(M) are content to express the goal of the revolution as simply the achieving of a “democratic, federal and proportional” republic. But it is true that there are other articles and speeches, not to mention the frequent informal assurances, such as in the letter to the RCP, that the Party “understands” or aims to achieve new democracy, socialism and communism. Here is where eclecticism plays its role in dulling the vigilance of the communists and the advanced masses. Promises about the final goal are sprinkled here and there, but the operative thing is elections for the Constituent Assembly and throwing all the Party into gear around this.

We will not review all of the arguments made in our previous letter concerning the relationship between strategy and tactics, the danger of tactics eating up strategy, and so forth, other than to encourage the comrades to reread our previous letter in light of the developments of the last two years. In this broader sense tactics, or perhaps better put, *policy*, is a necessary and appropriate arena for discussion and debate within our Movement. Nevertheless, it is the overall question of political and ideological line and not the specific tactics and policy of the CPN(M) that is the central and decisive question.

In the CPN(M)’s reply to our letter, they go so far as to make a principle out of denying this point. The problem with the RCP, according to the Nepalese comrades, is that we address only the level of “strategy,” whereas, the comrades insist, revolutions are *not* won or lost on the strategic level but rather on the level of tactics. The comrades argue, “Frankly speaking, it is very easy not to commit any mistakes in strategy... The test of revolutionaries, including your Party, is best taken by tactics, not strategy. Therefore, the fate of the revolution depends fully not on the strategy alone, but on what kinds of tactical moves one adopts at various junctures of the revolution to attain the strategic goal.”

In reality, history is quite different. Sometimes revolutions are defeated not because of the mistakes of the revolutionaries but because of the unfavorable balance of forces. But in those cases where the subjective factor, that is, the understanding and actions of the revolutionaries, has been the major factor leading to the failure of the revolution, it is often precisely that communists have misidentified the strategic tasks of the revolution, mistaken enemies and friends, or departed from the fundamental path. On the contrary, a tactical blunder can usually be

overcome *unless* it has strategic implications.

In this same vein, the reason we are so disturbed by many of the tactics, or policies, that the CPN(M) has been following in the last period is that these tactics objectively go against the strategic objective of accomplishing the new-democratic revolution.

Despite the CPN(M)'s charge against our Party of dogmatism and inflexibility, we are quite aware of the need, especially in a period of revolutionary upsurge, for tactical flexibility, making use of contradictions among the enemy, reaching broader sections of the masses and creative and daring initiatives in the interests of the proletarian revolution. For example, our Party defended the possibility of ceasefire and negotiations in the course of the People's War in Nepal and more generally.³ It is quite likely that in the specific conditions prevailing after the collapse of the absolute monarchy in April 2006 it would have been difficult and perhaps undesirable to continue uninterruptedly the armed struggle against the Royal Nepalese Army or refuse to enter into negotiations with the Seven Party Alliance. Due to the terror of repression during the People's War, the Party's contact with the masses had been restricted, especially in the urban areas. It was no doubt necessary for the Party to take maximum advantage of the crisis of the ruling class and its political institutions to project its program for the future society and prepare the masses for a revolutionary solution to the institutional crisis. But unfortunately this is not mainly what the Party has done. The nationwide and even international platform that the CPN(M) gained as a result of ten years of People's War and the ensuing April 2006 anti-monarchy movement and political and institutional crises has *not* been used to extol the new form of state in Nepal they had built in the base areas, *not* to expose the bankruptcy of the ruling class forces, and most definitely *not* to draw a clear line of distinction between bourgeois dictatorship and bourgeois democracy, on the one hand, and the proletarian dictatorship and proletarian democracy on the other. We will even go so far as to state that the decision to participate in the Constituent Assembly elections *might* have been necessary and justified *if* it were part of a different and, in fact, opposite, political line in command in the Party.⁴

None of the above is meant to justify the actual policy and tactics that the CPN(M) has been adopting. What we are saying is that these tactics alone, abstracted from their overall political and strategic context, cannot be the basis for judging the line and direction of the CPN(M). *The opposite is true as well: a return to more open combat will not, in and of itself, answer the question of political and ideological line.* It is certainly to be expected that the denouement of the profound institutional crisis in Nepal will not be peaceful. Even run-of-the-mill bourgeois elections in the third world countries are often accompanied by bloodshed. And in Nepal there is every reason to expect social explosions, upheavals and an intensification of class struggle in connection with the Constituent Assembly elections (if they actually take place) or in their aftermath.

One of the reasons for the paralysis of our Movement in the face of the emergence of a wrong line by the CPN(M) seems to be a difficulty in going beyond immediate policies and looking deeper into the ideological and political orientation propelling them. Instead of flipping from

being concerned when the fruits of the revolution are being compromised to being reassured when the conflicts sharpen and flipping back again with the rapid changes of the political situation in Nepal, comrades must, to paraphrase Mao, take the appearance only as the threshold and use dialectical materialism to understand the essence.

It is true that those of us outside Nepal will never be able to fully understand the situation well enough to have strongly formulated opinions on all the many specific questions that arise in the course of the revolution. Our debate with the CPN(M) is focused not on this or that tactic, but on the fundamental questions of the revolution and, most specifically, what kind of state must be established by the revolution. It is because of fundamental errors on *this* level—because of the blurring or even negation of the fundamental goals of the revolution—that the CPN(M) has adopted first one then another erroneous and damaging tactic which has led away from the achievement of the revolutionary goals.

What is the Goal—to “Restructure the State” or to “Smash It”?

One of the phrases that recurs in CPN(M) writings like a leitmotif is the call to “restructure the state.” In fact, this very phrase sharply sums up what is wrong in the CPN(M)’s political program. It is worthwhile reviewing the much-maligned “ABCs of Marxism” in this regard. In summing up the experience of the different revolutions in 19th century Europe, Marx made the very profound observation that “all revolutions *perfected* this machine instead of smashing it” (our emphasis).⁵ What did Marx mean by this?

In particular he was referring to the fact that the several rounds of revolution in Europe and especially France (1789, 1830, and 1848) had resulted in transforming the state machinery to correspond with the capitalist economic base and “perfecting” its ability to fulfill its role as the enforcer of bourgeois dictatorship. Quite clearly Marx is referring to the abolition of the monarchy in much of Europe and the generalization of bourgeois democracy as the “perfection” of the capitalist dictatorship that the state represents. Later Marx specifically draws the lesson of the Commune which was not, in its essence, an effort to further perfect the bourgeois state apparatus in France but rather a first, albeit halting, sometimes irresolute, and ultimately unsuccessful effort to *smash* the bourgeois state machinery and replace it with a different state emerging from the proletarian revolutionary struggle.⁶

At stake in the present debate in Nepal is whether, when all is said and done, the 10 years of People’s War will have served to *smash the reactionary state machinery or perfect it*. To put it quite bluntly, if the result of the war is the consolidation of a bourgeois republic, the tragic result will be that the sacrifice of the people will have served not to establish a new form of proletarian rule but only to “modernize” and “perfect” the very instrument that keeps them oppressed.

The theoretical basis of this confusion between “smashing” and “perfecting” the state apparatus can be seen quite clearly in the October 2005 CC resolution which “resolved” the two-line struggle in the party and laid the basis for the Party’s subsequent policies. In that resolution it is

argued that never in history has a monarchy disappeared without dissolving and defeating” the army on which the state power is based.⁷

This reflects a very wrong understanding of exactly what the historical experience has been, and specifically the very experience Marx was referring to in the above-mentioned citation of the experience of “all previous revolutions.” In most of the major countries of Europe the bourgeois republican state was able to be consolidated *without* ever thoroughly destroying the state apparatus associated with the monarchy for the very reason that bourgeois relations had grown up in the shell provided by the monarchy and that the earlier feudal monarchy had become a *bourgeois* monarchy to varying degrees. This process, of course, did not take place smoothly and involved revolutions, advances and retreats. In Great Britain no revolution took place after the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89 and there was a gradual process of the monarchy being adapted and remolded to be thoroughly in the service of capitalism, which is the situation right down to today. In other countries such as France, Germany and Italy there were repeated revolutionary explosions and both bourgeois counter-revolutions (France 1814 or Germany after 1848), as well as relatively peaceful bourgeois consolidation of the state system in the wake of revolutionary outbursts (Louis Napoleon in France, 1852). The result of this complex and varied process throughout the 19th century was, however, exactly as Marx described it—the consolidation, the *perfecting* of the bourgeois democratic regime, with or without a residual monarchy, in all of the advanced capitalist countries. Even in France, home of the quintessential bourgeois revolution, the reactionary army of the monarchy was never thoroughly “smashed” and the bourgeoisie found it useful to preserve or reintroduce aspects of the monarchy into the bourgeois framework even as it continued to struggle against remnants of feudalism at home and abroad, Napoleon I being a very clear example. In short, stating that no republic has been established without the thoroughgoing destruction of the state apparatus serving the monarchy does not correspond to the facts and serves to obscure the real tasks of the revolution in relation to the state. It is an illustration of the confusion and eclecticism that is reigning in the Party, where the correct revolutionary strategy of new-democratic revolution is combined with a very reformist strategy (now masquerading as a “tactic”) of fighting for a “transitional” bourgeois republic.

Furthermore, how are we to reconcile the description the CPN(M) offers with the experience of the Russian revolution? Is it not the case that the revolution of February 1917 established a bourgeois republic in Russia *without* “dissolving and defeating” the army and bureaucracy of the Tsar? In fact, the Provisional Government led by Kerensky very much represented the “perfecting” of the bourgeois state apparatus in republican form. It should not be any surprise that this “perfecting” also includes incorporating and protecting many reactionary features of the previous form of rule nor that some of the forces grouped around the Tsar also conspired against the Provisional government itself, such as in the Kornilov revolt in July of 1917 when these same forces tried to reverse the whole revolutionary process then going on in Russia. Lenin’s line was clear—the task of the revolution was *not* to consolidate a bourgeois republic but rather to fight to “smash” the bourgeois state apparatus and establish a completely different type of state. And this, of course, is exactly what he did.

Similarly in more recent history we have seen monarchies that were overthrown and replaced with different forms of a republic *without* requiring the smashing of the state. This can be seen in the 1979 revolution in Iran when the autocratic regime of the Shah was overthrown and an Islamic Republic established. The state apparatus of the Shah, and especially the army, was most definitely not *smashed* but rather reformed as part of the consolidation of the equally reactionary Islamic Republic of Iran. And while the general historical tendency has been for monarchies to give rise to republics, there are cases where a bourgeois monarchy has served as a more suitable shell than a republic for perfecting the bourgeois democratic state. The clearest example is Spain where the Franco dictatorship had outlived its usefulness to the bourgeoisie and the best means of avoiding revolutionary explosion and assuring a transition to a modern and effective bourgeois democracy was through the vehicle of a restored monarchy in the person of Juan Carlos. And it must be said that the transition of modern Spain from fascist bourgeois state to democratic monarchy was particularly successful and has indeed further perfected the state in the interests of the bourgeoisie and the world imperialist system as a whole.

So why does the CPN(M) insist so strongly on a portrayal based on the need to “dissolve and defeat” the armed forces of the monarchy? Their analysis is consistent with the CPN(M)’s constant efforts to portray the basic struggle in the country as between the forces of reaction grouped around the monarchy against the forces who stand for the Republic. In reality, this picture actually combines several contradictions. The contradiction between the masses and the enemy classes (feudalism, comprador-bureaucrat capitalism and imperialism) is *eclectically merged* with a real but secondary contradiction among the reactionary classes themselves, between the diehard supporters of the monarchy and other sections of the exploiters who now believe that the monarchy is a threat to their continued rule. Certainly the possibility of a move against the Constituent Assembly by the monarchy and sections of the Army cannot be discounted, but the *main tendency* within the ruling classes of Nepal and their foreign backers is now to favor the Constituent Assembly and the declaration of a republic.

There is a particular form of eclecticism at work here, where the CPN(M) takes the well-known and central Marxist precept about the need to smash the existing state apparatus and narrows and misapplies it to the institution of the monarchy. It appears to be very revolutionary to insist on the thorough smashing of the monarchy but in fact this covers over that the target of the new-democratic revolution is not the monarchy but rather the whole of the bureaucrat-comprador and feudal classes and their foreign and imperialist backers.

The monarchy in Nepal *does* need to be *thoroughly uprooted* by the new-democratic revolution. It is certainly no surprise that the reactionary classes will be inclined to incorporate many elements of the monarchy or even the king himself into a new reactionary state. In this sense it is quite correct for the communists to call for the thorough eradication of the monarchy and lead the masses in eradicating the monarchy *as part* of the new-democratic revolution and the bringing into power of a new state. But this is *not* what the comrades have been arguing—or doing. Instead, they are continuing to insist that the complete eradication of the monarchy and

the establishment of “pure” (bourgeois) democracy with parties representing interests of the reactionary classes is a necessary preliminary step before the revolution can advance toward its new-democratic objectives, or *redefining* new democracy to being really no different than bourgeois democracy. And it doesn’t really matter if this step is considered a required strategic step as is argued in “New State” or merely a “tactical” step as the 2005 resolution argues—in either of these interpretations the accomplishment of the republic is the necessary preliminary to further advance.

To this we have two main responses. First, any reactionary bourgeois-comprador-feudal republic established in Nepal must and will incorporate all sorts of reactionary features of the previous system. This is because such a republic will and can only be, in the most fundamental sense, a continuation of the previous (monarchical) state exactly because it will maintain and enforce the rule of the same reactionary classes. Whether the king remains, the stench of feudalism of which he was the symbol and main representative can never be eliminated without the completion of the new-democratic revolution. Our second and more fundamental response is that the bourgeois republic is, as Lenin put it, the “most suitable shell” for the growth of capitalism even if the bourgeoisie and the principal bourgeois parties (including the reformist and revisionist ones) may tremble with fear at the thought of standing alone without the protection of the monarchy. After all the monarchy has been the pillar of the whole comprador-bureaucrat feudal system in Nepal and thus the bourgeoisie and even revisionists have an ambiguous attitude toward it. This is exactly Marx’s point that hitherto existing revolutions have only *perfected* the bourgeois state apparatus even if they have often done so in *opposition* to the bourgeoisie itself (or at least large sections of it). The bourgeoisie’s exploiting nature and its tendency to compromise with other, even more antiquated, forms of exploitation has often led to its own vacillation and sometimes even paralysis, including in a revolution in which, objectively, its class and its mode of production are the ultimate beneficiaries. Often in history “the people” have put the bourgeoisie in power even when the bourgeoisie, or most of them, were slinking in fear.

In other words, the goal of “pure” bourgeois democracy, scrubbed clean of the odor of monarchy, is both unobtainable and undesirable. Yet rather than recognize, and proclaim to the masses, that the system that is presently being consolidated in Nepal through the whole process of the Constituent Assembly is *exactly* a kind of truncated, feudal-infested, national-betraying democracy, the “best” that is obtainable *without* overthrowing the reactionary classes, instead of extolling the democracy that was built in the course of the People’s War and calling on the establishment of *that* state system, *that* democracy and *that* dictatorship, on a countrywide level, the comrades in Nepal set out in quest for the Holy Grail of “pure” democracy, constantly discovering first one then another unfulfilled criteria of bourgeois democracy, and trying to focus the fight on this ever-narrowing basis.

Bourgeois Democracy and New Democracy

Mao developed the theory of the new-democratic revolution (NDR) and clearly conceived of it as, in its first stage, bourgeois democratic in character in that its objective is to clear away the

fetters that keep the oppressed nations undeveloped and subjugated to foreign powers—specifically semi-feudal relations and comprador and bureaucrat capitalism dependent on and serving foreign imperialist powers and, importantly in the case of Nepal, neighboring India. The NDR is not socialist in-so-far as it does not immediately seek to do away with all capitalist exploitation and, to a certain extent and to a certain degree, even opens the door for the growth of national capitalism. All this is well known.

But Mao was also adamant that the NDR was not part of the old democratic revolution of the bourgeoisie but a part of the world proletarian revolution whose aim is socialism and ultimately communism. This was not just an empty proclamation on Mao's part, but a reflection of the class analysis he had made of China and his programmatic understanding of the tasks of the NDR. And he gave great emphasis to the “socialist elements” within the NDR which lay the basis for the transformation of the NDR into a future socialist revolution.

Today Nepal is at a crossroads between new democracy and bourgeois democracy of the old type, with all that that means in the conditions of an oppressed country. Under these circumstances one would have expected the communists to be clarifying this choice to the masses, exposing the sham and reactionary nature of the democracy proclaimed by the reactionary classes and their foreign backers, extolling the accomplishments already achieved in the course of the NDR in the countryside and calling upon the people to institute this system throughout Nepal. But instead what is objectively a clear choice has been blurred and muddled, in particular by the propaganda, slogans and actions of the communists themselves in their quest for “pure democracy.”

When we take a concrete look at Nepal and how the revolution has developed, we can see that there are a number of crucial questions which are bourgeois-democratic in nature but challenge the very framework of the bureaucrat-comprador, semi-feudal system dominating in Nepal. Several of these questions which have been so powerfully expressed in revolutionary struggle during the ten years of People's War are 1) the fight to eliminate the oppression of women, 2) the fight to definitively destroy the caste system, 3) the fight for the equality of nationalities, 4) the realization of “land to the tiller”, and 5) establishing real independence from India and the imperialist powers. None of these questions are, by themselves, socialist in character but they are very much at the heart of the new-democratic revolution. They can only be achieved by the revolution led by the proletariat through mobilizing and relying on the people. Furthermore, each of these contradictions and the struggle to resolve them carries within it seeds that lay the basis for the future transformation of the revolution beyond the democratic stage toward the socialist and communist future.

It is quite clear that a reactionary bourgeois, comprador-feudal regime, republic or not, will never thoroughly solve any of the democratic questions mentioned above. Such a regime might try to “mitigate” some of these contradictions but ultimately cannot succeed, as can be seen in the example of neighboring India. “The world's largest democracy” is a good illustration of the reactionary nature of bureaucrat-comprador, semi-feudal democracy. In India, caste

discrimination is formally illegal and “reservations” are set aside in government jobs for the oppressed classes, women have legal equality, and the equality of languages and the secular character of the state is formally proclaimed. But everyone knows how far the formal proclamations are from the daily reality of the humiliation and oppression of Dalits and Adivasis, constant Hindu domination periodically punctuated by communal massacres, the subservience of women highlighted by frequent dowry murders, and the list could go on and on. In reality, in a few short years in Nepal, the unleashing of the masses in the People’s War brought about transformations of the relations among the people and of many of the corresponding ideas that were *never* accomplished in bourgeois comprador, semi-feudal India. For example, the very large number of young women volunteering to serve in the People’s Liberation Army, many of whom came to be leaders, is linked to the fact that the new revolutionary order, or new democracy taking root in the countryside, made an immediate and dramatic impact on the status of women—child marriage was effectively abolished in deed as well as in law, anti-women louts were disciplined, many young people chose their own spouse without concern for caste or family. Can India, where over 90 percent of marriages respect caste barriers, say the same? One of the great transformations in the Nepalese countryside has been the body blow to the caste system. While almost all political parties in Nepal declare *in words* their opposition to the caste system, only the revolution was able to make a real dent in this centuries-old practice. The formerly downtrodden, now standing up tall and proud, look anyone directly in the eye. These are the real democratic tasks that the revolution already accomplished to an important degree and which can be put forward as a model to the whole country. Ironically, the search for “real democracy,” which can only be considered a code word for thoroughly implemented (“real”) bourgeois democracy, has *undercut* the very power of these revolutionary democratic accomplishments exactly because “real democracy” cannot in Nepal, anymore than it has in India or other third world countries, thoroughly uproot these archaic and backward forms of oppression, and indeed “real democracy” generally makes no such claims. Rather, “real democracy” focuses on the *form* of state, and especially multiparty elections, to which democracy is systematically *reduced*.

Experience all over the world has shown again and again that multiparty elections will not prevent the political power, the dictatorship, from being firmly in the hands of the exploiting classes. The advantages these classes hold in experience in ruling, education, finances, connections to the imperialist world system (and in Nepal’s case to the Indian ruling class) give these classes and their representatives a great advantage in the electoral contest, even a “fair” one by bourgeois-democratic standards, not to mention all of the “extra democratic” features that most often accompany elections in third world countries—ballot stuffing, police intimidation, foreign intrigue, etc. And, of course, there is always the ultimate “veto” of the reactionary armed forces that can be imposed in the highly unlikely event that the electoral results actually did pose a threat to the interests of the ruling class and their foreign backers. We are about to witness this same process in Nepal. In the conditions of today it is extremely unlikely that the CPN(M) will be a majority in the upcoming Constituent Assembly elections, and the two-thirds majority necessary to make any substantial changes to the interim constitution is impossible. The most likely result is that the CPN(M) will be defeated “fairly” at the elections—after all, if the

reactionaries were not confident of this result they would simply postpone the elections as they did in June 2007—and the legitimacy of the newly consolidated reactionary state will emerge reinforced. If in the extremely unlikely event that the Party did come to occupy the key positions of government through this electoral process the very alliance required, the entanglement in bourgeois political institutions and with the “international community” will ensure that there is no transfer of power to the proletariat and the oppressed classes and no basis for the state to carry out the revolutionary transformation of society.

We would hope that the comrades of the CPN(M) will not accept the “verdict of the ballot box” despite their repeated pledges to do so and despite the immense pressure that they will be under to “accept the rules” of bourgeois elections. But even in the welcome event the comrades do reject such an outcome, they will be doing so on substantially weakened grounds having lent the authority of the Party to the legitimacy of this whole process. And there remains the underlying problem of the strategic conception and strategic goal of bourgeois democracy as a transitional state, an orientation which is constantly reasserting itself in the domain of tactical choices and policies. Even if, belatedly, the Party decides to take a different path—and we will continue to struggle for precisely such a radical shift in direction—pressure to return to the parliamentary road will continue to come from this very unclarity on strategic objectives. It won’t be enough to simply adjust tactics once again; a real repudiation of the approach and thinking that led to this impasse is required.

“Proportional” Bourgeois Democracy or the New-Democratic System?

Nepal even more than many other third world countries is “a prison house of nations.” The minority of “mainstream Nepalese” has ruled and run roughshod over the majority of the population at least since the establishment of the Gurkha kingdom in 1768 by Prithur Narayan Shah. A great achievement of the revolution has been to awaken the oppressed nationalities of Nepal all across the country and to organize them into the ranks of the revolution. As the revolution developed, organs of power were established in the areas of concentration of different nationalities, for example the Magarat Autonomous Region that was established in the Rolpa-Rokum heartland of the revolution in western Nepal. Certainly we would like to understand this experience better and learn more about specific forms of state and mass organizations in relation to overcoming national oppression. However, it is clear that these forms generally met with widespread approval of the masses.

We would like to emphasize the obvious—none of this was possible without the organized strength of the armed masses and specifically the victories of the PLA over the armed forces of the old reactionary state. It was on the basis of clearing away the police stations, courts, jails as well as the organized bands of reactionaries and lumpens that it was possible for people’s rule to be established and give expression to the long-smothered aspirations of the minority nationalities.

There is a great deal of experience in how the problems of minority nationalities have been

addressed as part of the proletarian dictatorship in the course of the 20th century. This experience needs to be deeply summed up as part of the broader experience of socialist revolution. One of the key summations we have drawn from the overall experience of the proletarian revolution is, as Comrade Bob Avakian has put it, the need for “a solid core with a lot of elasticity.” That is, with proletarian authority established and a firm grip on state power maintained, it is possible and necessary to allow a flowering of diverse political opinions and political groupings. Our limited understanding of the experience of people’s rule in Rolpa-Rokum and elsewhere in liberated Nepal suggests that this describes at least in part the process that was taking place there. The authority of the revolution based on representing the highest interests of the masses and the military strength of the PLA—that is, the dictatorship over the reactionary classes—created the conditions that allowed a real flowering of political life, including awakening diverse and sometimes even centrifugal forces among the different national groupings. As long as the authority of the Party was firmly in command and providing an anchor, such centrifugal forces did not threaten the advance of the revolution but gave it additional strength and vitality.⁸

It is well known that in the most recent period following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the confinement of the PLA in cantonments, there have been some very negative developments, especially in the Madesh (also called the Terai) region of south-eastern Nepal. The Terai is home to a large percentage of the Nepalese people and is the most important area of grain production in the country. It is also an area where most of the people have suffered different forms of national oppression at the hands of the central state, which has favored the population groups historically based in the hilly regions.

In particular, the Madeshis have been raising the demand for full proportionality in the new state, demanding that they have representation in the Constituent Assembly, state jobs, and so forth that corresponds to their share of the population. The CPN(M) had become a target of this movement because of its earlier endorsement of the interim constitution which, at the demand of the Seven Party Alliance, refused to accept a proportional system. Demagogues were able to whip up the national sentiment of the Madeshis against the CPN(M) and even murdered many comrades, especially in the Gaur massacre of March 31, 2007. The CPN(M) summed up that it had been an error to go along with the interim constitution, which had not provided for proportional representation, and the Party has since raised this as the crucial element in solving the problems of the Madesh and other oppressed nationalities.

The CPN(M) has focused its demands concerning the new constitution on the creation of a “federal republic” where the rights of all of the national groupings (and, in some cases, caste groupings) are assured on a proportional basis. Indeed, it is possible to find many references where it is claimed that “Once the Federal Structure of the national and regional autonomous republics is ensured, the Terai problem and other tensions will also be settled.”⁹

We are not at all convinced that regional autonomy and a proportional federal structure will solve the problems of the oppressed nationalities. Rather this insistence is one more indication of

the CPN(M) losing sight of the central question of *which class rules in alliance with which other classes* and instead focusing on the *form* of rule, in this case federal or proportional, and treating this above and outside of its class context.

Certainly measures such as regional autonomy can and must, under a state system with the leadership of the working class, play an important role in combating national inequality and mobilizing the masses of the minority nationalities in the revolution. As noted above, this is our understanding of what actually happened to a large degree in the base areas under the leadership of the CPN(M) where, it must be noted once again, the state power was based on the strength of the PLA. In the Madesh as well, during the course of the People's War, although there were certainly efforts by reactionaries and forces backed by India to try to divide the masses along national lines and foment opposition to the Party, there was not the kind of fratricidal conflict among the nationalities that has appeared in the last period. Instead, the demand for the recognition of the national rights of the Madeshis mainly took place *within and on the basis of the political power that the revolution had established*. In the Madesh as well as elsewhere in the country the PLA included young men and women from many different national groupings. Without this firm political power, without this solid core of proletarian leadership and authority, it is not possible, and indeed it has not been possible, to maintain and advance the unity of the people and take real concrete measures to uproot national inequality and injustice.

Proportionality cannot *by itself* be the key link nor be the *central solution* to solving national oppression or ensuring the unity of the masses. The proletariat alone (and those from other strata won to and trained in its outlook) can rise above national considerations and actually oppose *all* national discrimination and injustices. If the masses are told to elect their representatives according to their national or specific group interests, there will everywhere be conflict even among the masses of the oppressed themselves. For example, the Madeshis in the East will come into conflict with the Tharus in the West, Dalits will be fighting the small peasant landholders and the Badis will be in conflict with everybody else. There can never be a solid voluntary unity of the oppressed if this unity is looked at or conceived as a kind of coalition of different oppressed peoples and sectors. Sooner or later, and probably sooner, the objective contradictions that exist in class society will assert themselves and the masses will be divided up in their specific "tents." Bourgeois parliamentary democracy will fuel this tendency.

Once the problem of nationalities is restricted, confined and channeled into the bourgeois arena, once the idea is enforced that each nationality, sub nationality, caste or grouping should be fighting for the representation of their own narrow interests *in competition with and opposition to* those of other nationalities and groupings, the result will be what can be seen so clearly in neighboring India, where groups are constantly mobilized to fight for the reservation of jobs or parliamentary seats. Such measures have not made any real dent in the whole system of national and caste oppression. Indeed, bloody massacres are common in the "fair competition" of nationalities, while real inequality remains intact. We doubt very much that a federal republic of Nepal will have any better results than those of India.

Again, it is extremely painful to watch the achievements of the revolution being dismembered on the altar of a bourgeois republic (federal and proportional or not). Instead of the Party promoting the *essence* of the state system that emerged in the People's War (new-democratic dictatorship) and calling for that state system to be established through the whole country, it is promoting the *form* that people's power had developed in Nepal (autonomous republics) as the solution to democratizing the republic that is *being established by the bourgeoisie*. It is an arena that will never unleash and unite the enthusiasm of the masses on a correct basis.

Land to the Tiller

While the CPN(M) still maintains "Land to the Tiller" as a slogan in its electoral campaign, mobilizing the rural masses around this central demand is not at the heart of the Party's work in the rural areas. This is all the more surprising since the agrarian revolution, more than any other single factor, drove the whole process of People's War forward. Of course, the CPN(M) does call for land reform in its program and it is quite probable that the new bourgeois republic of Nepal will carry out some kind of land reform. But experience in many countries has shown the difference between an incomplete, undemocratic, bureaucratic land reform organized in cooperation with the ruling classes and a real *agrarian revolution* such as Mao carried out in China, that relied upon unleashing the enthusiasm of the peasantry, especially its most downtrodden sections.¹⁰ Once again, neighboring India provides a very good showcase. Significant land reform was carried out in India, but it was done in a way that compromised with the feudal classes. It was very unevenly applied and scarcely touched some areas, keeping the poorest sections of the masses from obtaining much if any land. Most importantly from the viewpoint of the ruling classes, it did everything to avoid revolutionary upheaval in the countryside. In South Africa, also, land reform was declared a national priority but, more than ten years after the end of the apartheid regime, the great majority of the land is still in the hands of a minority of white farmers.

On this question also the two types of democracy—bourgeois democracy and new democracy led by the proletariat—stand in sharp contrast. Because of the central role of private property in the capitalist system, because in countries like Nepal the bourgeoisie has links to landed property, and because of the common fear of the rural poor among all of the exploiting classes, the bourgeoisie will back away from a really revolutionary reform program, even though, by itself, land to the tiller does not escape from the bounds of bourgeois democracy.¹¹ In the conditions of the oppressed nations today, it is the proletariat alone that can accomplish this most central democratic demand in *a revolutionary way* and, in so doing, unite the great majority of the peasantry and broad sections of other classes as well who can understand that this is a crucial measure to really lay the basis for an independent and rapidly developing country. Furthermore, agrarian revolution can lay the basis for rapidly developing the voluntary cooperation and collectivization that plays such a central role in propelling the revolution beyond new democracy to the socialist stage.

Here again the problem of the Madesh is of particular importance because it is in the fertile

plains where there is a great deal of feudal ownership and where there is a particularly important problem of uniting the masses and opposing different kinds of national and caste oppression. Furthermore, the land revolution could have a very important impact on the national economy as well if it were to liberate the capacity and enthusiasm of the masses to produce. It is possible to see how a revolutionary land policy based especially among the poor could unite the majority of the population despite the long-standing national oppression and divisions. Isn't the agrarian revolution also key to uniting the Madesh with the rest of the country? So while the CPN(M) maintains "Land to the Tiller" in its program, this is not what is at the center of its current approach to the Madesh or other rural districts. Instead the main appeal is to proportionality and federalism that has not united and cannot unite the masses of the poor around the proletariat and instead pushes them into the arms of the exploiters (large and small) of their respective nationalities.

The very experience of the revolution in Nepal, as well as previous historical experience, demonstrates that it is the state power of the proletariat that *makes possible* the united front, especially the alliance of the workers and peasantry. Lenin had made the same point on the eve of the Russian Revolution: "To *smash* this machine, to *break it up*, is truly in the interest of the people, of their majority, of the workers and most of the peasants, is 'the precondition' for a free alliance of the poor peasants and the proletarians, whereas without such an alliance democracy is unstable and socialist transformation is impossible."¹²

The actual history of the Nepalese revolution has confirmed this orientation. It has been on the basis of clearing away the authority of the old state, and most centrally, the presence and reach of its military authority, that it became possible to unite the great majority of the population around the leadership of the proletariat. But once this proletarian authority is undermined and with the old army and old police force again in command, the unity of the masses will also be undermined, and the masses will have little choice but to seek to protect their interests against and in competition with other sections of the oppressed masses and come under the wing of the bourgeoisie.

On the Constitution and Class Rule

In their reply to the RCP, the Nepalese comrades write, "Your letter has very apprehensively raised one question. If the enemy accepts your demand, just for example, a constituent assembly, you are obligated to agree with it; otherwise you will lose the confidence of the masses. We appreciate your anxiety. But we understand that a constituent assembly in itself is not a solution, but its political content can be. For example, if the constituent assembly can ensure the dissolution of the royal army, the reorganization of the national army under our leadership, the implementation of revolutionary land reform based upon the policy of land to the tiller, the right of nations to self-determination, an end to social discrimination, development and prosperity, etc., why should one oppose it?"

The problem is that the Constituent Assembly *will not and cannot* carry out the above-mentioned

tasks. Does anyone really think it possible that the CA will lead to the “dissolution of the royal army” (and not just a name change), let alone the reorganization of the national army under the leadership of the CPN(M)? No! This is just as impossible as the claims of the old revisionist program of the Communist Party USA which proposed to do away with capitalist exploitation through a constitutional amendment. And if there was any doubt as to what is possible and what is impossible, it is sufficient to regard the *actual* process as it has unfolded. It has been the PLA which has been put in cantonments and largely disarmed while the only important change for the RNA was to drop the “royal” in its name.

So the question is not why should one “oppose” a Constituent Assembly that could accomplish the tasks of the new-democratic revolution, but rather why should one promote an illusion that cannot be fulfilled?

Even now, when the results of this process are coming into focus, the CPN(M) continues to spread these illusions. For example,

“It is aimed that the political crisis will be resolved by writing a new constitution which can pave the way for a new progressive system in Nepal that can lead the country to forward progress and further advancement by creating a society in which the exploitation of man by man in all forms is abolished.”¹³

Thus we see that the CPN(M) is arguing rather clearly, in public and informally, that it is possible that the Constituent Assembly process can consolidate a system which can evolve peacefully toward socialism and communism. Of course, the Party keeps open the possibility that die-hard elements, most especially the monarchy, can be expected to oppose such a constitution, in which case the use of force by the masses will be justifiable and necessary.¹⁴

In this way, the discussion of the provisions and wording of a future constitution displaces what really is the central question: on whose *power* will the new state be based? Generally speaking, a bourgeois constitution will uphold the “sovereignty of the people,” proclaim the equality of all its citizens enshrined in the principle of “one person, one vote,” proclaim rights of free speech and assembly, and so forth. It is also quite unlikely, to say the least, that the constitution resulting from the CA process will attack in a fundamental way the property of the exploiting classes.¹⁵

While a constitution can play an important role in any political system, it is not the promises of the constitution that will lead to a society without class exploitation if the army is in the hands of the exploiting classes and if the principal means of production are under their ownership and control. Indeed, the role of the constitution in any bourgeois republic is *precisely* to ensure that the political system does not interfere with and in fact serves the underlying economic system of exploitation. The democratic rights granted to the people are within this context and restricted by this reality. When the professed rights of the people come into conflict with the imperatives of the socio-economic system based on exploitation, it is the interests of the system of exploitation

that “trump”—override the rights of the people. The comrades of the CPN(M) point to the possibility of a constitution coming out of this Constituent Assembly which will institutionalize the victories of the People’s War. But these elections are being held under the supervision of the “international community” (meaning the world imperialist system and India), with the Nepal Army guarding the premises, and the television and newspapers for the most part firmly in the hands of the exploiting classes. The result of these elections under these conditions cannot open the way to socialism, and to argue that they can is either demagoguery or self-deception.

Revolutionary Practice

It is the strategy of a “transitional” (bourgeois) republic that is driving and directing the tactics, and not the other way around. It is true that any revolutionary process will combine diverse forms of struggle, and it can be easily seen that revolutionary war may pass through periods of ceasefire and negotiation. And conversely, as we have seen from diverse experience historically and internationally, seemingly revolutionary tactics have been, and often are, used in the service of thoroughly non-revolutionary strategies such as “fighting to negotiate,” calling the masses into the streets to serve as pressure for bourgeois electoral gains, and so forth.¹⁶

Nor is the essence of the question, even now, the fact that the Party is up to its neck in electoralism and parliamentarism. A “revolutionary” road to the bourgeois republic would not be any better than the path of compromise and collaboration that we have witnessed over the last two years. But there is a connection—the goal of a bourgeois republic and, we must add, one which is effectively “cemented” into the existing imperialist world order, will mean that a certain type of tactics will tend to predominate and that impulses to go in a more revolutionary direction, whether arising from the masses, the Party rank and file or sections of the leadership, will tend to be smothered. Indeed, the period of the last two years has also been one in which repeated plans and promises of the leadership to bring forward the masses to assert their class interests have gone unfulfilled. This should not be seen as a result of willful deception. Rather, it is the inevitable result of the class nature of the objective—the bourgeois republic—imposing itself on the choice of tactics to follow. Nor are we arguing for more “revolutionary” tactics divorced from a rectification on the level of strategy and goal. History has also been full of “insurrections” which have ultimately served as a “left cover” for cloudy or non-revolutionary objectives. Indeed, in Central America in the 1980s, different types of “left” as well as the more dominant rightist tactics were employed. We will again call attention to the line which emerged in the Communist Party of the Philippines pushed by Villalobos. It had the merit of articulating clearly the “short path” to “partial victory” which he specifically contrasted to the Maoist path of protracted people’s war for “complete victory,” which Villalobos considered unreachable and/or undesirable.¹⁷ In other words, to focus the discussion with the CPN(M) principally over tactics is to mistake the symptom for the disease and to reverse cause and effect.

Who’s Fooling Whom?

One of the most painful things for friends of the Nepalese revolution to watch is the way in

which the army of the people has been largely disarmed and herded into cantonments isolated from the people, while the reactionary armed forces, now renamed Nepal Army, which previously could not leave heavily fortified barracks except in large convoys, are now free to roam about the countryside. Also very significant is the reestablishment of hated police posts in the very heart of the former base areas, while the structures of people's rule built up in the course of the People's War are dismantled.

The origin of this situation predates even the April 2006 upsurge—it can be found clearly in the proposal reprinted in *The Worker* no. 9 where the Party proposes that the PLA and the RNA be demobilized and a new national army formed. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement has this as a cornerstone.

For a long time the CPN(M) would tell worried comrades that any merger of the two armies would come on the basis of the authority of the PLA and the Party and would be under its leadership. Of course, no integration of that type was even considered for a fleeting moment by the reactionary classes. On the contrary, the reactionary classes and their backers have been clear, ironically far more so than our comrades, on the central role of the armed forces in the state. The CPA legitimized the monopoly of force of the NA which was, after all, allowed to openly keep the great bulk of its weapons, granted responsibilities for controlling the country's borders and transportation routes, and, generally speaking, left free to march about the country armed. In January 2008, the Army Chief of Staff made a clear statement that he would refuse the integration of PLA fighters in the NA.

The response of the CPN(M) has included some very pointed and correct exposure of the Nepal Army. For example, Chairman Prachanda's statement, reprinted in *The Red Star* no. 3, rhetorically asked why a gang of murderers is fit to be part of the national army but not the sons and daughters of the people who fought for liberation. But this is exactly the point. The National Army will have only one central role—to maintain and enforce the rule of the exploiting classes. That the CPN(M) would *demand* that the fighters of the PLA be integrated into such an army is itself a real indication of how far the Party has departed from a Marxist understanding of the state. Again, the reactionaries have no such unclarity. They are determined to maintain a tight grip on the state apparatus and are not about to let large numbers of PLA fighters join the army, at least not unless and until the PLA had given adequate proof that it has definitively and thoroughly abandoned its goal of revolution—something which has not happened and must not be allowed to happen. So again the CPN(M) has allowed the debate to be firmly circumscribed by the reactionary classes. The question was shaking Nepal at the time of the collapse of the absolute monarchy—which state and which army, the old state of the king and the exploiting classes based on the hated Royal Nepal Army or the new state which had been emerging in the countryside based on the strength of the PLA, should consolidate its rule throughout the country? This has transformed into: is the PLA sufficiently committed to “real democracy” for it to be dissolved into the Nepal Army or will it have to be dissolved by some other means? Each answer is worse than the other.

Arming the Masses with the Truth or Sowing Deliberate Confusion?

In their response to our earlier letter the CPN(M) argues that some of their current positions may not appear clear because of the need to dissimulate in the eyes of the international and domestic enemies, but that their comrades should not be worried because the Party is clear on where the struggle must go. They say: “Yes, there are some confusing positions in our interpretations, in several contexts. We think sometimes they are necessary. If we can confuse our enemies and the international community with our tactical dealings, it can divide them to a certain extent, which will benefit our revolution. Problems will arise only if the Party of the proletariat itself is confused.”

This reasoning is wrong on a whole number of levels. Even if it were the case that the Party leadership was clear and united on the goals of NDR, socialism and communism, it would still be necessary to educate and arm the masses to understand the difference between a reactionary bourgeois solution to the country’s problems and a radically different solution led by a proletarian party and based on the masses of people. The love and support of the masses acquired in the People’s War is a precious achievement, but it is no substitute for their conscious training and their learning to perceive, beneath the honey-coated words of democracy, the real class nature of every party and political figure. Otherwise there is the danger that loyalty can become blind, and that the masses who were the bedrock of the People’s War will look to the Party mainly as a protector of their most narrow and immediate interests, interests that might and sometimes do come into conflict with other sections of the masses. How will it be possible for the masses to be won to the need for further struggle and sacrifice if the goal of this struggle is not clear? Are we really to believe the masses are quite clear on the goals of revolution or that they will reach this understanding spontaneously, without systematic training by the communists?

It is enough to read the Party’s own publications or the interviews with different leaders to see that the Party itself is not at all so clear on the crucial questions of democracy, state and so forth. Often vital questions of political orientation and policy are presented as a mere question of tactics: either the revolution will proceed smoothly to the republic or, if this process is interfered with by the reactionary classes, it will thus become necessary for the revolution to advance by more confrontational means. This leaves out the basic question of the revolutionary goal. In other words, the main question is not a peaceful or non-peaceful transition to a federal democratic republic, but rather *what type* of republic needs to be established (what class will rule) and specifically how can there be a seizure of power by masses led by a proletarian vanguard. This is objectively the question before the society, but it is *not what is being presented*.

Further, the idea that ideological acrobatics are necessary in order to confuse the class enemy is extremely naive at best. No major move by the CPN(M) goes unobserved by the class enemy. If the Party suspends negotiations or leaves the government, the other side is extremely attentive to the possible implications of such moves and discusses it from every angle in the press and in

their semi-public think tanks such as the International Crisis Group, which has been particularly well-informed about the situation in Nepal.¹⁸ In fact it is the masses, friends of the Party and the ranks of the Party themselves who are most often deceived by the Party's double language. For example, the main representatives of the reactionary classes in Nepal and internationally seemed much clearer than many comrades that the CPN(M)'s decision in September 2007 to leave the government, and its threats to call the masses out into the streets, probably did not mean a basic reversal of the road to the Constituent Assembly and the bourgeois republic. And in fact, these reactionaries were right—the goal and the attraction of going for the bourgeois republic reimposed itself and molded the Party's choice of tactics.

This is not to say that all of the masses are happy with the direction the Party has taken or that they will not find different ways to convey their discontent. But even assuming that the new regime which emerges from the Constituent Assembly really does provide the formal right to organized political expression, and even assuming that these formal rights exist in the rural areas as well as the cities as is rarely the case in the third world, it is very difficult to see how, without an organized and coherent leadership, the growing discontent of the masses will be able to be expressed in a concrete political program. This is another example of the falsity of the promise of bourgeois democracy and how really unequal the masses of people are in the “competition” of political forces. In the name of preserving the rights of the masses to supervise the state through “multiparty competition,” the CPN(M) is actually taking away the rights of the masses established through the People's War to have political institutions and political representation that truly represents their own class interests as opposed to the interests of other class forces and *against* the interests of the reactionary classes.

In fact, history provides many indications of what happens to the people once the leadership has embarked on a course that contradicts and undoes the struggle the masses have been waging. Massive discontent and widespread demoralization does not easily transform into conscious political action. In Palestine, Zimbabwe, Guatemala, to name but a few situations from more recent history, compromise political solutions and the reversal of promises and slogans to which the masses had rallied (remember that even Yasser Arafat started out proclaiming “revolution till victory”) were not effectively countered. Instead a few frustrated elements are more likely to split and lash out without being able to develop a coherent program. But this does not make the reformist compromise any more correct or any more legitimate. Under the slogan of the “rights of the masses” a “new”-old state will stand apart from the masses and over them.

There is a reason why double talk, the art of saying one thing and doing another, corresponds to the reactionary classes and cannot characterize the policy of the proletarian party. First of all, the reactionary classes cannot hope to survive except by deceiving the masses whose interests they can never represent. Communists, on the other hand, have everything to gain the more the proletariat and the masses of people understand the society and the tasks of the revolution. Helping the masses to get this kind of understanding is a crucial task of the vanguard party, but it is not an easy one. There are all sorts of prejudices and blinders that keep the masses from seeing the real features of the society. After all, if the masses were clearly able to see their own class

interests, having their own vanguard party would be far less necessary. But we know from experience in all countries that this is most definitely not the case and that the masses desperately need communist leadership that can help sort out the fundamental contours of class interests in a complicated world.

We are not so naïve as to believe that communist revolutionaries can or must reveal all of their plans and thinking on all subjects on all occasions. At the same time, in a fundamental sense and from a strategic viewpoint, communists enthusiastically uphold the *Communist Manifesto*'s famous statement, "The communists disdain to conceal their views and aims." What possible strategic advantage could the communists achieve by saying publicly to the masses over and over again that they are only about winning a majority in the electoral arena, or that their goal is "pure democracy"? Where is the training of the masses about the real class nature of such "pure" (bourgeois) democracy? This is no less of a task in Nepal, where a comprador-feudal bourgeois republic is on the horizon, than it is in the West where bourgeois democracy is the most common form of rule of the capitalist class. In fact, communists in a country like Nepal, where there are crucial bourgeois-democratic tasks to be accomplished through revolution, have a special responsibility to combat bourgeois-democratic illusions and show the real class nature of the bourgeois democracies of the West being upheld as a model.

Togliatti and Thorez

There have been some rather astounding statements made about the path-breaking nature of the CPN(M)'s decision to go for a democratic republic. In his May 1, 2007 speech, Chairman Prachanda even goes so far as to say, "The twelve point agreement was a wonderful and unprecedented type of understanding in history. The twentieth century never saw such a type of unique understanding that has been proved in history." Unfortunately, this is not the case.¹⁹

We say "unfortunately" because there are many tragic examples during the 20th century when the communists abandoned their struggle for political power, demobilized their independent armed forces, and restricted their struggle to within the bourgeois-democratic framework of the enemy. In some of these cases the Communist Parties maintained or even expanded a considerable influence over the working class and other sections of the masses and often had significant representation in parliament.

Two of the most significant cases were the experiences of the Communist Party of Italy and the Communist Party of France in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. The history of France and Italy diverge, especially in that France was occupied early in the war by Nazi Germany while Italy was allied with Germany in the war, but in both cases the Communist Parties had rallied important sections of the proletariat and the masses to wage armed struggle against foreign occupiers and the domestic fascist rulers.²⁰ At the end of the war these parties emerged with immense popularity, whereas almost all of the bourgeois political formations were thoroughly discredited by their collaboration with the fascist powers and/or their incapacity to wage any resolute struggle against them. In both Italy and France, the Communist Parties had

important armed contingents under their leadership. Many people forget that it was the partisans led by the Communist Party of Italy who captured Mussolini and hung his body in a public square in Milan amidst massive popular celebration.

However, despite the revolutionary movement that swept Europe with the collapse of the fascist powers, despite the fact that the bourgeois state apparatus had been discredited and greatly weakened through the course of the war, and despite the tremendous prestige that the Soviet Union under the leadership of Stalin then enjoyed, these Communist Parties disbanded their armed forces and took part in the provisional governments established in both of these countries under the watchful supervision of the occupying forces (mainly the U.S. and British). Most significantly, these parties accepted the political framework of bourgeois democracy. They did not, however, in words at least, drop the strategic objective of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” (it was only two decades later that this open admission of revisionism was to take place). Rather, participation in the bourgeois institutions was presented as a “tactic” which would, somehow, open the way to a later seizure of power by the proletariat. Nor should it be assumed that the entrance of the Communist Parties into the governments in Italy and France meant that this was a period of calm devoid of class struggle. On the contrary, those first postwar years were marked by extremely acute struggles, general strikes, powerful movements aimed at punishing collaborators with the fascists and so forth. In other words, participation in the bourgeois institutions did not preclude struggle and did not remove the necessity of the bourgeoisie of these countries (egged on and backed to the hilt by the unmatched military and economic might of U.S. imperialism) to hit hard at the communist parties as part of their effort to re-consolidate a bourgeois order after the havoc of world war and in the face of the revolutionary restlessness of the masses. The Communist Parties were held in great esteem by the working class at that time because of their role during the war and because even while they were following an objectively capitulationist policy they were also *in sharp conflict* with the ruling class both inside and outside parliament. In other words, these parties continued to uphold the goal of the dictatorship of the proletariat, socialism and communism. In 1947 the communists were driven out of the government as part of the beginning of the “Cold War.”

The point of this historical reminder is that there is indeed nothing so new, let alone so positive, about an agreement of communist forces to abandon their struggle for power and enter bourgeois institutions. Nor does such a step mean that the communists did not come sharply into conflict with the main representatives of the bourgeoisie. Nor should we assume that the objective circumstances were easier for the communists in Italy or France than they are today in Nepal. For example, in both Italy and France there was a heavy presence of the Allied military forces after the war. It is easy to imagine the justifications and the rationales that were offered to those who disapproved or were uncomfortable with what, in retrospect, can be seen as a decisive step toward revisionism.

The decisive question, then as now, is the political and ideological line of the communists. We are not in a position to say exactly what tactics the communists in France or Italy should have adopted. But it is possible to say that their decision to accept the “legitimacy” of the

reestablishment of the bourgeois order after World War 2 was objectively a tremendous service to the bourgeoisie at exactly the moment when the bourgeoisie was battered and in real difficulty in reorganizing its rule and ramming it down the throats of the masses. Once the basic framework of the bourgeois state institutions is accepted as legitimate, then the efforts of the communists to organize the proletariat and the masses to exert their interests *within* this framework (through both electoral and non-electoral means) has the objective effect of strengthening and perfecting these reactionary institutions themselves. Here we can only touch on the important international dimension and specifically the line of Stalin and the CPSU in the whole period before, during and after the Second World War. A more thorough discussion would show that this abandonment of the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat and adoption of the framework of bourgeois democracy is linked to the position adopted by the CPSU and the Comintern concerning the “united front against fascism” and the fight to preserve and/or restore bourgeois democracy as a necessary stage at that time.²¹

Rewriting Party History

We were disappointed that the response of the CPN(M) to our original letter of October 2005 focused to a considerable degree on a defense of its past practice and tried to use the experience of the whole trajectory of the Party since 1996 to the present as an answer to the arguments our Party and others have raised. Simply put: because the People’s War has developed this far it shows the correctness of the Party’s ideological and political line.

First of all, the fallacy of such a method of reasoning is easy to see. Even if the Party had been previously right on every question of politics and ideology (which we will see is far from the case), that would neither be a guarantee that the Party would be right on every question in the *future* nor a reason for not addressing in substance the arguments about what needs to be done *now*. The fact, for example, that the Party was correct in initiating and waging a People’s War in no way proves that it is correct in abandoning it.

Further, the account of the disagreements between our two parties and the description of the CPN(M)’s own history is not accurate. One important point to clarify is that our Party did not oppose the CPN(M)’s participation in parliament in the early 1990s. For one thing, our own knowledge of the situation in Nepal at the time did not provide enough basis to have a clear opinion on that policy. Furthermore, our Party did not and does not subscribe to the view of many other parties in the Maoist movement that the “boycott of parliament” is a “strategic question” which has been settled for all parties and all time. Nor did we ever support the positions of M.B. Singh. In fact, we waged struggle with Singh’s semi-Hoxhaite revisionism from our first encounter with him at the time of the formation of RIM in 1984 when the leaders of today’s CPN(M) were still united with him in a single party. What our Party *did* believe at that period and continues to believe today is that there was a great deal of rightism in the thinking and policy of the CPN(Unity Center)²² at that time and that unless the Party effectively ruptured with that approach there would be no successful revolution. Our Party, together with others in the RIM, struggled for exactly such a rupture. It is to the lasting credit of Chairman

Prachanda (supported by a core of other leaders) that he was able to lead this process of *leap and rupture with the previous wrong line*. It was precisely this ideological leap that was central to the organizational formation of the CPN(M) and the great historic decision to launch the People's War.

The current version of history that is contained in the letter to the RCP,USA and echoed in other recent articles and documents of the CPN(M)²³ is, alas, much different. Rewritten with 20-20 hindsight, the entry into parliament and the exit from it were both well-considered and carefully orchestrated maneuvers or tactics in the service of a clear strategy of preparing and launching a protracted people's war. Any serious study of the actual positions of the time shows that this was far from the case. There was a whole process of struggling to break with what had been the dominant understanding in the CPN (Mashal)—the original parent organization of the CPN(M)—which had a million and one reasons why revolution could never be successful in Nepal. Previously the CPN(M) noted and gave correct importance to this process of breaking with what the CPN(M) called the M.B. Singh “school of thought”. It is quite disturbing to see this process now distorted or even denied by many who know better.

The new history is full of “on the one hand” the struggle against revisionism, and “on the other hand” the struggle against “dogmatism,” an eclectic treatment that effectively obfuscates the actual need that Comrade Prachanda faced in waging an implacable struggle against revisionism and the lessons of that earlier leap and rupture and replaces it with a harmonious process devoid of contradiction.

It is certainly true that a great wealth of experience has been achieved in the course of the People's War in Nepal. We have strived to learn from this precious experience as best we can and we think that all revolutionary communists must do so. We have seen nothing in this experience, however, that strengthens the argument of the comrades for the possibility of a “transitional state” which is neither new-democratic in character nor a bourgeois republic. In fact, actual results of the past two years of experience in which the comrades of the CPN(M) have been trying to put this understanding into practice show quite the opposite.

More Reversal of Historical Verdicts

We have seen that the CPN(M) leadership has decided to rewrite Party history in relation to RIM from the standpoint of retroactively justifying every previous position, especially now that some of those positions, such as participation in parliament and the “peaceful pursuit of the revolution” are being implemented today. It is worth pointing out that this rewriting of history, however, is not limited to the debate with our Party or other RIM parties and organizations. It stands out in particularly shocking and bald form in the CPN(M)'s new version of the history of the communist movement within Nepal itself.

Consider the report “Single Communist Party.”

“The Communist Party of Nepal in its 59 years of journey has come through several splits and *unhealthy inner struggle*. These kinds of tendencies have not only weakened the communist movement but ultimately resulted disadvantages to the people and the nation. Although communist and leftist parties have the overwhelming support and sympathy of the majority of the people of Nepal, the rightist and retrogressive forces have always won the race. Currently, leftist parties hold the majority in the interim legislature too but the leader in the government is not from the communist parties.”²⁴ (emphasis added.)

This whole article, and not just the above passage, basically says that the overall process of rupture with revisionism (a word which is completely absent from this article) was “unhealthy” and led to “disadvantages.” What about the People’s War? Does anyone believe that the People’s War could have been launched *without* the rupture with revisionism? The fact of the matter is that this article rewrites history from a *parliamentary perspective*—the existence of several “communist and leftist parties” *divides the electoral vote*. This is where the rejection of what is called “one divides into two” (discussed more later) will ultimately end up—in an effort to cobble together a “leftist” or “communist” party composed of all sorts of opportunists and revisionists who have turned their back on revolution but which can “win” in a parliamentary election and preside over the government of the *old state*.

Not surprisingly, changes in the Party’s ideology and politics are reflected in its organizational affairs as well. Coupled with the change in political line and in light of the Party’s call to consolidate the “new Nepal” through all-out mobilization for the Constituent Assembly elections, the Party’s leadership now calls on changing the style of work, and specifically for members to be broadly and openly out among the electorate. Remember that breaking with the whole aboveground and parliamentary tradition of the communist (and pseudo communist) movement in Nepal was an important part of the necessary rupture to begin the People’s War in 1996. It is true that different phases of revolutionary work will require adjustments in organizational matters, but some bedrock principles about the need to build and preserve the kind of party capable of waging revolutionary struggle are gone. Revolutionary work requires one type of organizational structure. Parliamentary work requires another. Party leaders are exposed to the possibility of attack from what the CPN(M) calls “monarcho-imperialist forces,” not to mention the military apparatus of the old state. So we see another example of merging of two into one, as the Party says it is in the stage of strategic offensive and engaged in “war” to win the elections, yet the Party structure is laid bare for anyone to disrupt or destroy and the lives of precious Party leaders are put at great risk by revealing their identities. This is a matter of great concern to us also.

The International Dimension

We do not intend in this letter to explore in depth another often-advanced argument as to why the revolution in Nepal cannot win victory, namely the unfavorable international and regional situation. We should remember that one of the key features of M.B. Singh’s revisionist line was his contention that revolution was impossible in landlocked Nepal unless it was preceded by

revolution in India and/or China. The CPN(M) was correct to criticize this capitulationist theory as part of the preparation for the People's War and this verdict must be upheld. The article from February 11, 2008 *A World to Win News Service*, is worth noting:

“...No revolution exists in a vacuum. In Nepal as well, the advance of the revolution is closely linked to the advance of the revolution in the neighboring countries and the world as a whole.

“Nepal's close proximity and interconnection with India is a double-edged sword. True, that increases the country's vulnerability to pressure, interference and outright attack. It is also true that there are great advantages to the revolution as well. India has huge numbers of desperately oppressed masses, many with common cultural and linguistic links to Nepal. Already the millions of Nepalese who regularly work in India have been an important vector spreading knowledge and support for the revolution among the people of that country. Given the extreme and intensifying contradictions in Indian society, a real revolutionary regime in Nepal will have immediate and deep reverberations throughout India, especially the north and northeast. Furthermore, although it has no common border with Bangladesh, Nepal is only a few dozen kilometres from that country, most of whose 150 million people live in conditions of great hardship. Previously the CPN(M) had put forward the very revolutionary call for a Soviet Federation of South Asia which would create a new state structure in the region based on a common battle for new democracy and the genuine equality of nations. If the revolutionary regime is established in Nepal, there is a real possibility that the people of the region may come to its rescue.

“The military strength of India and the imperialist states, it is true, is an imposing and formidable obstacle. But here, too, it is necessary to understand their weaknesses as well. India has had a hard time dealing militarily with insurgencies within its own borders. Its major counterinsurgency operation in Sri Lanka in the 1980s ended in a dismal failure. It would be very difficult for India to intervene in Nepal, where hatred of Indian expansionism runs very strong and where revolution can benefit from a very favourable mountainous geography. The Indian reactionaries would have to think hard before taking on such a desperate gamble.

“The U.S. is, of course, an enormously dangerous and vicious enemy. But it is also true that the American military is highly overstretched, short of manpower, and facing ever-increasing opposition to its imperialist aggression all over the world, including from its own population. Even the U.S. military knows how difficult it would be to fight Maoist revolutionaries deeply linked to the people and enjoying their active support.

“It is definitely true that the revolution in Nepal cannot be separated from the revolutionary process in the world as a whole and there are positive as well as negative factors that have to be considered. In the whole region there are extreme and intense conflicts within the ruling classes and between the masses and their oppressors. The establishment of a real revolutionary regime in Nepal would be like a thunderbolt for the whole region. Yes, the governments of the neighboring states would try to interfere and overthrow such a regime, but it is also true that the hopes of the

people of these countries would be aroused in an unprecedented way. The masses of people of the region and ultimately the whole world represent a real, if presently untapped, reserve of strength for the revolution in Nepal. A clear revolutionary programme and the living example of the masses actually taking power and ruling society can unlock this potential.”²⁵

The international situation is certainly, in its main aspect, unfavorable. But it is also true that it will *remain* unfavorable unless and until communist revolutionaries in first one or several countries succeed in opening a breach in the world imperialist system. If everyone waits for the maturing of a favorable situation internationally before acting, we will as Lenin put it, all be “suspended in mid-air”.

“Combine Two into One” or “Divide One Into Two”?

As we have seen, *eclecticism*, that is, the orientation of combining “two into one,” of putting different contradictions on an equal level and not determining the principal contradiction, and failing to distinguish between the principal and secondary aspects of a contradiction, has increasingly come to characterize the political and ideological line and methodology of the CPN(M). Instead of criticizing and digging up the roots of this eclecticism, the very philosophical bases for many of the errors in the present course are being justified, upheld and even proposed as a model for others as well.

In order to understand a thing or a process, it is necessary to correctly identify the principal contradiction which determines its nature and its motion from among the many contradictions that are involved in any process. The revolution in Nepal is no exception. Clearly the revolution in Nepal is a complex phenomenon involving a series of contradictions, such as the contradiction between the forces grouped around the monarchy and those forces in the ruling class that are in favor of a republic, the conflict between the proletariat and the national bourgeoisie, the contradiction between the oppressed nationalities and the central state, the contradiction between women and men, and so forth. But it is crucial to emphasize that the fundamental contradiction is between the masses of people led by the proletariat and the three mountains of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. Nor can we accept that the principal contradiction in Nepal is between the monarchy and the “forces of democracy.” We do not know if the CPN(M) has made such a conscious theoretical formulation, but their policies and choice of tactics are consistent with such an analysis.

A particular feature of the eclecticism of the CPN(M) is to place two opposing policies on an equal level, or better said, to put them on an equal level *in words* while in actual life elevating the immediate, temporary and secondary above the decisive and principal.

The confounding of strategy and tactics, reversing principal and secondary, is part of the eclecticism that increasingly marks the Party’s writings. The following statement is typical of the kind of statements that riddle the articles and documents of the CPN(M):²⁶

“The country is in the transitional period from autocratic rule to federal democratic republic. The historical achievements are being institutionalized through the election of the constituent assembly. For this, there is a sharp struggle between the regressive-reactionary forces and revolutionary-progressive forces. CPN-M is leading to the direction of building New Nepal. The restructuring of old state power, the fusion of two armies, the awareness of the people and the adoption of proportional election system, the federal framework in place of unitary feudal state-structure and the participation of the nationalities, women, region, Madesh, Dalits, minorities etc. in the state power, are all achievements of the great people’s war. A decade long people’s war has given birth to the power of people and its leadership without alternative. But to wipe out the old and establish the new victoriously, the last encounter is inevitable.”

The first thing that jumps out in reading the above statement is that the goal is clearly misrepresented as a “federal democratic republic” which is quite clearly *not* a new-democratic republic. In case there was any confusion, the excerpts clarify that the goal is the “restructuring of the old state” and the “fusing of the two armies.” And this is misrepresented as the “goal of the People’s War”! Then this rather crass description of a bourgeois republic is declared “the power of the people.” The conclusion about the “last encounter” is most definitely not referring to the “final conflict” of the stirring refrain of the *Internationale* but clearly to the struggle to establish the republic. It is a perfect example of combining two into one.

This same eclectics is reflected in the following passage of an interview with Chairman Prachanda in the same issue.

“[Interviewer] How can you concretize the achievements of People’s War?”

“Prachanda: It has various dimensions. First, the present Nepali politics has moved following its steps on its way and it has proved certain basic aspects of our politics. Second, it brought the awareness among the people living in different corners of the country. Similarly class, regional, racial, gender issues have been established in Nepali society which are the day properties for the people of Nepal and world. Third, Constituent Assembly, Federal Democratic Republic, the concept of new Nepal, restructure of the state are the basic achievements of this war. For this, thousands of great people of Nepal sacrificed their lives, many more got wounded and disappeared. To sum up the ideas it’s a historical revolt. To my mind, the final victory is too near, we got victory and the last struggle is still going on and surely Nepali people will defeat the enemies. That would be the greatest achievement of People’s War.”

It is true that elsewhere in the same issue other, contradictory, messages appear. For example:

“ Now, we are advancing ahead in the peaceful process through the historical process of the ten year long people’s war and nineteen days people’s movement. The goal of the great People’s War is to move ahead in the direction of Socialism and Communism by establishing the New People’s Republic in Nepal. At present, we are advancing ahead energetically to the direction to build new Nepal through the election of the constituent assembly (CA) as the starting point of achieving the goal.”²⁷

This statement, unlike most of the other passages and recent articles, reaffirms the communist orientation of the struggle. But it too concludes by arguing that the Constituent Assembly is the vehicle for advancing in that direction. Nowhere is it explained why the consolidation of a “federal democratic republic” is a stepping stone to new democracy.

Eclecticism Defended

This whole approach of “combine two into one” is not unconscious. In fact, it was one of the substantive arguments made in the CPN(M)’s reply to the letter of the RCP. In their letter they take to task our Party, and indeed the whole Maoist movement, for insisting on the principle enunciated by Mao that “one divides into two.” Their letter holds:

“Historical and dialectical materialism is the philosophy of revolution; it not only applies to society but also in human thinking. The unity and struggle of opposites is its fundamental law. It means every entity divides into two, and each of the two aspects transforms into its opposite. We think the latter is the principal aspect for us—communists.

“It is our opinion that the ICM, in general, failed in the past to grasp the totality of this law of dialectics. Our class paid more attention to ‘one divides into two’ in the past and is doing so at present, but knowingly or unknowingly it has skipped grasping and applying in practice the transformation of one aspect into its opposite, the principal aspect.”

Comrades from one RIM organization wrote:

“In reality, ‘one divides into two’ isn’t just one ‘aspect’ of dialectics; rather it is a concentrated way of summing up the law of the unity of opposites, the fundamental law of the universe, and as such, it also includes or encompasses the transformation of the two aspects of a contradiction into their opposite. This is the way Mao and the revolutionaries in China understood it too. For example, the pamphlet published by the proletarian line in China *Three Major Struggles on China’s Philosophical Front* says that ‘The concept of one divides into two that Chairman Mao put forward profoundly and concisely summarizes the law of the unity of opposites and grasps the heart of materialist dialectics.’”²⁸

“According to the CPN(M), however, as we see in the above mentioned quote, ‘one divides into two’ is something different than and contrary to the transformation of the two aspects into their opposite (and they call for paying ‘more attention’ to this transformation instead of ‘one divides into two’). Therefore, they do not see the process of the two aspects transforming into their opposites as a process of ‘one divides into two,’ but as something different. Independent of the intentions of the CPN(M), this can only lead to an erroneous, metaphysical and eclectic conception (‘two combine into one’) of qualitative transformation.”

Indeed, the striving to combine two opposites and to mislabel this as “dialectics” is a feature that

we can see in many aspects of the CPN(M)'s line. As we saw above, this understanding is being openly and forcefully argued as a creative development of Marxism, a rectification of the one-sidedness of the previous understanding forged by Mao and popularized world-wide during the Cultural Revolution.²⁹ The CPN(M) has become so permeated with the method of “on the one hand this, on the other hand that” that it has become second nature and is constantly given as the explanation for their successes. In fact, this is a dangerous and wrong worldview which, far from guaranteeing the continued success of the revolution, underpins a whole approach in theory and practice which threatens to reverse the revolution.

One point in particular in the previously mentioned article needs to be emphasized here—the need for “one to divide into two” does not mean that a communist party or group is destined to split and split again, as the CPN(M) argues. Repudiating revisionism and defeating an incorrect line can, and often does, lead to strengthening the party not only ideologically and politically but also in terms of organizational solidity, numbers, and influence and, most importantly, ability to make revolution.

The Nepalese comrades are upholding the resolution of the two-line struggle between comrades Bhattarai and Prachanda in the CPN(M) as a model. We consider the “resolution” of that struggle to be precisely an example of “two into one,” when opposite viewpoints are reconciled which can only, and did in this particular circumstance, lead to the predominance of the incorrect line.³⁰

The struggle against eclectics was an important feature of Mao and the revolutionaries in the Communist Party of China, especially in the final, and tragically losing, battle with Deng Xiaoping. Deng criticized the revolutionary headquarters for being “only” concerned about class struggle and not “also” paying attention to production. Of course, this was a slander against the revolutionaries and Deng's real purpose was to negate and oppose Mao's teachings.

The revolutionaries in the Communist Party of China (CPC) put it this way:

“Eclecticism is revisionism. In putting the three directives on a par, and placing politics and economy, politics and vocational work and technique all on an equal footing, Deng Xiao-ping was using sophistry to negate the principal contradiction and the main aspect of a contradiction. This was an eclectic sleight of hand. Lenin pointed out in criticizing Bukharin: ‘His theoretical attitude is: “on the one hand, and on the other.” That is eclecticism.’” (Once again on the Trade Unions, the Current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin). We can use these very words to give an apt description of Deng Xiao-ping. The phenomenon only shows the weak nature of the revisionists. They want to reverse the theoretical conclusions arrived at by Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought and replace them with revisionist theories. But revisionism goes against the interests of the workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionary cadres and revolutionary intellectuals, that is, the masses who comprise 95 per cent of the population; and since practicing revisionism goes against the will of the people they dare not expose themselves too much, so they resort to eclectics because in falsifying Marxism in opportunist fashion, the

substitution of eclecticism for dialectics is the easiest way of deceiving the masses.”³¹

Crux of the Matter—Ideological and Political Line

One of the most often cited quotations used by our Movement is Mao’s celebrated formulation: “If one’s line is incorrect, one’s downfall is inevitable, even with the control of the central, local and army leadership. If one’s line is correct, even if one has not a single soldier at first, there will be soldiers, and even if there is no political power, political power will be gained. This is borne out by the historical experience of our Party and by that of the international communist movement since the time of Marx.... The crux of the matter is line. This is an irrefutable truth.”³²

And indeed, this quotation does concentrate brilliantly and accurately expresses the relationship between a correct line and the consequences in practice of any given line. The political and ideological line is a concentration of the class outlook, methodology and approach of a party (ideology) and the basic application of this outlook to the question of waging the class struggle, seizing power and advancing to communism (politics). Once the proletarian line is no longer in command, bourgeois goals, bourgeois methods and bourgeois politics will inevitably fill the void.

Our own Movement was born out of precisely such a struggle against an incorrect ideological and political line, specifically the revisionist line that triumphed in China after the death of Mao Tsetung by means of the coup d’état directed at his consistent followers. While the struggle in Nepal has not played the same kind of central and defining role in the world as the revolution in China under Mao’s leadership, it is still useful to remember the circumstances of that great struggle on an international level.

There were many parties and organizations who had professed agreement with Mao Tsetung and the Cultural Revolution and then went along with the revisionist usurpers in China. In the case of some it was open attraction to the politics of class collaboration, but in other cases a kind of *realpolitik* prevailed by which communists in other countries refused to accept the responsibility for understanding and evaluating the line of the CPC. They argued instead that the line of that Party was its “internal affair” and/or that the tremendous experience and prestige of the CPC meant that others had no real basis or capacity to understand the political line questions involved. Still others argued that the CPC had many previous two-line struggles and even if there were elements that they found disquieting in Hua Kuo-feng and Deng Xiao-ping, China after all, was a socialist country, things might well be reversed in the future, etc.

Some of this can be dismissed as slavish tailism and crass opportunism—for example, fear of losing what support China may have given this or that movement. However, the problem was much deeper than that: it went to the very way people looked at revolutionary experience, the understanding of internationalism and the responsibilities of communists in different countries for the problems of the movement as a whole. In short, *criteria other than* the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line were used to assess the situation in China and

guide the “communists.” The results of this pragmatism and opportunism were tragic. Most of the erstwhile communist movement crashed on the rocks, were unable to maintain their revolutionary bearings and ended up, more often than not, in reconciling with the existing reactionary order and/or disappearing entirely. Furthermore, the developments in China completely bore out the scientific predictions of what the result of the change in line in the CPC meant—namely the restoration of capitalism with the re-emergence of all of the horrors, oppression and exploitation that is at the heart of this system. Almost alone in the world, RIM was able to keep its ideological bearings in the face of the reactionary ideological tsunami that accompanied the loss in China precisely because RIM was able, at least in its main aspects, to understand the reasons for the reversal in China and uphold the principal tenets of MLM, including as they had developed and were advanced by Mao.

Today we cannot indulge in anything less than the same kind of thorough, scientific examination of reality and, on that basis, a firm orientation and determination to carry the struggle forward. Unfortunately, the ability of the Movement to carry out these responsibilities has been undermined to no insignificant degree by some of the ways the Peru difficulties were approached. While this is not the place to review that whole history, the truth is that a wrong approach interfered with and at times even overshadowed the correct revolutionary communist orientation upon which our Movement was founded. In particular, there arose the criterion of “political truth,” an approach which abandoned principles and took decisions not on the basis of “seeking truth from facts” and applying our revolutionary science to understanding reality but on the basis of what seemed “useful.” In particular this type of outlook was used to justify the “hoax” theory put forward by the leadership of the Communist Party of Peru (PCP), which insisted, against available evidence, that Chairman Gonzalo had no connection to the Right Opportunist Line in the Party and that to even investigate this possibility was to commit the vilest treason. Today we are paying the price for those errors as well, as the Movement flounders in the face of a great challenge of stepping forward and coming to the assistance of the revolution in Nepal which has given so much to the international communist movement and which we hold so dear.

Another quotation from Lenin often used in our Movement but too often misunderstood or ignored in practice is worth repeating: “There is one, and only one, kind of real internationalism, and that is—working wholeheartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in one’s own country, and supporting (by propaganda, sympathy and material aid) this struggle, this, and only this, line in every country without exception.” We have the responsibility of fighting “for this, and only this, line and no other” in Nepal, no less than the responsibility to advance the revolutionary struggle in one’s own country. Otherwise “proletarian internationalism” is reduced to a mockery and “international solidarity” is nothing more than a kind of “commodity exchange,” as can be readily seen in the dealings of opportunists and revisionists on the international level. Trading the “capital” of the struggle in Nepal (i.e., its influence and prestige in the world) in return for silence or acquiescence in a wrong line is the worst kind of opportunism. And we have also seen what happens if the “capital” loses its value, as was the case in Peru: people with this kind of approach are quick to

look for another trading partner. This is partially what explains how some who shamelessly tailed the screeching of PCP supporters against even the idea of negotiations now find it so easy to swallow the CPN(M)'s "Comprehensive Peace Agreement."

Many comrades fail to understand what is going on in Nepal, or fail to draw the appropriate conclusions, because they have a great deal of confidence and respect for the leaders of the CPN(M) and do not understand why comrades such as these would adopt a line which, objectively, serves the efforts of the class enemy to reimpose reactionary rule on the society. Once again, the central question of political and ideological line is replaced with the subjective realm of intentions. We have no doubt that Chairman Prachanda and other leaders of the CPN(M) believe very much in the communist goal and are convinced that the present steps they are taking are a necessary if convoluted means of reaching this goal. And intentions *do* count in the sense that the comrades' desire to reach the communist future provides a favorable basis for struggle and a reason to believe that they can be won to understand why their present course is so harmful. But it is also true, as comrade Chang Chun-chiao said, that theory is the dynamic factor in ideology. It is the theories of the CPN(M) concerning the nature of the state, the summation of the proletarian revolutions of the 20th century, how to understand democracy, and, on the philosophical level, the Party's criticism of the centrality of one divides into two, that are playing the "dynamic factor" in transforming the ideology of the party. Thus it is necessary to sharply criticize and repudiate these erroneous theories, and without such repudiation even a shift of tactic or policy, however welcome such shifts would be, is unlikely to get at the root of the problem by itself.

What Type of Ideological Synthesis Is Needed?

Our previous exchange of letters with the comrades of the CPN(M) focused, among other subjects, on the correct understanding of "democracy" and its role in the revolutionary state.

It should be apparent from reading the exchange of letters between our Party and the CPN(M) that the ideological and political differences are not limited to the question of the policies CPN(M) has adopted over the last two years nor even to the more general points about the nature of the new-democratic revolution. Comrade Bhattarai's "New State" article that was the original focus of our Party's criticism closely links its theses concerning the "transitional state" to the author's summation of the experience of the proletarian revolutions of the 20th century and their reversals.

One could sidestep this question with the observation that if the revolutionaries refuse to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in the first place there is no reason to worry about preventing its reversal. But there *is* a very real link between the ideology and politics that the CPN(M) is developing as "democracy of the 21st century" and the tragic policies the CPN(M) is carrying out today. Basically it comes down again to the ABCs of Marxism: the proletariat, led by a vanguard political party, must, by force, defeat the existing apparatus of the state, establish its own rule (class dictatorship) and use this state power to transform society step by step until

the very basis for classes no longer exists, either in the material conditions of life or in the thinking of people. This crucial question of the dictatorship of the proletariat has been at the heart of the major struggles between Marxism and revisionism throughout the whole history of the international communist movement, and it is no surprise to see them resurfacing today.

It is most definitely the case that simply repeating the experience of the past, or simply recycling past polemics, cannot resolve the problem of how the proletarian revolution can reemerge from the cinders of defeat and actually advance amidst tumultuous class struggle toward the communist future. Tremendous things were accomplished by our predecessors, which reached their greatest peak in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution led by Mao Tsetung. But the world moves on, humanity's understanding advances on different fronts, material conditions of life are transformed and revolution faces new and unexpected challenges. If we insist so much on the "dictatorship of the proletariat," it is not *because* it is an ABC of Marxism but because all that we understand about history and all that we can learn from contemporary society and the class struggle argues that *there is no other vehicle* for reaching the goal of communist society—a goal which is *possible* and which corresponds more than ever to the needs of the masses of the people on this earth. The Chairman of our Party, Bob Avakian, has been working for several decades on the vexing problem of learning from the past experience, negative and positive, of the proletarian revolution, and has developed a new synthesis which he has referred to as "a solid core with a lot of elasticity." Comrade Avakian put it this way:

"This new synthesis involves a recasting and recombining of the positive aspects of the experience so far of the communist movement and of socialist society, while learning from the negative aspects of this experience, in the philosophical and ideological as well as the political dimensions, so as to have a more deeply and firmly rooted scientific orientation, method and approach with regard not only to making revolution and seizing power but then, yes, to meeting the material requirements of society and the needs of the masses of people, in an increasingly expanding way, in socialist society—overcoming the deep scars of the past and continuing the revolutionary transformation of society, while at the same time actively supporting the world revolutionary struggle and acting on the recognition that the world arena and the world struggle are most fundamental and important, in an overall sense—together with opening up qualitatively more space to give expression to the intellectual and cultural needs of the people, broadly understood, and enabling a more diverse and rich process of exploration and experimentation in the realms of science, art and culture, and intellectual life overall, with increasing scope for the contention of different ideas and schools of thought and for individual initiative and creativity and protection of individual rights, including space for individuals to interact in 'civil society' independently of the state—all within an overall cooperative and collective framework and at the same time as state power is maintained and further developed as a *revolutionary* state power serving the interests of the proletarian revolution, in the particular country and worldwide, with this state being the leading and central element in the economy and in the overall direction of society, while the state itself is being continually transformed into something radically different from all previous states, as a crucial part of the advance toward the eventual abolition of the state with the achievement of communism on a world scale.

“In a sense, it could be said that the new synthesis is a synthesis of the previous experience of socialist society and of the international communist movement more broadly, on the one hand, *and* of the criticisms, of various kinds and from various standpoints, of that experience, on the other hand. That does not mean that this new synthesis represents a mere ‘pasting together’ of that experience on the one hand, and the criticisms on the other hand. It is not an eclectic combination of these things, but a sifting through, a recasting and recombining on the basis of a scientific, materialist and dialectical outlook and method, and of the need to continue advancing toward communism, a need and objective which this outlook and method continues to point to—and, the more thoroughly and deeply it is taken up and applied, the more firmly it points to this need and objective.”³³

The above excerpt expresses in a concentrated way how we understand the process of making revolution and continuing to go forward toward communism. Our fear is that instead of sifting through, recasting and recombining the criticisms of the socialist experience and integrating that into a deeper and more thorough understanding of the need for a revolutionary state power of the proletariat to transform society, the comrades of the CPN(M) are actually *uncritically adopting wholesale* ideological and political positions of the opponents of the proletarian revolution. This is particularly the case in how “democracy” is being portrayed and promoted in a way that rips it out of its historic and class content, treats it as an end rather than a means, and *reduces* the struggle to one for formal political rights—bourgeois democracy. Twenty-first century-democracy as the comrades of the CPN(M) are portraying it, looks more like the 17th- and 18th-century democracy proclaimed by Locke or Rousseau than the 21st-century communist revolution which we need to lead.

We cannot in this article review all of the many important points of discussion that have emerged in the exchange between our Party and the CPN(M) or in the other contributions of RIM parties and organizations. These questions of ideological and political line have immense implications for the future of our cause and we are more than a little disturbed by the fact that many or even most of the RIM parties and organizations apparently do not consider the current debate a crucial matter. The comrades of the CPN(M) told us to “be patient—wait and see.” Well, we have not been patient and we have not just waited, but we most certainly have seen. The ideological and political line that the CPN(M) adopted is being put into practice and the initial results are there to be seen now. Even more tragic and disastrous results will surely follow *unless* the Party leadership finds the orientation and resolve to chart a different, and in a fundamental way, an *opposite* path. Contrary to the CPN(M)’s efforts to convince us that their theory is a result of their practice, we see the opposite. Theory, line, has preceded practice, has led practice, as indeed it must. In 1996 it was the adoption of Maoism by the CPN(M) and in particular the theory of new-democratic revolution and people’s war that preceded and prepared the initiation of the great People’s War in Nepal and which remained the dominant and determining line through ten years of heroic struggle. Unfortunately, today it is an erroneous theory of fighting for a “transitional state” floating somewhere between the new democracy of the proletariat and

bourgeois democracy (in its form in the semi-feudal and semi-colonial countries) which is preceding, shaping and guiding the practice of the Party.

What is needed now is for the RIM to come squarely to grips with its urgent responsibilities and really be the center of the world's Maoist forces that the world so desperately needs and really be the thorough-going proletarian internationalists we claim to be. Today this is taking a particular focus in the struggle to save the revolution in Nepal. This very important battle is part of a greater process of rescuing the communist project in the only way that it can be rescued, by confronting the ideological and political questions of revolution in the 21st century, daring to examine and reexamine our precepts and understandings and forging the solution to the problems of humanity. Our own steps along this process have convinced us, more than ever, of the viability and necessity of the communist revolution. The great lesson of ten years of People's War in Nepal is that it is possible, even in a generally unfavorable international situation and in a small country, to lead the masses to break free from a system dominated by imperialism and reaction and in so doing hasten the downfall of that world system. Revolution in Nepal is, as any real revolution will be, exceedingly complex, rich, and difficult, and to advance from one step to another is not easy. The important thing is to get back on the right road and use the most advanced and correct understanding to guide the revolution forward.

The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

March 19, 2008

Notes

1 See the article by Chairman Prachanda, "A Brief Introduction to the Policies of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)", *The Worker* no 9, "In the given context of the existence of two ideologies, two armies and two states in the country, the Party is agreeable to demobilization of both armies and carrying out of elections to the Constituent Assembly under the supervision of the United Nations organization and international human rights organizations."

2 Smearing red ash (tikka) on the forehead, especially in the case of men, is a Hindu custom.

3 For example, in the debate over the Right Opportunist Line in Peru, our Party refused to categorically reject the possibility of negotiations and we struggled against those who condemned the CPN(M)'s previous ceasefires and negotiations. It is worth recalling later that we were also attacked for these positions, including by some who are now among the most ardent supporters of the CPN(M).

4 Of course, any discussion of this type quickly falls into speculation because it is impossible to know how the actual situation in Nepal would have developed if the CPN(M) had maintained a firm grasp on the crucial political and ideological questions.

5 Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Chapter VII, p. 122.

6 How to sum up the Paris Commune has always been an important debate between communist revolutionaries and different types of reformists and anarchists. We will only note here that the "New State" article is a continuation of the tradition of misusing the experience of the Commune *against* the actual lessons that Marx and Engels drew at the time—the need for the more vigorous

and more thorough struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

7 Central Committee Resolution, October 2005. “To shut eyes on the historical necessity of dissolving and disarming the royal army that has been defending absolute monarchy by booting down people’s democratic movement and its achievement since 250 years, in general, and past six decades, in particular, becomes moving around feudalism and imperialism. In the history, no republic has been established ever without dissolving and defeating the army subservient to monarchy and Nepal cannot be an exception to it...”

8 We would be interested in knowing more about the experience in the elections held under the authority of the Magarat Autonomous Republic, including the CPN(M)’s decision to let other political parties participate—which some did on a local level. In one district the candidate of the party was defeated, leading the Party as a whole to study the reasons for the dissatisfaction of the masses. But the important thing to stress here is the world of difference between this experience under the system of rule (class dictatorship) led by the Party and the multiparty elections conducted under the dictatorship of the exploiting classes.

9 *The Red Star*, no. 2, January 1-15, 2008, article by a reporter identified as a member of the CPN(M) Central Committee.

10 See in particular William Hinton's magistral *Fanshen*, an account of the land reform movement in one village in China.

11 Lenin pointed out in his celebrated work *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (Vol. 3 first published in 1905) that small commodity production of a free peasantry creates a fertile ground for the rapid development of capitalism.

12 “The State and Revolution,” *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, 422.

13 Comrade Gaurav, *The Red Star* no. 2, January 1-15, 2008.

14 In fact, the proponents of the “peaceful transition to socialism” have never denied that force might be necessary on the part of the “legitimate elected majority” against those who might refuse to accept the will of the people.

15 The post-apartheid ANC regime in South Africa instituted what has been often touted as the most democratic constitution in the world. However, one of its pillars is its infamous “property clause” which recognized and preserved the right of the small minority of white exploiters to maintain their property.

16 We saw, in our study of the negotiations in relation to Peru, the fundamental difference between “negotiating in order to fight” and “fighting in order to negotiate.” In other words, both a revolutionary and a revisionist strategy made room for both tactics of fighting and talking (and many other forms of political activity as well). But from the revolutionary perspective, the strategy of the complete destruction of the old reactionary state leads and determines when, if and how, the tactics of negotiations and compromises are necessary.

17 See the “Open Letter to the Communist Party of the Philippines” from 1987 printed in *A World to Win*, no. 8, which analyzes this line at length.

18 Reports from this high-powered imperialist-sponsored institution can be found at www.crisisgroup.org

19 The 12-point agreement (November 2005) is the political agreement between the CPN(M) and the Seven Party Alliance of the principal parties of the bourgeoisie which later developed into the Comprehensive Political Agreement (November 2006).

20 There was also a serious political error in seeing the struggle as essentially a fight between fascism and bourgeois democracy that helped ideologically disarm the communists and lay the basis for the very error we are discussing. See Bob Avakian, *Conquer the World* at revcom.us.

21 *Conquer the World* discusses these questions in depth.

22 The CPN(Unity Center) was the organization that was transformed into the CPN(M) in 1994.

23 See, for example, the article by Comrade Basanta on the “International Dimension of Prachanda Path” in *The Worker*, no. 10.

24 *The Red Star* no. 5, March 1-15, 2008.

25 *A World to Win News Service*, February 11, 2008.

26 *The Red Star* no. 4, February 16-29, 2008.

27 Comrade Kiran, *The Red Star* no. 4, February 16-29, 2008.

28 **The article from RIM comrades cites *Three Major Struggles on China’s Philosophical Front*. “One divides into two,” correctly understood as a concise way of expressing the law of the unity and struggle of opposites, embraces both aspects of the identity of opposites: first, that the two aspects of a contradiction mutually condition each other and coexist in the same process, and second, that in given conditions the two aspects are transformed into their opposite (the more important aspect). In “On Contradiction,” Mao explains that the coexistence and mutual conditioning of the two opposites corresponds to a situation of quantitative change (“relative rest”), and the transformation of the aspects into their opposite—to qualitative change, the leap in which the secondary aspect becomes principal and vice-versa (conspicuous change). Both phases are processes of the struggle of opposites, and therefore, they are processes in which “one divides into two,” but in different conditions and moments. Mao sums it up in this way: “Things are constantly transforming themselves from the first to the second state of motion; the struggle of opposites goes on in both states but the contradiction is resolved through the second state. That is why we say that the unity of opposites is conditional, temporary and relative, while the struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute.”

29 Of course, if an understanding is wrong or one-sided, it is correct to criticize it, even if it has been formulated by our great leaders. However, the principle of “one divides into two” as the fundamental law of dialectics is correct and should be mastered and applied and *not* repudiated.

30 Central Committee Resolution, October, 2005: “What those discussions and interactions clarified was that comrade Laldhoj and other comrades were not for split, there remained no basic difference even though there were differences in emphasis and angle in some questions related with ideology of protracted nature, remained similar kind of thinking in tactic against the absolute monarchy, party could be carried forward more unitedly in the sensitive moment of history by criticizing and self-criticising, verbally and in written, the weaknesses emerged from several doubts in the past.”

31 *Peking Review*, 1976

32 From the *10th National Congress of the Communist Party of China*, adopted August 28, 1973.

33 Bob Avakian, *Making Revolution and Emancipating Humanity*, 2007 at revcom.us

Editor's Note:

This letter is as it originally appeared with the exception of spelling and grammatical corrections and the deletion of a few citations internal to Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) publications

October 2005

To the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

Dear Comrades,

Our party, and especially its leadership, has paid close attention to the unfolding of the People's War in your country and the thinking of your party. We have particularly appreciated the orientation of Comrade Prachanda that Marxism-Leninism-Maoism advance into the 21st century and that the lessons of the first great wave of proletarian revolution beginning with the Paris Commune and continuing up until the defeat of the proletarian revolution in China must be summed up.

As you know the Chairman of our Party, Bob Avakian, has made the study of this experience a major focus of his attention. In many important aspects we have noticed a convergence between positions put forward by your party and the directions that we have also set forth. However, for some time now we have been disturbed by some of the political positions and their theoretical justifications that have been adopted by your party or, at least, by some leading comrades. Many of what we consider incorrect, or confused and eclectic positions are to be found in issue number 9 of *The Worker*, particularly, but not only, in the article by Comrade Baburam Bhattarai on "The Question of Building a New Type of State" (hereafter referred to as "New State").

Our growing concerns over the questions of political line and approach—especially on the question of dictatorship of the proletariat and democracy—are not just points of abstract theory, they very much have to do with the key line questions that in turn are relevant in terms of the immediate tasks of the revolution in your country when the old state is on its death-bed and the question arises if the revolution will be fully victorious, what type of state will replace the monarchy, what will be the role of this new state in world politics and how your struggle will help advance the world proletarian revolution.

The two-line struggle that has broken out in your party is focusing on precisely those questions where your past positions were, in our opinion, unclear, problematic or eclectic. "One is dividing into two" or at least it appears so, and it provides a great opportunity for the party to cast aside those aspects of its previous understanding and political line which go against the mainly correct orientation your party has been following throughout the long and complex course of the People's War.

Our own central understanding of the question of democracy and dictatorship is best expressed by the following quotation from Comrade Avakian: "In a world marked by profound class

divisions and social inequality, to talk about 'democracy'—without talking about the *class nature* of that democracy and which class it serves—is meaningless, and worse. So long as society is divided into classes, there can be no 'democracy for all': one class or another will rule, and it will uphold and promote that kind of democracy which serves its interests and goals. The question is: *which class* will rule and whether its rule, and its system of democracy, will serve the *continuation*, or the eventual *abolition*, of class divisions and the corresponding relations of exploitation, oppression and inequality.”

Our concerns center on two basic levels. First of all, the theoretical understanding of democracy under the socialist transition presented in “New State” loses sight of the most essential problems of advancing socialist society toward communism and, in particular, undermines the understanding that it is not possible to transform society and advance toward the communist future without the dictatorship of the proletariat. Secondly, and partially flowing from the erroneous conception of democracy expressed in “New State”, arguments are made that tend to negate the necessity of establishing a new-democratic state (People’s Republic) as the immediate goal of the People’s War in Nepal and would instead argue for instituting some kind of bourgeois democratic republic as a necessary step.

Democracy: Form and Content

In the different documents of *The Worker* number 9 there is a great deal of emphasis on the importance of democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat in the transition toward communism. It is very important that your party is emphasizing the state as a transitional form to the final goal of communism. It is also correct to stress that the concrete measures, policies and features of the state system that are developed in the transition period must have as their aim the achievement of this final goal.

The viewpoint that “New State” implies is that the simple extension of formal democracy is the main aspect in leading toward the “withering away of the state”. In support of this argument it quotes Lenin “the more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment when it becomes unnecessary.” But several points need to be made here. 1) The experience in the USSR and China and the world revolution generally has shown that the need to develop and build up a powerful state machinery is not something that can be quickly dispensed with after the victory of the revolution in a particular country. In a world still dominated by imperialism it is quite impossible to imagine that the need for a powerful standing army, to take one key example that is cited in “New State”, will quickly disappear. This has clearly turned out to be a more protracted process than envisioned originally by Marx and Engels and even by Lenin when he wrote *State and Revolution* on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution. 2) When Lenin writes of “democracy” in the passage cited in “New State” he is clearly *not* mainly talking about *formal* democracy, such as elections and the right to vote. Rather, he is emphasizing that the majority of society will “have learned to administer the state *themselves*.” This, too, is not something that is easily accomplished and will no doubt take generations to accomplish on a world scale, especially with the remaining strength of international imperialism. But it does provide one very important measure for determining to what extent the proletarian state is truly democratic in the

most profound sense of the word and, specifically, in a way that is consistent with and serves rule by the proletariat and the advance, under that rule, toward the goal of communism and, with the achievement of communism, and not before, toward the abolition, the “withering away,” of the state. The bourgeois concept of democracy is that *election* and formal rights is the essential feature of democracy. The classical revisionist conception is that as long as the state is acting in the “interests of the people” it can be considered democratic with or without elections. But Mao situated the fundamental and essential problem elsewhere—in the problem of eliminating what the Chinese comrades referred to as the “4 Alls” in reference to a crucial citation from Marx when he said the communist revolution must aim at the elimination of: all classes and class distinctions generally, all the relations of production on which they rest, all the social relations corresponding to them, and all the ideas that result from these social relations.

As long as the three great differences exist, as long as relations of production are still not completely free of bourgeois right, as long the differences and inequalities left over from the old society still exist, as long as production and exchange of commodities and the law of value persist, even if restricted, then the possibility of the emergence of new forms of exploitation exists and there will be representatives who emerge to champion these exploitative relations of production and ultimately attempt to establish a different class rule. And the existence of these various expressions of social inequality and of bourgeois right will, for a long time, exist at the same time as and in connection with—and will be interacting with, and reinforced in important ways by—the existence of, and the influence of, imperialist and reactionary states and their continual attempts to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat where it exists. The world-historical problems connected with all this, the reasons why this emphasizes the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat, until communism is reached, worldwide, and crucial questions bound up with how to exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat so as to, at one and the same time, continue to transform society toward the goal of communism, in unity and dialectical relation with the world revolution, and to develop the proletarian dictatorship as a state that is radically different from all previous forms of the state—these and related questions are at the heart of, and provide the foundation and framework for, how as communists we have to understand and approach the specific question of democracy, its class character in different societies, under different systems of class rule, and its relation to the goal of moving beyond the whole realm—and, as Marx put it, the narrow horizon—of bourgeois right, both in the material world and in the thinking of people.

Formal Democracy Under Socialism

One important common concern of both our parties is to sum up the whole experience of the proletarian revolution and the proletarian dictatorship to date. It is certainly the case that we will not be able to make revolution in the 21st century if we fail to really examine, from many angles and in depth, the positive and negative experience of our class in this respect.

We cannot go into depth in this letter into this crucial question of the understanding of the transition period—the dictatorship of the proletariat. Comrade Avakian has written a great deal on this subject, and we would like to call your attention in particular to his article “Democracy:

More Than Ever We Can and Must Do Better Than That” refuting K. Venu in number 17 of *A World To Win*, the article “Dictatorship and Democracy, and the Socialist Transition to Communism” and the article on “Discussion With Comrades On Epistemology – On Knowing And Changing The World” (see revcom.us) an excerpt of which was submitted for publication in an upcoming issue of your English language journal *The Worker*.

In order to achieve a higher level of synthesis on the problem of the socialist transition, even as we correctly refuse to exempt anything from critical re-examination, it remains necessary to firmly uphold certain basic principles of our understanding, including the central Marxist thesis on the nature of the state and the need to maintain a dictatorship of the proletariat. And while the dictatorship of the proletariat is upheld in words in the “New State” article, the article actually promotes a bourgeois-democratic orientation that would, if followed, lead to not establishing a proletarian dictatorship¹ or to abandoning it if it were established.

The articles in *The Worker* number 9 address the difficult question of what forms of laws, elections and so forth should take place under the dictatorship of the proletariat. We feel that to make the most essential question one of formal democracy, and its expression in elections, competing political parties, and the like, is a serious mistake and will strengthen tendencies toward the abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, or its outright overthrow by counter-revolutionaries. This orientation actually directs attention away from the *main* source of capitalist restoration and away from the main vehicles for involving the masses in the further revolutionizing of society.

Finally, it should be noted that elections in socialist society are no guarantee at all against the rise of revisionism in the state apparatus or its conversion into machinery of oppression against the people. In the same way in which the bourgeoisie in the West generally finds bourgeois democracy suitable for exercising its dictatorship, indeed the “most suitable” form as Lenin put it, new exploiters, arising within socialist society, and in particular within the state and the party leading the state could also keep the masses ignorant, inactive politically and oppressed while allowing them to cast a ballot every few years.

Does this mean we are arguing that there is no importance to formal democratic rights under socialism, or that there does not have to be a Constitution, a set of laws, norms which take into account the rights of the people? No, this is not our understanding. Comrade Avakian has stressed in his recent writings on this subject the importance of such guarantees in keeping with the Maoist understanding that even under the dictatorship of the proletariat the contradiction between the people and the state will continue to exist, albeit in a different way than under the rule of the exploiting classes. He has also explored the possibility of allowing competing political parties, using elections and so forth as part of the socialist state system. At the same time, these possibilities have been put forward in a framework of what Comrade Avakian has

¹ In speaking of the dictatorship of the proletariat we are also including forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat involving different class alliances, particularly the new-democratic, or people’s democratic dictatorship, under the leadership of the proletariat that Mao describes.

referred to as “solid core with a lot of elasticity”—the solid core being the dictatorship of the proletariat led by its vanguard party. Without this “solid core” elasticity turns into bourgeois-democratic pluralism, which will quickly lead to the re-establishment of capitalism and a real dictatorship over the vast majority of the people. Again, in this letter we can only briefly refer to and characterize these important points, and in addition to calling comrades’ attention to the talk on “Dictatorship and Democracy, and The Socialist Transition to Communism” by Chairman Avakian, as well as the polemic he wrote against K. Venu, we have included, along with this letter, two short excerpts from a recent talk by Chairman Avakian—“Some Further Thinking On: The Socialist State as a New Kind of State” and “The Creative Development of MLM, Not of Revisionism”—which deal with questions concerning the nature of the state, the proletarian state in particular, and the transition to communism.

We see this as a different approach than that argued for in “New State” and some other documents. For example, there is the suggestion that it should be possible to adopt wholesale the methods of direct rule used in the Paris Commune or to dissolve the standing army. But there will be no dictatorship of the proletariat in the conditions of the world today without a standing army, and in fact, to dissolve the revolutionary standing army, once socialism has been established and consolidated—to a certain beginning level only, in relation to the long-term and strategic task of advancing through the socialist transition to communism, on a world scale—to dissolve the people’s army in those circumstances would be to invite, and in reality to be defenseless against, attack at the hands of counter-revolutionaries within the socialist country and imperialist and reactionary states, with the objective effect that the socialist society would be crushed and abolished and the masses subjected, once again, to the horrors of rule by imperialism and reactionary classes. And it will not be possible to utilize the Commune forms such as the direct election of all officials as a general principle in running the state. History has shown that without the leadership of a genuine proletarian party there will be no seizure of power or possibility of consolidating and maintaining that power after it has been seized.

The quotation from Rosa Luxemburg's 1918 criticism of the October Revolution, reprinted favourably in "New State", argues that the leadership of the party will inevitably lead to the dictatorship of the party. It is definitely true that the very existence of the proletarian state, a vanguard proletarian party, a standing army, etc., all can be transformed into their opposite—a state of the bourgeoisie oppressing the masses of the people. The same can be said for the revolution itself—there is no guarantee that it will continually advance toward communism—revolutions can be and unfortunately many have been aborted or turned into their opposites. But this is no argument not to make a revolution. Whether a state continues to advance toward the ultimate goal of communism, and its own eventual withering away, depends on whether and how that state is fighting to transform all of the objective material and ideological conditions that make the existence of the state still necessary. There is no easy way around this. Relying on the institutions and practice of formal democracy will not solve the problem—it will not remove the contradictions that make the dictatorship of the proletariat absolutely necessary, it will only strengthen the hand of those forces who are seeking to overthrow and abolish the dictatorship of the proletariat, and who can draw strength in these efforts from the remaining inequalities in socialist society and from the existence of reactionary and imperialist states, which for some

time are likely to be in a position of "encircling" socialist states as they are brought into being through revolutionary struggle. Abolishing or undermining the monopoly of political power and, yes of armed power, by the proletariat, and its vanguard leadership—in whatever form this is done, including by having elections in which the vanguard party and its role is put up for decision in general elections—this will, for all the reasons we have spoken to here, lead to the *loss of power by the proletariat* and the restoration of *reactionary* state power, with everything that means.

“New State” argues that past proletarian states, “instead of serving the masses and acting as instruments of continuous revolution turned into masters of the people and instruments of counter-revolution, and rather than moving in the direction of withering away transformed into huge totalitarian bureaucracies and instruments of repression.” This description suffers from a classless treatment of the state more reflective of the petty bourgeois belief that oppression springs from contradiction between society and the state, rather than the Marxist understanding that the state exists to ensure the dominance of one or another class in society. And, to be frank, it echoes much of the slanders of the bourgeoisie itself against the dictatorship of the proletariat and falls, to a significant degree, into accepting the outlook and methods of the bourgeoisie and the corresponding “verdicts” against revolutions led by the proletariat, through its communist vanguard, and aiming for socialism and ultimately communism. While we share with your Party the understanding that it is crucial to engage deeply and sum up comprehensively the experience of socialist society and the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is also crucial that we do this from the standpoint of, and with the scientific method of, MLM and not allow the influence of the outlook of the bourgeoisie and its “verdicts” to distort and subvert such a scientific summation.

The proletarian dictatorship is portrayed in “New State” as, at best, a “necessary evil.” In fact, state power in the hands of the proletariat and its class allies is a tremendous positive achievement that can actually allow the masses of people to transform the world and themselves in the process. There is no reason to be apologetic about this. In Nepal itself we have seen the transformations in social conditions and culture that have already taken place in the liberated areas, which give a glimpse of the even greater things that will be accomplished when nationwide power is in the hands of the masses under the leadership of the vanguard proletarian party.

We can see from the very clear example of revolutionary China that the proletarian dictatorship was not a “totalitarian bureaucracy”. When the state, including the army, was under the leadership of Mao and the genuine revolutionaries, tremendous revolutionary transformations were able to take place, including, very importantly, the incorporation of more and more of the masses into the administration of the state through different vehicles (“three-in-one committees” and so on). China did not just gradually become more and more capitalist, more and more “totalitarian”, as the state grew stronger and stronger. In order for capitalism to be transformed, state power had to be seized by the capitalist roaders, which they did through a coup d’état after Mao’s death.

Similarly, for the reasons we have touched on here, Luxemburg’s remedy of general elections, “unrestricted freedom of press and assembly”, and the elimination of the leading role of the party

will only ensure that instead of “a few dozen” party leaders leading the proletarian state, a few dozen (or less) opportunists and capitalist roaders will monopolize the state and use that monopoly of state power to ensure that no real democracy exists for the masses of people, as we have seen time and time again in history.

Competition between different political parties cannot be made an absolute under the dictatorship of the proletariat – it cannot be raised above, or even put on an equal level with, the need for the state to continue to reflect, and to reinforce and further, the objectives of the proletarian revolution, in defending what has been won through revolutionary struggle, continuing to further revolutionize society, in the economic base and the political-ideological superstructure, supporting revolutionary struggles throughout the world, and advancing toward the achievement of the “4 Alls” and the goal of communism, on a world scale. Whether or not a state is, in its principal aspect, *furthering those objectives* (and not whether or not, or to what degree, there are elections with competing parties, etc.) is essential in determining whether or not the state, in reality, represents the fundamental interests of the proletariat and masses of people. And while, once again, we can recognize a role, and importance, in socialist society for things like elections, even with some aspect of competition between different trends and even organized forces – and while we must recognize the importance of a Constitution, laws, and so on, which give expression to democracy, in a broad sense, for the masses of people, on the basis of rule by the proletariat – *all those things too* are dependent on, and find their role in relation to, that fundamental question of whether the state is *actually furthering* the objectives we have referred to here, *or* whether it is in fact *working against* the further revolutionization of society and the achievement of the “4 Alls” and communism, world-wide strengthening instead the bases for the restoration of capitalism, expanding the scope and influence of bourgeois right, in the production relations, the social relations, and the political and ideological superstructure of society, and in the relation of the society to the world situation and the struggle between revolution and counter-revolution throughout the world.

Certainly the genuine proletarian revolutionaries cannot and should not allow the dictatorship of the proletariat to be overthrown by a vote. And, it is possible to envision circumstances when, even in conditions of proletarian rule, the majority of the masses might—under the pressure of the world imperialist system as well as the domestic reactionary classes—vote against their own class interests. One thing can be sure—if the reactionary classes return to power through a vote, they will stay in power—there cannot be democratic “alternating” between proletarian and reactionary state power. Again, this does not rule out the advisability of some degree of electoral competition under socialism, but any such measures must take place *within* the proletarian dictatorship – they can never “stand above” the actual class struggle, both within the particular country and on an international level, and the dialectical interpenetration and interplay between the two.

Yes, there is a real and difficult problem of how to maintain a vibrant political and cultural life, how to train the masses of people to more and more take the affairs of state into their own hands, how to enable them to become fit to rule, to paraphrase Marx. There is a great deal to be summed up about difficulties our class has had in managing this correctly in the past and a great

deal we will have to struggle over and learn. But one thing is certain, it is *impossible* to solve these problems unless the authority of the proletariat is strong. Again, we can see the dialectic between Mao's authority in China, which as we know was considerably strengthened during the GPCR and the unparalleled flourishing of mass democracy that also took place². As for those who opposed Mao's "dictatorial" role—we know where their type of democracy led the people.

People's Republic or "Transitional Forms"

In "New State" the point is made that "we should not rule out the possibilities of having to pass through various mixed and transitional forms of democracy in the process of marching from autocratic monarchy through bourgeois democracy to proletarian democracy." This sentence is arguing (or at the very least "not ruling out") that the revolution in the monarchy of Nepal must "pass through" bourgeois democracy as a distinct phase, require a distinct form of state rule, before "proletarian democracy" can be established. This same theme has appeared in other documents of the party as well, in particular in an article aimed at "Our American Friends" in which it specifically states that the immediate goal of the revolution in Nepal is *not* a people's republic but rather a bourgeois democratic republic referring to the bourgeois republic established by George Washington after the U.S. War of Independence. This is most assuredly *not* the kind of society and kind of state that the masses in Nepal, the United States or elsewhere need at this stage of world history.

It should be noted in passing that this article is overly generous toward the democracy of the U.S. bourgeoisie—the bourgeois republic established after independence from Britain did not even abolish slavery until a bloody civil war followed eighty years later. And U.S. bourgeois democracy has always meant real dictatorship over the masses of people including murderous suppression aimed at the working class and the oppressed nationalities in the U.S.

We see in "New State" where the theoretical confusion about democracy, especially the over-emphasis on certain forms of bourgeois democracy (competing parties, elections and so forth), leads in the direction of abandoning the Maoist understanding of the new-democratic revolution. We all know that the stage of the revolution in Nepal is one of completing the bourgeois-democratic revolution, as was the case in China and as is generally the case in the countries of the Third World. But what this article misses is that the bourgeois democratic tasks are solved *under the leadership of the proletariat*, and that it must lead *not* to the establishment of a bourgeois republic but rather to a new-democratic or People's Republic, which is, in essence, a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat in alliance with all other revolutionary and progressive sections of society, including the national bourgeoisie.

The article hinges its argument mainly on the specific conditions of Nepal, in particular that it has a monarchy, which somehow requires a special sub-stage of struggle. No doubt the existence

² Our point is not that revolution cannot advance beyond the heights achieved during the GPCR. Both the weaknesses as well as the great accomplishments of the Cultural Revolution must be examined critically. But the basic point is that democracy for the masses is dialectically related to advancing the proletarian dictatorship.

of the monarchy is an important factor to take into account in analyzing Nepal, and developing and applying the strategy and corresponding tactics to advance the revolution in Nepal, but it would be wrong to conclude from this that Nepal exists in a completely separate category than other oppressed countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and that the political questions involving the stage of the revolution are fundamentally different.

Every country will have its particularity—in Iran the reactionary dictatorship takes the form of a theocracy,³ in many other Third World countries there are essentially one party dictatorships, with or without a parliament, in some countries there is military rule, and there are other countries with monarchies. Again these particularities need to be analyzed and taken into account as part of developing a genuine revolutionary strategy and the corresponding tactics in every country. But we have seen again and again that arguments have been made that these specific forms require a specific stage of first establishing (or "passing through" to use the terms of "New State") a "pure" bourgeois democratic republic and only then can the revolution advance to a proletarian stage. And nowhere have such arguments contributed to—or have attempts to implement such a program led to—the eventual victory of the new-democratic revolution and the advance to the socialist stage of the revolution.

The role and character of the ruling classes and their political representatives, such as the parliamentary parties, are determined fundamentally not by their relation to the monarchy but by their relationship to imperialism and feudalism.

The goal of the new-democratic revolution cannot be a bourgeois republic and the state system it establishes cannot be a bourgeois democracy. Indeed this was one of Mao's most important theoretical breakthroughs, which led the way to the establishment of the People's Republic of China. He stressed that the bourgeoisie always hides behind the category of "citizen" to conceal the real class distinctions in society and Mao stresses that instead of bourgeois democracy it is necessary to establish a state structure based on "democratic centralism" because "only a government based on democratic centralism will allow the whole of the revolutionary people to express themselves freely and combat the enemies of the revolution with a maximum of energy". (On New Democracy)

"New State" cites an important passage from Lenin: "The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: the dictatorship of the proletariat." But then it goes on to say in the next paragraph that "In the transitional period of a backward society like Nepal, where the transition has to take place from semi-feudal autocracy through bourgeois democracy to communism, there would be naturally more diversities and complexities."

The above situation is a *basically wrong approach* to understanding the transitional stage. The leadership of the proletariat means that the bourgeois democratic *tasks*—freeing the country

³ Although it should also be pointed out that Iran has a vigorous and functioning parliament, competing political parties, and so forth, within the framework of its theocracy.

from feudalism and foreign imperialism—can take place *without* creating a bourgeois democratic *state*. It is the new-democratic system itself that is the actual application of Lenin's point of the "tremendous variety abundance and variety of political forms" of the dictatorship of the proletariat. New democracy is the *form* of the dictatorship of the proletariat particular to the oppressed countries and which completes the bourgeois democratic revolution and transforms it, without interruption, to the socialist stage.

In our epoch the liberation of countries and nations cannot take place through bourgeois democratic revolution of the old type. This is not some mere "academic" point—or, worse yet, a dogmatic insistence on strategy divorced from actual conditions—but is a fundamental principle based in reality and confirmed by a wealth of experience, both positive experience and, all too often, negative experience paid for in the blood of masses and the severe setback of the struggle for the emancipation of the masses. This is mainly because the strength of international imperialism reinforces the subordination of the oppressed nations and, as part of this, tends to preserve and utilize backward aspects of the socio-economic base and superstructure, such as feudalism and the monarchy in Nepal, even while penetration of imperialist capital undermines some aspects in pre-capitalist society and intensifies the class struggle. Exactly because imperialism is a world system and because, in the final analysis only another world system, communism, can finally supplant it, in this epoch no state can exist, at least not for any significant period of time, which is not led either by the proletariat or by the reactionary classes connected to the imperialist system itself. Parliament or monarchy, junta or single party dictatorship, all the various forms of reactionary comprador bureaucrat capitalist regimes in the Third World share common class features and we must indeed "rule out" (to use the term of "New State") any "transitional form" which is not based on the leadership of the proletariat. Indeed history has shown that when communists participate in such a government the transition is not toward socialism and communism but rather a transition of the party that takes part toward disaster.

If a bourgeois democratic republic is established in whose hand will be the state, and in particular, the army? Would it be in the hands of the revolutionary masses of Nepal who have been struggling and sacrificing or would it be in the hands of the reactionary classes, in Nepal and internationally, who have been waging the counter-revolutionary war? It has, alas, often been the case that the oppressed classes and their leadership, including communists, have not sought to smash the resistance of their enemies, but it has *never* been the case that the exploiting classes fail to use state power to try to suppress the revolutionary masses. What policies will such a state enforce and in what direction will society go? Will the state be allied with the revolutionary masses the world over or will the new state itself become part of the "international community" led and shaped by the imperialists? It is not only basic Marxist theory but life itself that continually shows that there is no such thing as a state that does not have a class character, that is not an instrument in the hands of one class to suppress another.

Tactics and Strategy

We have concentrated on what we consider to be the main questions of political and ideological

line that have surfaced in the discussion of democracy and dictatorship in your party. Clarity on strategic questions concerning the nature, stage and tasks of the revolution are essential in guiding any party to correctly adopt the necessary policies and tactics to advance in the complex swirl of revolution. It is not within our capabilities to have opinions on specific tactics that your Party might engage in—for example, we are not in a position to know whether the current unilateral ceasefire declared by your party is correct and useful nor do we feel qualified to form definitive opinions on such matters as "strategic offensive" or the precise form of the class alliances or all of the specific political maneuvering that you are undertaking. On the other hand, we *do* feel that tactics in a revolutionary process in a specific country can, and sometimes do, come to concentrate major questions of political line in which case it is incumbent on comrades in the international movement to understand these questions as fully as possible and, where they feel it is necessary, raise major concerns or disagreements. Even more importantly, there are basic principles involved in the relationship between strategy and tactics that are common to all revolutionary processes and involve the basic principles of MLM.

Often we say "firm in principle and flexible in tactics". This accurately describes the unity of opposites between strategy and tactics. The principal aspect of this contradiction, the aspect that determines its character, is strategy. This is why the same tactic can take on a completely different meaning depending on what strategy it serves and flows from. We saw, in our study of the negotiations in relation to Peru, the fundamental difference between "negotiating in order to fight" and "fighting in order to negotiate". In other words, both a revolutionary and a revisionist strategy make room for both tactics of fighting and talking (and many other forms of political activity as well). But in the revolutionary perspective, the strategy of the complete destruction of the old reactionary state leads and determines when, if and how, the tactics of negotiations and compromises are necessary. In the revisionist orientation, for example the strategy openly argued for by Villalobos of the CP of the Philippines in the 1980s, the objective was to arrive at a compromise at the strategic level, "partial power", where the proletariat would share power with the reactionary classes (the famous "Nicaragua model"). And this "Nicaragua model" requires armed struggle as a tactic, as well as negotiations, in order to achieve its strategic goal of "partial power".

Thus we see that both models, both roads, use all kinds of tactics in pursuit of certain strategic goals. But we cannot conclude from this that any strategy justifies any tactic. For example, reactionary military officials often study Mao Tsetung not only to understand the tactics of communists but also, in some cases at least, in hopes of applying some of Mao's principles and tactics to their own counter-revolutionary war. For example, it is not hard to understand the advantage of having a population that is favorable to your army in providing intelligence as to the whereabouts of the opposing forces, and so forth. During the Vietnam war the U.S. army called this the policy of "winning the hearts and minds" of the people. Of course, they were completely incapable of "winning hearts and minds" and this very phrase came to be something that was ridiculed and scorned by millions of people in the U.S. as well as all over the world. But does this mean that the U.S. really did not want to, or care, about "winning hearts and minds", that this was *only* hypocrisy and crude propaganda to cover over their slaughter and torture? No, the U.S. military very much wanted and needed to win over masses in Vietnam, but their

strategic goals—preserving reactionary rule in Vietnam and subjugating the nation to U.S. imperialism—were in antagonistic contradiction to the tactics of winning over the people. Instead the reactionary goal required and relied upon reactionary tactics of mass murder, torture and rape.

The purpose in going into this example is once again to illustrate the relationship between strategy and tactics. While many, even most, tactics may be used by any class force, there are some tactics that must never be used by the proletariat—such as mass murder, torture, or rape. And there are tactics such as relying on the masses, suffering weal and woe with them, practicing democracy in the army that cannot be effectively employed by the reactionaries even if they *want* to do so. It is not only, or mainly, a question of subjective intentions, but very much a question of class character and class objectives that ultimately determine specific tactics.

If the goal is a "political solution" then it becomes possible and necessary to make the war serve this strategic goal and this can take the form of frequently stopping and starting the fighting, or making military tactics aimed at very specific and immediate political results. We can see this among nationalist forces and the kinds of military actions they often use (such as kidnappings, attacks on the civilians of the dominant nationality, etc.). A revolution led by a MLM vanguard guided by the goal of radically transforming society and advancing to socialism and ultimately communism throughout the world must have the goal of completely smashing the old reactionary state and thus the tactics employed must, primarily, be determined by the strategic laws of warfare.

Do tactics and strategy influence each other? Yes they very much do. In particular there is the danger of tactics *transforming* strategy. The comrades of the MKP in Turkey and North Kurdistan summed up this problem as "tactics eating up strategy" and "policy eating up politics". There is the danger of the contradiction between tactics and strategy becoming antagonistic, in which case either the tactics must be changed and brought in line with the strategy or there is the danger of the strategy itself becoming something different. In the case of a people's war there is the danger that a war begun with the intention of accomplishing the new-democratic revolution throughout the entire country could be transformed into a war whose goal is to achieve "partial power." Not only *can* this transformation take place, especially in a situation in which the party is trying to unite with intermediate and vacillating classes, this negative transformation, from a revolutionary to a reformist orientation, *is very likely to happen unless* the conscious leadership, the proletarian revolutionaries, are constantly struggling to ensure that the tactics of the struggle correspond to the strategic revolutionary objectives.

"Fighting to negotiate" or "negotiating to fight": this is a fundamental question and dividing line that our movement confronted sharply in the struggle over how to evaluate the "peace accords" tactic being put forward by the Right Opportunist Line in the Communist Party of Peru. Clearly, negotiating or not negotiating, cease-fire or no cease-fire, is not the central question. Revisionism has been able to use to armed struggle—and the whole Nicaragua model is precisely an illustration of this, especially as raised to the level of theory by Villalobos of the CP of the Philippines with the argument that the goal should be "partial power". Partial power means

accepting a commitment to not thoroughly destroy the old state apparatus, to not fundamentally change the economic and social structure of the country, and to not establish the dictatorship of the proletariat (in whatever form and alliances are historically evolved in a given country). Sometimes revisionists and opportunists openly proclaim the goal of "fighting to negotiate" but whether the principle being applied is "fight to negotiate" or "negotiating in order to fight" is not only a question of the subjective intention of the leadership. It is inseparable from the ideological and political line being practiced by the party.

A Questionable Proposal

In issue number 9 of *The Worker* there is the following statement, "In the given context of the existence of two ideologies, two armies and two states in the country, the Party is agreeable to demobilization of both the armies and carrying out of elections to the Constituent Assembly under the supervision of United Nations organization and international human rights organizations." In our view this "tactic" is one that is antagonistic to the goal of new-democratic revolution. If it were to be fulfilled, that is, if the Royal Government and the "international community" were to accept this demand and if the PLA were to be demobilised and ultimately dissolved it would lead to very serious setbacks in the revolutionary struggle and quite possibly its actual smashing at the hands of the reactionaries. (And, indeed, the *reason* the class enemies might accept such a proposal would be to inflict such a setback.) This is clearly an example of where a tactic is incompatible with, i.e. antagonistic to, the very revolutionary strategy itself.

Promising "full and fair elections," especially under conditions of control by the United Nations or other imperialist auspices and with the proletariat shelving or "soft peddling" its demand for a people's republic, could lead to an unfavorable alignment of class forces and strengthen the possibility of a negative, even quite possibly a disastrous, outcome, which would amount to the Party, and the masses of people it has for 10 years led in people's war, *losing through this process of elections what it has won, at the cost of heroic struggle and great sacrifice, on the battlefield*—losing this at a time when the possibility of advancing this struggle toward the goal, and great leap, of seizing power nationwide has come more clearly into view and closer within reach, *precisely because* of the advance of the People's War.

And what would be the case if the party refused to recognize the results of such imperialist "supervised" elections? The very classes and strata you were hoping to attract to your banner would feel betrayed. Your tactic would boomerang.

Does the fact that this tactic is unlikely to be adopted—that is, that for the time being the ruling classes are not inclined to accept such a proposal—justify it? Do communists have the right to say or promise anything if they are convinced they will not be required to fulfill these promises? No, there is the basic obligation of communists to speak and represent the truth. (For example, we cannot say that if a socialist state is established there will be no more poverty in Nepal—but we can say that under socialism the social barriers preventing the people from using their efforts and energy to step by step solve the problems of the masses will be eliminated in a qualitative way.) Furthermore, making promises that communists should not keep and should not want to

keep can leave the door open to possible setbacks with potentially disastrous consequences.

There is the danger that what seems impossible today may become necessary for the reactionaries to grant tomorrow, in which case the earlier calls would greatly undermine the party's ability to unite the masses *against* the kind of "solution" that is now being put forward in words at least. The reactionaries in your country and their international masters are clearly convinced that any durable "settlement" passes through and must involve the destruction of your vanguard party (and only then might the militarily, politically and ideologically weakened elements of your party be permitted a "legitimate" place in the reactionary led "political process"). But they may be forced to conclude that the only way to avoid their own crushing defeat is to accept some kind of solution along the lines proposed in the statement cited from *The Worker*, issue number 9 above. And, it must be pointed out, if the enemies were to accept such a "political solution" it could well be coupled with, or be a prelude to, relying on military means to enforce a military solution, as we have seen far too often in history (Indonesia, Chile, Iraq in 1965).

And, in line with the point we emphasized above about the danger of setting the revolution up for a crushing defeat we would like to stress that even if *nothing* ever comes of this "tactic" it still has negative consequences in so far as it promotes an erroneous understanding of the nature of the state (both the existing reactionary state and the future dictatorship of the proletariat in whatever form the latter is created in Nepal). The history of our movement from its beginning is full of numerous distortions or attacks on the basic Marxist understanding of democracy and dictatorship and there are material and ideological reasons why this will be a protracted struggle that will recur again and again including in new forms. It has also been shown that it is not so easy to defeat opportunist and revisionist lines on this point. If, through our tactics, the communist revolutionaries themselves spread unclarity, eclectics, or even outright erroneous views on this vital point it will be all the more difficult to win victory when the inevitable revisionist and opportunist distortions arise.

On the "International Community"

There can be no doubt that the "international community" means, in essence, world imperialism, the reactionary states under its domination and influence, and those statesmen, public figures, journalists, and intellectuals attached to the world imperialist system. Does this mean that the "international community" is without contradiction, that it is a monolithic reactionary bloc? No, there are important and growing contradictions among the imperialists and there are significant sections of the intelligentsia and others who criticize and oppose different aspects of the imperialist system—contradictions which make it correct and necessary for the proletarian party to make use of the contradictions in the enemy ranks and to win over some of those "opinion makers" normally attached to the ruling class. But here, as in all things, it is necessary to be clear on the principal aspect—the defining feature of the "international community"—not only in general but specifically in relation to the People's War in Nepal.

An article appeared in the Indian press in the summer of 2005 saying that there was "an

unwritten consensus in the international community that the Maoists must not be allowed to come to power." Is that an accurate summation of the attitude of the various reactionary states who in essence and as the defining aspect comprise the "international community"? We think it is very accurate. Among the imperialist powers, as the revolutionary Chinese comrades used to emphasize, there is both contention and collusion. But in relation to the People's War in Nepal collusion is principal over contention—the contradictions among them have not sharpened to the degree that, nor has the overall international situation intensified to the point where, major imperialist countries will "break ranks" in any fundamental way over policy in Nepal.

It is true that different actors on the international scene play different roles, give different speeches, etc., including India, China, Britain and the United States. In the case of the U.S. and the UK it has been proven over and over again that their imperialist interests are very much intertwined with one another and that the whole imperialist strategy of the UK is based on accepting and serving U.S. world hegemony. Tony Blair's shameless vassalage to George Bush in the Iraq war was only the latest evidence of this "special relationship". What *is* different between the U.S. and the UK is that, even when they are completely united in their imperialist marauding, they have different specific roles, particularly in the realm of public opinion. The UK continues to embellish imperialism with more honey-coated phrases about democracy and human rights, while the U.S., which also uses these words, is also able and required to openly flaunt its biggest "argument"—its huge economic and especially military strength. This is nothing new—even on the eve of the victory of the Chinese revolution Mao talked about the division of labour of these two predators. It is clear to see that in certain situations in the world today the UK and the U.S. are playing a "good cop, bad cop" routine.

What about countries such as France and Germany whose opposition to the Iraq war illustrated growing conflict with U.S. imperialism? Yes, these contradictions are real and growing. But they do not mean that these countries will, in any fundamental way, oppose the dominant Nepal policy of the imperialists and reactionaries.

And we all know the nature of India and what role it is playing in relation to the People's War, even turning in comrades to the Royal Nepalese torturers.

To call on these forces and others like them—and this is exactly what the UN means—to "supervise elections" in Nepal is a dangerous ploy that will have no positive benefit but has plenty of potential for harm and could even lead to a devastating defeat.

We can learn lessons from the invasion of Iraq. Even in that case, when the imperialist countries really were sharply divided and when the Saddam Hussein regime had long and extensive relations with different imperialist countries, the UN helped set the stage for the US aggression. When, at the last minute, the UN Security Council refused to give its approval for the war, it did nothing to condemn it, let alone struggle against it. At this moment in history, and especially in relation to a genuine people's revolutionary struggle, there is no possibility of the UN playing any role that fundamentally opposes the interests and objectives of U.S. imperialism.

Even the current positions of France and Germany in relation to Iraq are revealing. Yes, the invasion was wrong, perhaps even illegal or unjust, they say, but now that it has happened "we have no choice" but to hope that the U.S. "succeeds" since the alternative scenario, that the U.S. is driven out, would leave that important area of the world unstable and "unpoliced".

If there is any thought that the "international community" will be more tolerant of the Maoists than, say, of Saddam Hussein, this is a dangerous illusion that should be quickly abandoned. Who is a democrat, who is violating human rights, who is a tyrant or a terrorist and who is a saint in the eyes of "the international community" is not based on whether political forces or regimes are "democratic" or not, but whether a force is considered harmful to the interests of the world imperialist system. Witness the recent promotion of Colonel Gadafy of Libya from terrorist to responsible statesman, or the demotion of Robert Mugabe from reasonable ex-revolutionary to bloody tyrant after six (yes, six!) white farmers were killed in the land reform process, etc. The fact that your Party has deep and close ties with the masses, enjoys their support and relies on them, the fact that you have built a broad united front involving the great majority of society—none of this will mean that you are granted a status of legitimacy by the "international community". Mao and the Chinese communists were derided as "totalitarian" during the GPCR at the very time they were engaged in what remains the most massive political mobilization of masses in any society and the most widespread democracy ever seen on earth—real democracy in the sense of the right to criticize, struggle and transform society.

Nepal and the Imperialist World Order

In reality, appealing for the assistance of the "international community" amounts objectively to a declaration that the revolution will not "disturb" the existing set-up in the world, that the kind of state that the revolutionaries are striving for, to replace the monarchy in Nepal can "settle into" the network of international relations as it now exists. While it is certainly true that new-democratic revolution in Nepal cannot, by itself, abolish the existing world order, it is equally true that the existing world order will not tolerate a genuine people's revolutionary state. And, of course, this has particular and direct relevance in the case of India.

If the revolution is to do what it must, that is embark on transforming the existing social conditions and building an economic system not based on "integration into" and in fact subordination to the imperialist world order, if it will fulfill its obligation of supporting the revolutionary struggle around the world, then there can be no doubt that the imperialists and the reactionary states—the "international community"—will bitterly oppose you and do everything they can to prevent you from coming to power in the first place, and to overthrow your rule, if you do succeed in coming to power, and this will very likely involve different types of military aggression as well as economic sabotage and blockade, espionage activities and the financing and training of counter-revolutionaries all of which is "business as usual" for the imperialist states, and India as well, for that matter.

Any election "supervised" by these imperialist marauders and their client states will never allow a genuine revolutionary state to emerge. Just consider what they consider a "fair" election. The

elections in Iraq, under conditions of U.S. occupation, are considered very fair—even by those powers such as France and Germany who did not support the invasion in the first place. The recent re-election of Mubarak in Egypt is considered "exemplary" even though only 16 percent of the population thought it was worthwhile going to the polls. But when an election does not give the desired results, such as in Zimbabwe or Venezuela it is considered "flawed" or "unacceptable" even though, in those cases, the heads of state who were elected were not even consistently or thoroughly anti-imperialist, to say nothing of real revolutionaries and communists. In Nepal only an election that will block the emergence of a people's republic will be acceptable to the "international community".

The above is only the immediate and more overt way in which the international community supervises the actual process of the election itself. There are other deeper and more important ways in which the "international community" controls ("supervises") the supposed sovereign will of the people by using its economic, diplomatic and political and military strength to "mould" the opinion and votes of the people. For example, in the 1980s "free elections" were forced on the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. This meant that the U.S. was free to funnel huge amounts of money to the opposition candidates. And it also meant that the elections took place in circumstances where to vote in favour of the regime meant to vote in favour of extreme economic deprivation, continued counter-revolutionary incursions and violence and the threat of even more massive and destructive military intervention by imperialists and reactionaries and so forth, while a vote against the regime meant the end to the blockade and the promise of "peace" and improvement in living standards. Under these conditions it is not surprising that large numbers of people, and not only among the most backward, voted "freely" against the Sandinista regime.

Our point is not that the party or the new state that it brings into being should passively accept this—certainly there is a very important role to be played by struggle in Nepal and internationally against imperialist and reactionary intervention against the People's War—"Hands Off People's Nepal" must become a cry of the revolutionary masses and growing numbers of people more broadly the world over, especially in the U.S., India and other countries most directly intervening. But the party must never harbor illusions in this sphere or fail to explain the real situation clearly to the party members and the masses. Whether or not you are "democrats" or "terrorists" in the eyes of the "international community" is overwhelmingly a question not of your nature but of *their* nature—which is why Mao stressed, correctly, that to be attacked by the enemy, to be painted without a single virtue, is a sign that our work is good and that if we were *not* attacked in this way, if the enemy were to praise our "democratic" side, it should be considered cause for alarm. Articles and appeals misrepresenting the nature of the United Nations and the "international community" spread confusion as to the true nature of these forces and undermine the capacity of the revolutionary forces and masses to stand firm in the face of them.

Democracy and the Middle Strata

It is very clear that one of the important tasks of the new-democratic revolution, especially in order to take nationwide political power, is winning over the national bourgeoisie in the cities and those classes and strata who are under its influence. It is these sections in the oppressed countries who historically are most infatuated with the trappings of formal democracy while the basic masses, especially in the countryside, whose life goes on pretty much the same with or without a parliament, are much less susceptible to these illusions.

Because of the bourgeois democratic nature of the new-democratic revolution it is both possible and necessary to win these strata over and guarantee that their interests will be protected for a substantial period of time (and even after the revolution moves ahead to its socialist stage the basis is laid to transform and lead the individuals of that class in remolding and finding a full place in the future society.)

But it is also clear that there are many features of the national bourgeoisie which make it difficult for it to unite with the proletariat: 1) it lives by capitalist exploitation 2) it has connections to the world imperialist system on which it depends for supplies, technology, sometimes even markets 3) it has connections to landed property as well. All this means that the national bourgeoisie will continue to vacillate up to and beyond the completion of the new-democratic revolution.

This dual character of the national bourgeoisie is determined by its class character and not fundamentally by the policy of the communists. Of course, what the communists do will have a significant influence on whether and to what degree the national bourgeoisie and those sectors attached to it ideologically and practically will unite with the revolution, but their attitude toward the revolution will *mainly* depend on the concrete strength of the contending camps and their own class nature and interests.

It is also quite natural that now as the possibility of the defeat of the monarchy is looming large, the national bourgeoisie will be in turmoil. Some of them sense that it is now possible to actually achieve a bourgeois republic; even some reactionaries may believe that the monarchy has now become a liability that must be liquidated. Many are no doubt happy to see the revolution on the verge of seizing power, others may not be so sure.

The idea of a bourgeois democratic republic in a Nepal free of imperialism and feudalism is an illusion to dangle in front of the masses. But the national bourgeoisie and even some sections of the petite bourgeoisie and intellectuals attached to it actually believe in this illusion. No matter how often history in Nepal and the world hammers at this possibility, the class position of these strata coupled with the ideological influences of imperialism means that this illusion will be continually generated.

Because the illusion of a pure (bourgeois) democracy in the oppressed countries really is just an illusion, reality keeps intruding on these strata, forcing them to define their position in terms of the actually existing state power and the contending class forces. This means that, however much some of the national bourgeoisie and those sectors attached to or influenced by it may

oppose the reactionary ruling circles, there will continue to be a strong tendency for these sectors to seek accommodation with reaction and imperialism. But when a real and concrete alternative state power is posed, things can change dramatically. In Nepal we have seen that the parliamentary parties objectively aligned themselves with the reactionary system, through their participation in the parliament and government and in other ways, most fundamentally through their opposition to the People's War. Now that the revolution is showing a clear possibility of taking nationwide power, there is a solid base for many of the former doubters and vacillators from the middle strata to be won to support revolution and for the doubt and vacillation to sweep over those sectors who had previously been firm in opposing the revolution. All this is important and a good advantage for the revolution.

But the key to this is the strength of the people's forces, the firmness of the proletariat's determination to continue the revolution through to the end, and, on the other hand, the increasing bankruptcy of the old order. All of this *forces* the whole society to choose with which future, with which state power, it will ally. Without that compulsion to choose one destiny or another, all of the illusions of the national bourgeoisie and the urban petite bourgeoisie will return and these illusions will be transformed into political programs and policies.

Revolution is an act of force by which one section of society seeks to overthrow another. Even though the revolution is in the interests of the people, and even in the interests of the national bourgeoisie to a large degree, it still does, and indeed must, create compulsion on various forces in society, even among the people themselves. For example, when the armed struggle begins in the country or starts in a new area it inevitably is responded to by vicious counter-attack by the reactionary ruling class. Even those sections of the masses not initially mobilized in the revolution will soon be compelled to "choose their camp", and because of their class nature and interests, as well as the political, ideological and educational work of communists, the vast majority of the workers and peasants will side with the revolution. But the intermediate strata, such as the national bourgeoisie, will hesitate between the two camps and will continually seek some illusory escape from the basic choice confronting society.

Can there be any doubt how most of the middle classes would have voted if they had been given a "free choice" in 1996: should the CPN(M) launch a People's War or should it pursue its goal by more "reasonable" means? Today a great portion of these strata has been won to the revolution, has chosen to support the new state power in the countryside over the old state power in the capital. But if these strata are given a different choice—the opportunity to vote their illusions—there is a strong possibility that hesitating support could turn into opposition.

We fear that the policies your Party is adopting toward the national bourgeoisie, as reflected, for example, in calls for elections to a constituent assembly, tends to overlook this basic reality. Instead of calling on the national bourgeoisie to join a state apparatus that will clearly be *under the leadership of the proletariat*, there is too much of a tendency to promise that the proletariat will respect a form of state, a bourgeois republic, which, objectively, corresponds to the interests and outlook of the bourgeoisie.

Not only would such a bourgeois republic fail to solve the fundamental problems of the masses, it would also miserably fail to resolve even the bourgeois democratic tasks of the first stage of the revolution, of thoroughly destroying feudalism and breaking the hold of imperialism on the country. Even *if* the leaders of such a bourgeois republic *wanted* to truly liberate the country from imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism, they *cannot* do so precisely because a bourgeois state will reflect and enforce the relations of production in the old society and the relations between Nepal and the world imperialist system. Haven't we seen this time and again in the world? Nor should we delude ourselves into thinking that if *communists* were to lead, or to play a role in leading, a bourgeois republic the results would be fundamentally different. "Communist Allendes", or "communist Aristides" would be trapped by the very nature of the republic they were presiding over, unable to fundamentally change the relations in society, unable to break from the smothering grip of imperialism and forced to either become themselves representatives of reactionary relations of production and/or be crushed.

A bourgeois republic in Nepal would not be a "stepping stone" to a people's republic. All we have to do is look around the world at the scores of reactionary republics to see what the essential features of such a state would be or would soon become and what it would mean for the vast majority of people.

In our opinion, the erroneous understanding about the relationship between the dictatorship of the proletariat and democracy most sharply expressed in "New State" goes hand in hand with the idea that the revolution must pass through a stage of establishing a bourgeois republic. In both cases democracy is treated as unconnected to the problem of class rule, something that somehow stands above the cleavage of society into antagonistic classes. This is a reflection of a bourgeois democratic outlook, not the communist dialectical materialist world view.

There is much of importance to be learned in how Mao handled similar contradictions in the final months of the civil war with Chiang Kai Shek.⁴ Once the imperialists concluded that the old KMT regime was soon to be finished, they placed their hopes on precisely those sections of the national bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia who were hesitating between the two camps.

“Part of the intellectuals still want to wait and see. They think: the Kuomintang is no good and the Communist Party is not necessarily good either, so we had better wait and see. Some support the Communist Party in words but in their hearts they are waiting to see. They are the very people who have illusions about the United States... They are easily duped by the honeyed words of the U.S. imperialists, as though these imperialists would deal with People's China on a basis of equality and mutual benefit without a stern, long struggle. They still have many reactionary, that is to say, anti-popular, ideas in their heads, but they are not Kuomintang reactionaries. They are the middle-of-the-roaders of the right-wingers in People's China. They are the supporters of what Acheson calls “democratic individualism”. The deceptive manoeuvres

⁴ See in particular “On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship” and the following four articles in Volume IV of Mao’s *Selected Works* addressing the “White Paper” prepared by Dean Acheson, a leading representative of U.S. imperialism, about the Chinese revolution.

of the Achesons still have a flimsy social base in China." ("Cast Away Illusions, Prepare for Struggle", *Selected Works* Vol. IV, p. 427)

Isn't this similar in some important ways to the situation in Nepal today? The important thing to note is that in the above passage and many others like it from that period only months before the final victory of the Chinese revolution Mao is recognizing that these middle forces need to be won over, that they cannot be treated like "Kuomintang reactionaries" but at the same time they are very much capable of becoming tools in the hands of international imperialism, especially because of their bourgeois democratic illusions. Mao sought to win these forces over, but he did not let these kinds of forces *set the terms*. Rather, by advancing the revolution he continued *to compel* these forces to choose whether or not to accept the *terms of the people, of the new-democratic revolution*, and then did everything in his power to encourage these forces to choose in the correct way.

Mao also was clear that, once the Kuomintang reactionaries were defeated, international imperialism would seek to rely on the supporters of "democratic individualism" as Acheson called them. We have seen the same pattern in our own times as well, where imperialism seeks out and props up forces who, on their own, may have played a positive social role under certain conditions. This is the case today, for example, in Iraq, Zimbabwe, and Venezuela, as well as in the example of Nicaragua cited earlier—in all of these cases imperialism finds some national bourgeois and other strata (we are leaving aside the case of outright reactionaries), which it can build up and *transform* in a negative direction. Haven't we seen in country after country, for example, how the whole NGO apparatus has been used precisely to transform and channel what are often the genuine progressive sentiments of some sections of the middle strata into programs that objectively accommodate to the domination of imperialism? The very class position of these forces, their dominant ideology, and their political program makes the supporters of "democratic individualism" susceptible to the sugar-coated bullets of the bourgeoisie. In fact, we must clearly recognize and educate the masses that "democracy" and "human rights" are the ideological battering rams of world imperialism *even when the imperialists themselves are promoting measures against democracy at home and abroad*. Yes, we must expose the contradiction between the words of the imperialists and their evil deeds, but we cannot avoid the fact that the *ideology* of bourgeois democracy corresponds to *their* mode of production internationally, not the one that we are fighting to bring about. While we oppose their undemocratic institutions, policies and actions we must not willingly or unwillingly extol the bourgeois democracy and bourgeois democratic political structures of the old type, that is those which have been built up and incorporated by the world capitalist system. We must be clear ourselves and help others to understand that bourgeois democratic ideology cannot lead the revolution in the direction it must go if it is really to liberate the masses and advance as part of the worldwide process toward communism. We will never succeed if we claim their banner as our own, that is, arguing that the communists, not the imperialists and the bourgeoisie, are the "real, consistent bourgeois democrats". Rather, any attempt to do so will lead to confusing our own ranks as well as the people more broadly and make it difficult to correctly struggle and unite with those whose class orientation and ideology remain in the bourgeois-democratic framework.

We are offering this letter as part of what we believe to be our proletarian internationalist responsibility to support, in the best and most appropriate way we can, your party and the People's War you are waging. Our parties are linked together in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement and we have both an opportunity and a responsibility to struggle over the vital questions of revolution in each of our countries and in the world as a whole. Not only are we linked in striving for the common goal of communism, the advance of the internationalist communist movement and the class struggle at this juncture makes it necessary and urgent that our parties vigorously pursue our efforts to understand the world more completely in order to meet the challenges before us. We are sure that you will consider the observations and criticisms raised in this letter in that spirit.

Our sincere communist greetings,

The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

October 2005

See accompanying appendices which were sent with the above letter: “Some Further Thinking the Socialist State as a New Kind of State” and “A Creative Development of MLM, *Not of Revisionism*”

Editor's Note:

This letter is as it originally appeared with the exception of spelling and grammatical corrections and the deletion of a few citations internal to Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) publications.

July 1, 2006

**To the Central Committee
Revolutionary Communist Party, USA**

Dear Comrades,

The letter your Party had written on 1 October 2005 to ours had reached to our hand quite late, and it was necessary on our part to reply to it quickly. But, we failed to do so given that we were very busy with the speedily changing political situation in our country and the need to lead it closely. However, firstly, we appreciate the initiative your Party has taken up to put forward criticisms and raise questions on our ideological and political position and the tactics we have adopted in recent years and, secondly, we make an apology for being late in replying to your letter. We firmly believe that the exchange of opinion will undoubtedly help identify the points of unity and disunity among us that, through comradely struggle, will help develop a higher level of unity between us by narrowing down the gap. We are in no doubt that this process of line struggle based on the ideological unity we already have will help both of our parties learn more from each other and elevate our ideological grasp to a higher level, which in fact can be one of the important cornerstones for developing MLM in the 21st century. Definitely it will have far-reaching significance.

Nevertheless, the letter has raised serious criticism on the ideological and political line and tactics we have adopted to accomplish New Democratic Revolution in our country and pave the way for socialism and communism. Not only this, your letter has accused us of sliding towards revisionism, though not mentioned directly. In this sense, the letter shows that we have serious differences in our ideological and political grasp, which calls for thoroughgoing struggles. This reply of ours can only be the initiation of that struggle, not the end.

Historical Context

Your Party, the RCP, USA, is very much aware that we were trying to develop our ideological and political line in an adverse international situation. We had shouldered this historic responsibility when the International Communist Movement was facing a serious setback the world over following counter-revolution in Russia and China, when our philosophy of MLM was facing all-round attack from the imperialists and revisionists, when the world imperialist system too had undergone a change in which inter-imperialist rivalry had weakened and the unipolar imperialist plunder, mainly of US imperialism, was escalating all across the world in the form of a globalized state. In addition to this, the Peruvian People's War, which was the most inspiring movement for our Party in the 1980s, had suffered a serious 'bend in the road', and when other ongoing revolutionary armed struggles, quite a few in numbers, were gaining no momentum but were cycling around the same circle year after year. On the other hand, the development of

technology, mainly in the field of information, was making this world a small unit, and the growth of bureaucrat capitalism in our semi-feudal and semi-colonial country had brought about a certain change in the class relations of society. All of these questions were pressing us to think more creatively about how a revolutionary line in our Party could be developed. The semi-Hoxhaite dogmatic legacy of the MB Singh school of thought, which was deep-rooted in our veins, was also creating obstructions to going ahead creatively. It was really a challenging task subjectively for us to come out from the aforesaid adversities. We came to realize that the traditional way of thinking and applying MLM is not sufficient to face the new challenges created by the new situation. However, we were confident that a firm grasp of MLM and a proletarian commitment to revolution could face this challenge.

Taking into account all these particularities of the new situation, our Party creatively developed its ideological and political line. Of course, the way we tried to apply historical and dialectical materialism in the particularity of Nepalese society from the very beginning of developing our line and preparing for People's War, from the early 1990s, was to a great extent different from how other communist parties did before and were doing then in the world. The firm grasp of MLM, the 'concrete analysis of concrete conditions', the 'correct application of mass line' and the creative application of historical and dialectical materialism, the philosophy of revolutionary practice, in the particularity of Nepalese society were the basis with which we fought back alien ideologies and reactionary and revisionist attacks against us, which in turn prepared the ground for us to initiate People's War in 1996. What we have achieved during the past ten turbulent years of class struggle is before the world's people.

In fact, the past ten years have not been years of smooth sailing for us. We have gone through twists and turns, ups and downs, and rights and lefts. Every revolution does so. When we applied our line in revolutionary practice, it not only developed People's War in leaps but also started generating new ideas so as to enrich the philosophical arsenal of MLM. It is known to your Party that the experiences and the set of new ideas that we gathered from the revolutionary practice of the initial five years had already been synthesized as Prachanda Path in 2001. It is heading towards a higher level of another synthesis.

From the time when we established our proletarian internationalist relations with your Party through RIM, though we have basic unity between our two parties, we have not found your Party satisfied with our political line and tactics at different historical turning points. Even now, your Party, RCP, USA, is looking at our Party mainly with the same eyes with which it used to see 15 years before. Frankly, RCP never correctly understood our Party, its political line and the tactics we adopted at times. The traditional way of thinking and the dogmatic understanding of MLM that the RCP is suffering from has made your Party unable to understand ours at every turning point of history. Just for example, when we had united with Lamas, in 1991, your Party reached a conclusion that the unity was wrong and it was a deception to the proletarian revolution in Nepal. When we partially used parliamentary elections, you thought that we were bogged down in parliamentarism. In your Party's opinion, MB Singh, who opposed our Party unity as revisionist and partial use of parliamentary struggle as parliamentarism, was correct. When we sat for two negotiations with the enemy you thought that we were finished. But, the objective reality never proved your judgment to be correct, because it was the result of your dogmatic analysis and subjective synthesis. Now, we understand that you don't agree with our present

tactics of ceasefire, interim constitution, interim government, constituent assembly election and democratic republic to be established by extensive restructuring of the state. It is because your way of thinking is subjective and does not follow the mass line. The present letter is a proof of that. However, it is our firm belief that with the correct grasp of MLM and its creative application in our particularity we will be able to establish a new democratic state under the leadership of the proletariat, possibly soon in our country, which will objectively prove your disagreement, serious criticism and indirect accusation of revisionism raised in the letter to be utterly subjective and wrong.

Experience of History and Our Effort

History is a witness that the proletarian class had succeeded in establishing its power in almost one-third of the globe, with the breath-taking sacrifice of millions in the twentieth century. The imperialist world system of war and aggression for loot and plunder of the poor nations and people of the under-developed countries was under threat from the socialist system. Poverty, deprivation, corruption, unemployment, etc. – the general phenomena of the capitalist mode of production – had been basically eliminated from those socialist countries.

But questions have come up as to why those proletarian powers turned into their opposites without any bloodshed, right after the demise or capture of the main leadership? Why did Comrade Stalin fail to control the emergence of revisionists from within the Party he had led, despite that he did his best, including forceful suppression against them? Why did the CPC under Mao's leadership, despite that it launched the Cultural Revolution, fail to stop revisionist Deng and his clique from grabbing power after his demise? Why did the Russian Red Army that was able to defeat the fascist Hitler and his powerful army with the sacrifice of about 20 million Russian patriots, fail to retain proletarian power after the death of Comrade Stalin? Why did the Chinese PLA, which was able to defeat Japanese imperialist aggression and 5.5 million in the Chinese reactionary army, turn out to be a silent spectator when the revisionist Deng clique grabbed power? Why did the Vietnamese people's army, which was able to defeat the US army, the strongest army in the world, and equipped with the most sophisticated weapons, fail to notice the transfer of proletarian power into its opposite? These and alike are the questions for which we are trying to find correct answers. Only cursing the revisionists does not solve the problem.

It goes against dialectics to believe that we are immune to committing any mistakes while translating MLM into practice. Therefore, we not only welcome but demand suggestions and criticism from our comrades the world over. In this sense, we very much welcome your creative suggestions and criticism. But, we have been very much frustrated by how you understand us, and your effort to teach us the basics of MLM as if we don't know them at all or we have derailed from it. We clearly observe inconsistency between what ideological and political assistance we need from our international comrades and what they, presently the RCP, are providing to us through this letter. We need assistance in our effort to try to connect the missing links in the ICM by which our class had to lose its power in the twentieth century, but your letter is trying to draw us back to the struggle around the basic and classical questions of MLM. We want debate on the aforesaid questions to overcome the problems our movement faced in the 20s, when we have got no undisputed answer to date. Your letter does not focus on those ideological and political questions, but mainly teaches the ABC of Marxism. It is frustrating us.

Historical and dialectical materialism is the philosophy of revolution; it not only applies to society but also in human thinking. The unity and struggle of opposites is its fundamental law. It means every entity divides into two, and each of the two aspects transforms into its opposite. We think the latter is the principal aspect for us communists.

It is our opinion that the ICM, in general, failed in the past to grasp the totality of this law of dialectics. Our class paid more attention to ‘one divides into two’ in the past and is doing so at present, but knowingly or unknowingly it has skipped grasping and applying in practice the transformation of one aspect into its opposite, the principal aspect. Because of this mistaken grasp, in practice at least, our class applied the dialectics of negation in two-line struggle so as to create splits among our own ranks instead of helping to unite by creating the material environment to make the wrongdoing comrades transform. In other words, our class practiced unity-struggle-split, not unity-struggle-transformation. The fatal consequences that the communists are confronting to date justifies [proves] this fact. Our ranks must correct it, and our Party is trying to do so.

Now the question comes up, how can we help the fellow travellers to correct their mistaken ideas? Definitely, we don’t have any magical rod. Firstly, and importantly, it is the correct grasp and appropriate application of dialectical materialist principles in the practice of two-line struggle within the proletarian Party that can correct the mistaken ideas of given comrades. And secondly, it is the masses of the people, the proletariat and oppressed class, that can help their leaders transform by supervising, controlling and intervening, if necessary, upon them and the institutions they work in. We say, “Revolution from within the revolution”, and of course believe that it is the developed practical manifestation of and so the development of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, as propounded by Mao. In other words, it is the process of making mass action against the mistaken leaders a regular phenomenon under the dictatorship of the proletariat. We believe this is how the Party of the proletariat can help the wrongdoing comrades to transform in the service of the oppressed people and thereby check counter-revolution from within its ranks. We will discuss later on how we are trying to develop the mechanism and methodology to achieve this goal.

State, Democracy and Dictatorship of the Proletariat

It is the ABC of Marxism that state power is an inevitable means to apply dictatorship upon one class by another in a class society. In a letter, dated 5 March 1852, to Weydemeyer, Marx says, “What I did that was new was to prove: 1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production; 2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; 3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society....” In the same way, in his famous work, *State and Revolution*, Lenin says, “Only he is a Marxist who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat.”

For those who claim to be communists to think that both of the hostile classes in a society enjoy equal rights under the existing state power is sheer nonsense and unscientific. The fact is that the class in power enjoys democracy and applies dictatorship over the enemy class. Hence,

democracy and dictatorship are two opposites of a single entity, state power. That is why there can be no absolute democracy in a class society nor can absolute dictatorship exist there. It is entirely true for both of the states, the bourgeois or the proletarian. When classes cease to exist in society, then the state power too ceases to exist, and consequently both dictatorship and democracy wither away. Where should we focus on is how our practice of democracy and proletarian dictatorship can lead to the abolition of state power and the withering away of both democracy and dictatorship from society.

Of course, our Party's serious concern is how the proletarian class, when it reaches power after the violent overthrow of its enemy, can strengthen the dictatorship over its antagonistic class so that it can continue towards the abolition of the state by preventing counter-revolution. We believe that the more democracy for the oppressed classes is guaranteed, the stronger will be the voluntary and principled unity among them, which as a consequence will strengthen the dictatorship over the bourgeois class. When democracy does not take root in the entire oppressed classes, then bureaucratic tendencies emerge in the Party, state and the society as well that consequently weaken the dictatorship of the proletariat. The history of the ICM and our own practice of people's power, though in an immature form, have demonstrated us this. This is why we have been emphasizing developing democracy under the proletarian dictatorship.

Now, we would like to see how our pioneering leaders looked at democracy under socialist society and the state. The Communist Manifesto, on page 57 writes, "... that the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy."

In his famous work, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (Theses)", Lenin writes, "The socialist revolution is not one single act, not one single battle on a single front, but a whole epoch of intensified class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, i.e. battles around all the problems of economics and politics, which can culminate only in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It would be a fundamental mistake to suppose that the struggle for democracy can divert the proletariat from the socialist revolution, or obscure, or overshadow it, etc. On the contrary, just as socialism cannot be victorious unless it introduces complete democracy, so the proletariat will be unable to prepare for victory over the bourgeoisie unless it wages a many-sided, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy."

Let us quote Mao from his "Speech at the Second Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China". (Vol. 5, 15 November 1956). He says, "We are not even afraid of imperialism, so why should we be afraid of great democracy? Why should we be afraid of students taking to the streets? Yet among our Party members there are some who are afraid of great democracy, and this is not good. Those bureaucrats who are afraid of great democracy must study Marxism hard and mend their ways."

From the above quotations we find the Communist Manifesto, Comrade Lenin and Comrade Mao urging for democracy. But we find the past practice of proletarian democracy was inadequate, particularly in the lack of a specific mechanism and appropriate methodology to institutionalize it, which as a consequence weakened the dictatorship of the proletariat. We are not arguing for something new, not in MLM, but what we are suggesting is to connect the

missing link of the past to make both democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat more effective. So, we don't think your Party should be afraid of the democracy that we are talking about. Rather, we want your Party to concentrate more on how the genuine democracy of the proletariat can be established so that the voluntary unity of the whole oppressed classes can exercise effective and real dictatorship over their class enemy.

Of course, we have put forward some proposals to develop a methodology and mechanism within the state so that it can effectively help implement the dialectical relation between proletarian dictatorship and democracy in society. We have seen Chinese practice, the latest, where we find eight different political parties of various sections of the masses, not of the enemy class, playing a co-operative role in the people's government. We think it was mechanical and formal, so it is inadequate. What we have proposed is to raise this multiparty co-operation to the level of multiparty competition in the proletarian state within an anti-feudal (or anti-bourgeois) and anti-imperialist constitutional framework. The RCP's criticism that the CPN (Maoist) is sliding towards the abandonment of the proletarian dictatorship by adopting bourgeois formal democracy reflects your Party's unawareness to reach at the crux of the problem we are raising. So, instead of accusing us of having adopted bourgeois democracy, we request RCP to take it seriously and launch debate from the height we need.

Now a question arises, what the Party of the proletariat will do if it is defeated in elections under multiparty competition, which we think is your main concern. We believe this question is less serious and less dangerous than, what will the proletarian class do if its Party in state power degenerates into revisionism? These are the questions related to how to develop a methodology and mechanism to continue the revolution until communism amidst various internal and external threats of counter-revolution. This is why we have proposed that the constitution, which is put into action after the proletarian class seizes power, should provide the right for the oppressed classes, not the enemy, to rebel against the Party, if it turns revisionist, and to form a new one to continue the revolution under the given circumstances.

On the other hand, the Party's necessity to go for the people's mandate makes them more responsible towards the masses of people. If they are not to face competition among the masses to remain in the leadership of power, then there remains a material basis, in which the relation between the Party and the masses becomes formal and mechanical, consequently it provides an opportunity for bureaucracy to breed from within the Party itself. Past experience justifies this. Hence, we believe multiparty competition for the people's government and, along with this, the people's right to supervise, control and intervene, including the recalling of their representatives from power, provides a kind of hook in the hands of the masses that can drag the wrongdoing comrades into their court. This process makes the relation between the Party and the masses livelier and vibrant, which creates a helpful objective environment for the wrongdoers to transform, either in a positive or negative direction.

Criticizing our position, your letter writes, "We feel that to make the most essential question one of formal democracy, and its expression in elections, competing political parties, and the like, is a serious mistake and will strengthen tendencies toward the abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, or its outright overthrow by counter-revolutionaries." We don't think the question is as simple as you have placed here. Everyone knows there was no multiparty competition, and

the like, in Russia and China, which according to you is the main source of strengthening tendencies towards the abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Then why did Russia and China fail to sustain the revolution and continue with the dictatorship of the proletariat until communism? Multiparty competition is not the only way by which imperialism can play a role to reverse the revolution. We request comrades to focus the debate on what positive and negative consequences it can lead to if such a competition is put into practice under the proletarian dictatorship, but not to reject it outright by accusing it as formal democracy of the bourgeoisie. Simply criticizing our proposals, based on logical arguments, does not solve the problem that our class is confronting now. We think the fate of the proletarian revolution in the 21st century relies on our generation, mainly our two parties at present. We request RCP to dare to break the traditional way of dogmatic thinking and raise the level of struggle to meet the need of the day.

We would like again to quote two sentences from your letter. It writes, “China did not just gradually become more and more capitalist, more and more ‘totalitarian’, as the state grew stronger and stronger. In order for capitalism to be transformed state power had to be seized by the capitalist roaders, which they did through a coup d’état after Mao’s death.” Firstly, this kind of interpretation doesn’t represent dialectical materialism, because it negates the inevitability of quantitative development for a qualitative leap. There was a material basis mainly in the superstructure for the counter-revolution to take place, which was constantly developing from within the socialist state itself. Had there been no such situation, why had Mao to struggle against various evils like, for example, the three excesses and five excesses and finally launch the GPCR against the revisionist headquarters? Had there been no such material basis, counter-revolution could not have taken place in a single stroke on the wish of revisionists. Rather, the fact is Mao was late to foresee this situation.

Secondly, this kind of argument leads to the conclusion that it is the revisionists alone who are responsible for counter-revolution. This way of thinking does not go into the depth of the problem but skips the question of why revolutionaries failed to prevent the emergence of revisionists from within a revolutionary party. Revolutionaries must not remain self-content only by cursing revisionists for the damaging consequences, but should emphasize more what mistakes they made in the past and what measures they should take to correct them at present. The trend of cursing others for a mistake and enjoying oneself from such acts does not represent either a proletarian responsibility or culture.

Democratic Republic – A Transitional Form

Let us initiate our discussion on this topic by quoting a sentence from your letter to us. It writes, “The role and character of the ruling classes and their political representatives, such as the parliamentary parties, are determined fundamentally not by their relation to the monarchy but by their relationship to imperialism and feudalism.” Strategically, it is very much correct. But, in our case, even though there is no fundamental difference between monarchy and the parliamentary parties strategically on the question of their relation to feudalism and imperialism, in a tactical sense there are some conflicting aspects existing between them. It was for this reason that we have been able to take advantage of their conflict during the past ten years of People’s War. This conflict is not yet resolved. Our political tactics of an interim government, constituent assembly and democratic republic of this conflict.

The political resolution that our Central Committee Meeting adopted unanimously in 2005 clarifies our position on this tactical slogan. It reads, “Now the slogan of interim government, election of the constituent assembly and democratic republic that our Party, taking into account the international and domestic balance of power, has formulated is a tactical slogan put forward for the forward-looking political way out. Remaining clear on the principle that the tactics must serve strategy, our Party has viewed the democratic republic neither as the bourgeois parliamentary republic nor directly as the new-democratic one. This republic, with an extensive reorganization of the state power as to resolve the problems related with class, nationality, region and sex prevailing in the country, would play a role of transitional multiparty republic. Certainly, the reactionary class and their parties will try to transform this republic into a bourgeois parliamentary one, whereas our Party of the proletarian class will try to transform it into a new-democratic republic. How long the period of transition will be is not a thing that can right now be ascertained. It is clear that it will depend upon the then national and international situation and state of power balance. As for now, this slogan has played and will play an important role to unite all the forces against the absolute monarchy dominant in the old state, for it has been a common enemy for both revolutionary and parliamentary forces.” We don’t think more explanation is required to clarify our position on this tactic.

The question of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is very much linked with this tactical slogan. Clarifying our position on the PLA, a unanimous resolution of the CC meeting held in 2006, writes, “In the present context, when domestic and foreign reactionary elements are conspiring against the Nepalese people’s aspiration of progress and peace, the whole Party from top to bottom must give maximum emphasis to the question of consolidating and expanding the People’s Liberation Army and keeping them prepared to go any time into the war front. In the present sensitive stage, when imperialism and reaction will struggle to disarm the People’s Liberation Army, and our Party will struggle to dissolve the ‘royal’ army in the front of talks, if the Party failed to consolidate and expand the People’s Liberation Army and keep it prepared 24 hours for war, the Nepalese people would suffer a big defeat. The Party can have a lot of compromises in the domain of politics and diplomacy, but will never give up the real strength, the People’s Liberation Army and the arms they possess that the Nepalese people have gained with the blood of thousands of martyrs. Its name and structure can be changed in accordance with the verdict of the people, but even its name will not be changed as to benefit the imperialists and reaction and their wishes and demands. The Party will never tolerate any vacillation in this basic class and theoretical question.”

In general, tactical political slogans are materialized less in practice. This is because reactionary think tanks understand that it has a direct link with the strategic goal of the revolutionaries, and they know that the proletarian class takes advantage of it. But sometimes they are compelled to agree with it because the next alternative remaining for them becomes worse than that. In this sense, revolutionaries must not put forward tactical political slogans with the assumption that they are not being put into action. That is why our tactics has been so adopted that in both cases, whether it is being put into action or not, it can be linked with the strategic goal for a higher level of offensive against the enemy. The main thing it needs to have is the political strength to weaken and isolate the enemy by rallying people around this slogan. When the politics of the

proletarian class gets established among the masses, then the masses will have no hesitation to rally around the Party raising that slogan. We believe this slogan has been doing this.

The democratic republic can take its shape only after the restructuring of the state, which the document has clearly mentioned. It will be structured so as to resolve the basic problems of the oppressed classes, nationalities, sex and regions, the content of the new-democratic revolution. In whatever ways we manoeuvre in between with this terminology, it does not make any difference in the essence of the strategic goal. What we can say now to your Party is, just be patient— to wait and see.

Strategy and Tactics

Dialectical and historical materialism, the revolutionary ideology, is a science, and revolutionary politics is the art of developing tactics in favour of the proletarian class interest. Tactics cannot be copied from a book, nor can anyone away from the knowledge of objective reality suggest it. It is creatively developed on the basis of the concrete analysis of concrete conditions. In this sense, one should be very flexible in tactics, because the objective situation goes on changing. But strategy represents a specific target or goal so as to resolve the basic contradictions in the given society. The revolutionaries must remain firm on strategy till the basic contradictions of the society are resolved. And tactics must serve strategy.

Memorizing things from books and interpreting for hours and hours on their basis is one thing, and applying them in living practice is qualitatively another. Frankly speaking, it is very easy not to commit any mistakes in strategy. But it is extremely difficult to take up and apply appropriate tactics in the service of strategy. It is dangerous too. Where there is more danger, there is more opportunity, this is dialectics. The test of revolutionaries, including your Party, is best taken by tactics, not strategy. Therefore, the fate of the revolution depends fully not on the strategy alone, but on what kinds of tactical moves one adopts at various junctures of the revolution to attain the strategic goal.

We can confidently say that we have been correctly applying the dialectics of strategic firmness and tactical flexibility in our revolutionary practice, since before the initiation of the People's War. It is open to the world's people, including your Party, that we had united with revisionists, we had been in parliament with 11 MPs, we already had two rounds of negotiations with the enemies, and the third round is going on. The Interim Government and constituent assembly election are on the immediate agenda. Comrades, if we were wrong in handling the dialectics of tactical flexibility and strategic firmness in our practice of waging class struggle, we would have been finished quite before. Any one of these tactical moves was enough to make us revisionist, the whole set was not necessary.

Yes, there is always a serious danger of tactics eating up strategy or policy eating up politics, the synthesis of MKP according to your letter. Tactical flexibility without strategic firmness creates this danger, and its ultimate consequence is reformism and revisionism. It is manifested in the form of 'fighting to negotiate', not 'negotiating to fight'. But, there is other danger too, which you did not mention in your letter. It is: strategy becoming tactics, in other words, having no tactics, or politics eating up policies. To say this in another way, it is strategic firmness without tactical flexibility, of which the end result is dogmato-sectarianism.

Those who are drowned in the quagmire of tactical flexibility without strategic firmness understand our Party as dogmatic, whereas, those who are suffering from the jaundice of strategic firmness without tactical flexibility see us moving towards reformism and revisionism. Confidently, what we can say is that both of these accusations are wrong, but we are correct, because we have been applying in our practice strategic firmness and tactical flexibility dialectically. The qualitative leap of the People's War in the past ten and a half years justifies this fact.

Our Party is very keenly trying to learn from the experiences of revolutionary struggles and tactical moves of the International Communist Movement, in general, and the latest experiences of Peru and Nicaragua in particular. We believe that both ways of adopting tactics, in Peru and Nicaragua, were wrong. We are confident that we can protect our movement from the mistakes committed in these two countries.

On the basis of our experience of unity and struggle with your Party in the past in general and your letter at present in particular, we believe that your Party is deeply suffering from the dogmato-sectarian trend. Therefore, we are not surprised to receive from your Party a warning bell through your letter in which it has doubted that our revolution is sliding towards revisionism. We know it is not your wish to indirectly accuse us of revisionism, but it is your way of thinking that has led you to this conclusion. Nevertheless, we don't claim that we are immune to committing any mistakes in our path. In this sense, your letter has contributed significantly to alerting us to the possible dangers ahead on our journey.

New Democratic Republic of Nepal and the Army

What our present position is on the PLA in the context, when your letter has suspected us of dissolving it, has been clarified in the part of the document excerpted before. We don't think it necessary to elaborate on this more. But, given our geopolitical situation, we are developing some concepts about the strength of the army in the New Democratic Republic of Nepal. It is a geographical fact that our country, inhabited only by 25 million people, is sandwiched between two giant nations, India and China, each of which has more than one billion inhabitants. Chinese military strength is being developed so as to counter US imperialism. The Indian army is known to be the fourth-strongest army in the world. From the resources we have in our country and the strength of our PLA, even if we recruit all of the youths within it, we cannot think of defeating either of the armies neighbouring us, let alone the US imperialist army, to defend our geographical integrity from foreign military aggression.

In this objective situation, we have to maintain our army not to fight foreign military aggression, but so as to provide military training to the general masses in the form of the militia. Only the armed sea of the masses, equipped with revolutionary ideology and politics, can defend our geographical integrity. Just for example, we have a brilliant history of heroic struggles in the past. The Nepalese masses equipped with domestic weapons and aged from 11 to 65 years had, under the leadership of patriotic army generals like Bhakti Thapa and Balbhadra Kunwar, defeated British aggressors attacking from the South, in Nalapani. Based upon the aforesaid historical facts too, we think that some thousands of the PLA will be sufficient to train the

general masses so as to defend her geographical integrity under the New Democratic and Socialist Republic of Nepal.

Our Party has developed this concept on the basis of the bitter experiences of the past revolutions too. This means it is related to how the relation between the army and the general masses can be maintained as cordial as it was before the capture of power. But, after the seizure of power, if the PLA are set in big permanent army barracks, objectively this would cut off the previous vibrant relation of 'water and fish' and 'soil and seed' between the general masses and their army, and consequently a bureaucratic set-up would start getting its shape from within this. This is why we are for developing a new methodology and mechanism by which bureaucracy could be frustrated from within the army, so that a strong people's relationship with them is maintained. We think this way of maintaining the People's Army can democratize it more, can involve them more with mass activities and strong ideological and political unity, which so develops among their ranks and the masses, and enables them to fight unitedly against both threats, internal and external. This can also be a new concept for maintaining the army in the socialist countries, in the 21st century, to fight international imperialism. We want to debate from this height.

Miscellaneous points

Let us excerpt some of the important parts of a sentence or sentences from the latter part of your letter under different headings like, "A questionable proposal", 'On the international community', "Nepal and the Imperialist World Order" etc. These are as under:

"And, it must be pointed out, if the enemies were to accept such a 'political solution' it could well be coupled with, or be a prelude to, relying on military means to enforce a military solution, as we have seen far too often in history (Indonesia, Chile, Iraq in 1965)'.

"...it is equally true that the existing world order will not tolerate a genuine people's revolutionary state."

"...an unwritten consensus in the international community that the Maoists must not be allowed to come to power. ... We think it is very accurate."

" the 'international community'—will bitterly oppose you and do everything they can to prevent you from coming to power in the first place, and to overthrow your rule, if you do succeed in coming to power, and this will very likely involve different types of military aggression as well as economic sabotage and blockade, espionage activities and the financing and training of counter-revolutionaries all of which is "business as usual" for the imperialist states and India as well, for that matter."

First of all, we would like to say that your concerns expressed in these excerpts is very much correct, so we share them. Imperialism will not tolerate any revolutionary to rule in any part of this earth as long as they can. It was not true that the CPSU and CPC first made imperialism happy with their politics and tactics, and then collected support to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in their countries. Also it was not true that they successfully established the dictatorship of the proletariat because they were superior to imperialism militarily. The fact was

that the Party of the proletariat was superior in mobilising people around it, handling contradictions among the enemies and using them in one's favour dialectically, because their outlook was scientific and they were far-sighted. The same is true for now also.

From the whole of your letter, it implies that imperialism will not allow any revolutionaries to have a political settlement in a peaceful way and will conspire with 'business as usual' to destroy revolution. And it also implies that what our Party is doing now tactically is wrong and nonsense. Therefore your letter has suggested us to go straightforward in a military way, with 'business as usual'. We appreciate your concern; but we understand imperialism will not tolerate us in power at all, as long as they can, even if we go with 'business as usual' too. That is why, whether imperialism will tolerate us or not is not the question at all behind our tactics; with which tactics we can defeat imperialism in the present context is the only question. We are not self-assured on the question that imperialism will allow resolving the civil war peacefully in the way our Party wants, but we are confident that we can defeat imperialism and their puppets in the military front by going through this tactic only. This is the question of applying the mass line correctly.

Yes, there are some confusing positions in our interpretations, in several contexts. We think sometimes they are necessary. If we can confuse our enemies and the international community with our tactical dealings, it can divide them to a certain extent, which will benefit our revolution. Problems will arise only if the Party of the proletariat itself is confused. So long as the ideological and political line is clear and the Party is committed to accomplishing its strategic mission, it can lead the masses in all circumstances. Revolutionaries can lead the masses ahead from the height of consciousness they acquire from the class struggle in society, not from the height of consciousness the Party of the proletariat has. It is a question of not dictating to them to do what we want, but of being together with the masses to deal with the situation and applying the mass line to develop their consciousness.

Your letter has very apprehensively raised one question. If the enemy accepts your demand, just for example, a constituent assembly, you are obligated to agree with it; otherwise you will lose the confidence of the masses. We appreciate your anxiety. But we understand that a constituent assembly in itself is not a solution, but its political content can be. For example, if the constituent assembly can ensure the dissolution of the royal army, the reorganization of the national army under our leadership, the implementation of revolutionary land reform based upon the policy of land to the tiller, the right of nations to self-determination, an end to social discrimination, development and prosperity, etc., why should one oppose it? By this, we mean that the constituent assembly is decided by its political content, not by its form. It is not an inert thing but full of contradictions, only what is required is our capability to use those contradictions in favour of our strategic goal.

The masses never compromise with their necessities but prefer peaceful execution. It is the task of the revolutionary parties to prove through practice that their necessities are not met by peaceful means. And only by doing this can the Party of the proletariat lead them to violent struggles. We understand that the enemy will not allow us to attain our strategic goal in a peaceful way, but we can lead the masses in violent struggle to overthrow them with such political tactics.

Conclusion

This is our short response to your letter dated 1 October 2005. We hope we succeeded to place our position clearly, mainly on the questions you have raised in the letter.

We understand that our two Parties have a convergence of views on the need to synthesize the positive and negative experiences of the past successful revolutions. Also we have convergences of views on the need to develop MLM to confront the challenges before our class in the 21st century. We believe that MLM can be developed in the course of applying historical and dialectical materialism in the practice of class struggle in society, two-line struggle among the entire revolutionary ranks all across the world, and the correct synthesis of past experience. Our two parties have a good opportunity to wage struggle, both being together in RIM. As an internationalist class, both of us have an important responsibility to fight unitedly for our class in the USA, in Nepal and the world as well. We take this response of ours as a first step towards that direction.

With Revolutionary Greetings!

**From the Central Committee,
Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)**
July 2006

First Appendix to the October 2005 Letter from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

This is an excerpt from a talk by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA.

The Creative Development of MLM, Not of Revisionism

Now this question of creative development is a very tricky question. Khrushchev claimed that he was creatively developing Marxism-Leninism when he brought forward revisionist theses, or feces. [laughter] (There is the Shakespeare analogy, again—he couldn't resist a pun, and I couldn't resist a play on words here). Anyway, Khrushchev's "three peacefuls"—peaceful competition, peaceful co-existence, peaceful transition to socialism—and his "two wholes"—the party of the whole people and the state of the whole people—these were revisionist theses. These were revisionist theses which he claimed represented a creative development of Marxism-Leninism in the context of new conditions in the world. Whether they are creative developments or whether they are, in fact, feces, needs to be analyzed and determined concretely and scientifically. And there is—as is pointed out in the Declaration of the RIM, and we've spoken to this—a dialectical relation between upholding fundamental principles while not only creatively developing them, but even interrogating them repeatedly to see if they are correct, and to see what we are learning about even those fundamental aspects of things.

So this is one of those things that also requires a lot of work and science. But if we are going to meet the challenges of making revolution in the world that's been set in motion in particular by this resolution of previous contradictions (with the "End of the Cold War"), in this period of major transition with the potential for great upheaval, and more broadly the changes that are being brought about in the world—the playing out of the more underlying contradictions that have been spoken to throughout in this talk—then we are going to have to actually creatively apply and further develop our grasp and our application of the fundamental principles of our science.

And, in all this, it is of decisive importance to at one and the same time remain firmly grounded in the fundamental understanding and principle that what is required is the revolutionary seizure of power, by millions (and, in a country like this, ultimately tens of millions and in some countries hundreds of millions) of people, and the thorough defeat and shattering of the existing state power and consolidation of a new state power, through the revolutionary struggle of masses, as the first great leap. If we let go of that—either in theory or if in practice we apply lines that lose our grip on that—we will not only be set back but our struggle will be drowned in blood, repeatedly.

You have to understand that whatever the stage of the class struggle, whatever its level of development at a given time, fundamentally what is involved is the struggle over what the character of the state will be, so long as we are in class society. In a country like the U.S. we are not on the road of protracted people's war, so we can't now form even an embryonic state that represents a rival regime to the existing state as, for example, is happening now in Nepal. There

this fundamental question, of one state vs. another, is very clearly illuminated, but in our situation it's not so clear. Yet, fundamentally, what's going on is the struggle over what the character of the state will be, and who's going to be controlling the state—what the nature of the state is going to be and what it's going to be aiming toward. That is what's at issue, and one or the other force, representing opposing state powers, is going to shatter and destroy the other. That's what's strategically involved: One state power or another is going to shatter and destroy the other, in the final analysis, even though that's only the beginning of another stage of the struggle and not the end of everything.

And if you lose sight of that strategic fact—or even if you continue to uphold it in conception but go in a direction and apply policies that lead you away from it—you are strengthening the basis for the other side to shatter and destroy you and weakening your basis to do the opposite. There is no way to get around this fact; as long as the old ruling class holds state power, there is no way to get around the need to shatter and destroy and dismantle its apparatus of state power and to construct a radically different state power in its place. And if you let go of that—either explicitly in conception, as Khrushchev did, or even inadvertently and unwittingly, without consciously doing so—the consequences are disastrous. You not only can lose everything you've won through ardent and heroic struggle and great self-sacrifice, but you can be set back and shattered, defeated and shattered with demoralizing consequences for a long time to come and with reverberations broadly throughout the world. So that's one point that needs to be underscored, once again, in talking about creatively—scientifically but creatively—confronting, and making advances in terms of confronting, the actual necessity we're dealing with, correctly understanding it and then transforming it more deeply toward our strategic revolutionary objectives.

Second Appendix to the October 2005 Letter from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

From Views on Socialism and Communism: A Radically New Kind of State, A Radically Different and Far Greater Vision of Freedom

Editors Note: The following is drawn from a talk given by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, to a group of Party members and supporters in 2005. It has been edited for publication here, and subheads and footnotes have been added.

Some Further Thinking on: The Socialist State as a New Kind of State

I want to talk a little more about the question of democracy and dictatorship in socialist society and about the socialist state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, as a radically different kind of state. Proletarian democracy—as given expression as democracy for the masses of people in socialist society—should contain some secondary and "external" features, if you will, in common with bourgeois democracy, including Constitutional provisions for the protection of the rights of masses of people, *and* of individuals; but *in essence it is a radically different kind of democracy*, fundamentally because it is an expression of a *radically different kind of class rule*—rule by the proletariat, led by its vanguard, openly exercising dictatorship over the overthrown bourgeoisie and other proven counter-revolutionary elements—*and* it has radically different objectives, above all the advance to communism, and the "withering away of the state"—*and of democracy*.

Here the following passages from Engels, once again from *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, are very relevant: He points out: [In early communal society] "there cannot yet be any talk of 'right' in the legal sense....Within the tribe there is as yet no difference between rights and duties."

That's worth pondering and wrangling with deeply: no difference between rights and duties. And we can go on to say that, in a fundamental sense, what was true in early communal society will again be true, but in a very different way—with a different material, and ideological, basis and in a different, worldwide context—in communist society: where there is no class antagonism, there is no separation, in a fundamental sense, between rights and duties. There is no separation between rights and duties characteristic of class society, is another way to say this. All rights and duties will be afforded and carried out consciously and voluntarily—and there will be no need for special institutions to enforce duties and to protect rights—no need for the state, *nor* for formal structures of democracy. This, of course, does not mean that there will no longer be a need for a *government* in communist society, for decision making and administration. That need will persist, and understanding this is a crucial part of understanding the difference between a **scientific** and on the other hand a **utopian** view of communism—and of the struggle to get to communism (I will have more to say on this, too, as we go along). But the *state* is not the same thing as, not identical with, government: the state, once again, is an organ, an instrument, of *class*

suppression and dictatorship, and its existence is always and everywhere an expression of the existence of *class antagonisms*. Now, at the same time, the character of the proletarian state, and the way in which power is exercised under the dictatorship of the proletariat, must—in accordance with, and to advance toward, the fundamental objectives of the communist revolution—also be *radically different* from any previous kind of state.

In order to get into this, and as a foundation for it, I want to paraphrase and review three sentences on democracy which I have formulated as a concentration of some fundamental points. To paraphrase, the first of these sentences is: In a world marked by profound class divisions and social inequalities, to talk about democracy without talking about the class content of that democracy, and which class it serves, is meaningless or worse. And second: In such a situation, there cannot be any such thing as democracy for all or "pure democracy"—one class or another will rule and will institute the forms of rule and of democracy that serve its interests. And therefore the conclusion of this, if you will, the third sentence, is: The essential question and dividing line is whether this class rule and the corresponding forms of democracy serve to reinforce fundamental class divisions and social inequalities, fundamental relations of exploitation and oppression, or whether they serve the struggle to uproot and finally eliminate these relations of exploitation and oppression.

Now, I said before, in another context, that I could teach a whole college course on this, simply by reciting these three sentences and then saying, "discuss," for the rest of the semester. And I wasn't joking. One could easily do this. But here, let's take off from this to discuss some important related questions, with this as a foundation.

I want to discuss the *state*—once again, the armed forces and the other organs of dictatorship—in relation to the *broader institutions and functions of government* in socialist society, including decision-making bodies, a legislature of some kind more or less, as well as centralized institutions that can effect the carrying out of decisions, or an executive of some kind. I also want to deal with the question of a Constitution and of the "rule of law" and of courts.

Recently, I told some people that one of the key things I have been grappling with is how to synthesize what's in the polemic against K. Venu¹ with a principle that is emphasized by John Stuart Mill. A pivotal and essential point in the polemic against K. Venu is that, having overthrown capitalism and abolished the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat must establish and maintain its political rule in society, the dictatorship of the proletariat, while continuing the revolution to transform society toward the goal of communism and the abolition of class distinctions and oppressive social relations, and with that the abolition of the state, of any kind of dictatorship; and that, in order to make this possible, the proletariat must have the leadership of its vanguard communist party throughout this transition to communism. In

¹ This polemic, titled "Democracy: More Than Ever We Can and Must Do Better Than That," appears as an Appendix to the book *Phony Communism Is Dead...Long Live Real Communism!*, 2nd edition, by Bob Avakian (Chicago: RCP Publications, 2004). The polemic originally appeared in the 1992/17 issue of the magazine *A World to Win*.

continuing to grapple with these fundamental questions, I have become convinced that this principle articulated by Mill—that people should hear arguments presented not only as they are characterized by those who oppose them, but as they are put forward by ardent advocates of those positions—is something that needs to be incorporated and given expression in the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is one element—not the entirety, but one element—of what I have been reaching for and wrangling with in terms of what we have formulated as a new synthesis. And in line with that, while the proletariat has to maintain firm control of the state—and, particularly in the early stages of socialism and for some time, this is expressed in terms of the leadership of the vanguard party of the proletariat—while the proletariat in that way has to maintain firm control of the state; and while the key organs and instruments of the state have to be responsible to the party (and I'll talk more about that and other aspects of this shortly); there is also a question of how can the masses be increasingly drawn, not only into the exercise of state power, but also into other forms, other aspects of the governing and administration of society, and the law-making of society; and how can the political process that goes on in socialist society, on the basis of the firm control by the proletariat over the state as exercised in a concentrated way through the leadership of its party—how on that basis can the political process lead to, or contribute to, the kind of ferment that I've been talking about as an essential element of what needs to go on in socialist society, including the emphasis on the importance of dissent.

So here "the John Stuart Mill principle" comes in, in a certain way—within the framework of proletarian rule and not raised as some kind of absolute, outside of and above the relation of classes and the class character of the state. I don't have time to go into a whole discussion of Mill, but in the "Democracy" book (*Democracy: Can't We Do Better Than That?*) I made the point that in fact Mill did not insist on and apply a principle of unrestricted liberty in some universal and absolute sense—he didn't think it applied to workers on strike; he didn't think it applied to people in "backward countries" who, as he saw it, were not yet ready to govern themselves, and he implemented that by being an official in the East India Company, a major instrumentality of colonial depredation and ravaging in Asia and other places. But nonetheless, leaving those contradictions aside here, there is a point that Mill is raising, about how people should be able to hear arguments from their ardent advocates. And I think one of the ways in which this should find expression in the governing of socialist society is that—within the framework where, first of all, the state is firmly controlled by the proletariat, and second, there is consultation between the party and the masses and the implementation of forms, such as those that were developed through the Cultural Revolution in China, forms that combine basic masses with people from administrative posts or technical or educational professionals, or people in the arts who are professionals, etc., in decision-making and administrative tasks on all the different levels and in all the different spheres of society—while that should go on as a foundation, there should be a certain element of contested elections within the framework of whatever the Constitution of the socialist society is at the time. And one of the reasons why this should happen is that it will contribute to implementing what is positive about this John Stuart Mill point—that people need to hear positions not just as they are characterized by those who oppose them but as they are put forward by ardent advocates of those positions—what is positive about this in relation to **our** strategic objectives, of continuing the socialist revolution toward the goal of communism, the ways in which the implementation of this principle will contribute to political

and overall intellectual ferment in socialist society and to the flowering of critical and creative thinking and, yes, of dissent, within socialist society—which will make that society more vibrant and will overall strengthen not only the willingness but the conscious determination of the masses of the people, including among the intellectuals, to not only preserve and defend that society but to continue revolutionizing society toward the goal of communism, together with the revolutionary struggle throughout the world.

One of the things that should be really understood about what we have characterized as the new synthesis, is that it envisions a much more wild society than has heretofore existed, politically speaking. I mean, things got very wild in the Cultural Revolution in China. But I am envisioning this in a different sense, on a more ongoing basis—one in which there is a solid core, and elasticity is giving rise to all kinds of contention on the basis of the solid core and within the framework in which the proletariat is (a) firmly in control of the state, and (b) is leading, and in that sense, in control of the overall political apparatus, even those parts that are not strictly speaking the state in the literal sense of being organs of political dictatorship and suppression, such as the armed forces, where the leadership of the party, and with that the rule of the proletariat, has to be very clear and firm.

The reason that I'm wrangling with this idea of having contested elections to, in part, select people to legislatures—in other words to have *part* of the selection, not the whole, but part of the selection of people to legislative bodies on local areas, and even on the national level, open to contestation—has to do with the Mill principle. It has to do with the principle (which I've articulated before) about how even reactionaries should be able to publish some books in socialist society—all of which, of course, is highly unorthodox [*laughs*] and, to say the least, controversial, especially in the international communist movement. But I do believe that the masses themselves—if they're actually going to rule and transform society and understand to an increasingly deepening level what is involved in transforming the world—will be better served by some contention in this kind of way, and that it has to find some expression other than just people being able to be guaranteed certain "first amendment" rights (freedom of speech and of assembly, of the right to dissent and protest, and so on), which they should have, within the framework of the proletarian dictatorship. So that's one element that I'm wrestling with.

Along with that, as there has been in previous socialist societies, there needs to be a Constitution. A Constitution, however, should always be understood, as should the law, as a *moving, dynamic thing*. At any given time it has relative identity. You can't say it's completely relative, or that it's essentially relative at any given time, or it would have no meaning then—it would be whatever anybody wanted it to be, and that's not a Constitution. A Constitution is something that sets down what are the rules of the game so that everybody can, on the one hand, in one important aspect, feel at ease, and, at the same time, can contribute fully to the struggle to transform society, while knowing, in effect, what the rules are. But it's a *moving* thing in the sense that a Constitution will change as the advance is carried forward toward communism. A Constitution is a reflection in the superstructure of where you are in the overall transformation of society, including in the economic base—just as the law, as Marx pointed out, is essentially a reflection of the property relations of society (and the production relations at the foundation of those

property relations) at any given time. And there will be a need, as there was in China, for example, for different Constitutions at different stages in that process. You will need to, in effect, tear up the old Constitution and rewrite it, as you advance, particularly by leaps, from one stage to another. But, at any given time, a Constitution plays an important role, I believe—or should play an important role—in socialist society. For example, I firmly believe that the army, and also in a fundamental sense the courts, especially courts that have a more societal-wide impact, and the essential administrative bodies, should be particularly responsible to the vanguard party in socialist society. But, here's where the contradiction comes in. I also believe they should be *responsible to the Constitution*. That is, to get right down on the ground, the army should not be able to be mobilized to go against the Constitution, even while it's being led by the party. And here you can see a potentially roaring tension. But if the party can lead the armed forces to go outside of and above and beyond the Constitution, then the Constitution is meaningless. And then, in effect, you do have an arbitrary rule whereby it's merely the party and whatever the party is deciding at a given time—those are the rules, and that's how they'll be enforced.

Now, this gets really tricky if you think about Cultural Revolutions in socialist society. What happens then? Well [*laughs*] revolutions are revolutions—a lot of things get suspended, but they have to be reconstituted. And there has to be some sort of leading core and rules even within that. That was the point of the Circulars that were put out by the party leadership in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, for example. But on a more ongoing basis, you can't simply run society in such a way that whoever gets control of the party at a given time sets and enforces the rules according to whatever they think the rules should be at a given time. Or else the masses will not feel at ease and, in fact, you will open the gates much more widely to the restoration of capitalism and a bourgeois dictatorship, a dictatorship of exploiters and oppressors of the masses. So there's real tension, and you can concentrate it in that formulation—that the army, for example, should be responsible to the party and led by the party, but it should also be responsible and accountable to the Constitution, and if people rally against the party, for example, in mass dissent, it should not be that the party can mobilize the army to carry out bloody suppression of those masses, or to suppress their right to raise that dissent against the party. So this has a lot of acute tension, or potentially acute tension, built into it. But again I am firmly convinced that, in order for the masses to really increasingly become masters of society, these kind of principles, and the institutionalization of these principles, are necessary in socialist society.

This, then, raises the question that I call the "Islamic Republic of Iran question." People will say: "Well, okay, that sounds good—Constitutional rights, even the army can't violate the Constitution, yes, have some contested elections—but how are you going to be different than Iran where they have the Supreme Islamic Council and it has final veto power over what happens. You're not really going to be different than that, are you?" Well, we *aren't* and we *are*. We aren't in the sense that we don't intend to have the fundamental question of state power put up for whoever can grab it. In fact, *a Constitution has to embody what the character of the state power is*—not only what the role of the army is in relation to the party, for example, but what is the character of the production relations, in addition to having a whole dimension of the rights of the people and, yes, of individuals.

Why do you need a Constitution? Because as Mao pointed out—this was an important thing that he brought forward—in socialist society there remains a contradiction between the people and the government, or the people and the state. This was not well understood before Mao. He pointed this out, if I remember correctly, in "On the Correct Handling of the Contradictions Among the People." And the need for a Constitution and for constitutional provisions, protections and rights is an expression of the recognition of that reality—that even where the state is in the hands of the proletariat, and is a positive state, is a good state, is a state that's maintaining the rule of the proletariat and putting its weight behind the further revolutionization of society and support of the world revolution—even there, there has to be protection against simply trampling on individuals or sections of society in the name of, or even in the legitimate pursuit of, the larger social and worldwide good.

So this is an important contradiction, and this is why you need a Constitution. And in my opinion, it is why you also do need a "rule of law." This has to do with the criticism that I raised in "Two Great Humps" (a talk I gave in the latter half of the 1990s)² of Lenin's formulation that dictatorship is rule, unrestricted rule, and specifically rule unrestricted by law. Now, to be fair to Lenin, he was saying this in the very, very early stages of the new Soviet republic, when not that much experience had been accumulated about the nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and under very urgent and desperate circumstances. And he was not putting this forward as a general conclusion about what the character of the governance should be throughout the transition to communism. He didn't even fully understand what that transition would look like yet. But, reflecting on it with historical perspective, that is not a correct statement of what a dictatorship is or should be. There do need to be laws. And there does need to be a "rule of law," or else there are no laws. I mean this in the sense that the law does have to be applied according to the actual character of the society and what is provided for in the Constitution and the laws themselves—it has to be applied in the same way to everybody and everything. Now, part of the law, an essential part of the law, must be and will be an expression of dictatorship over the bourgeoisie, and suppression of counter-revolutionaries. But then you do not simply declare somebody a counter-revolutionary and deprive them of rights without any process of law, or else you're again opening the gates to arbitrary rule and the restoration of bourgeois dictatorship. So that's another intense contradiction.

² The full title of the talk is Getting Over the Two Great Humps: Further Thoughts on Conquering the World. Excerpts from this talk appeared in the Revolutionary Worker newspaper (now Revolution) and are available online at revcom.us. The series "On Proletarian Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship—A Radically Different View of Leading Society" appeared in RW #1214 through 1226 (Oct. 5, 2003-Jan. 25, 2004). The series "Getting Over the Hump" appeared in RW #927, 930, 932, and 936-940 (Oct. 12, Nov. 2, Nov. 16, and Dec. 14, 1997 through Jan. 18, 1998). Two additional excerpts from this talk are "Materialism and Romanticism: Can We Do Without Myth?" in RW #1211 (Aug. 24, 2003) and "Re-reading George Jackson" in RW #968 (Aug. 9, 1998). All of these articles can be found online at revcom.us.

What about independent judiciary? In my opinion, the judiciary, as to whether it should be independent—it should and it shouldn't. In one real sense, it should be independent—in the sense that it shouldn't be, in any proximate, immediate sense simply following the dictates of the party. There should be law, and things should operate according to the law. On the other hand, and in an overall sense, and especially the more we are talking about a court whose decisions influence things on a large scale, and especially courts whose decisions affect all of society, this, too, has to be under the leadership of the party at the same time as it is beholden not only to the party but to the Constitution. Once again, intense contradiction.

So these are some things I'm wrestling with, and here the "Islamic Republic of Iran question" does arise, once again. Now there are some fundamental differences between us and what I'm envisioning in speaking of the Islamic Republic of Iran (as the embodiment of a certain kind of rule). First of all, we're not theocratic fundamentalists! That is not merely a statement without content, but makes a profound difference—our world outlook, our political objectives, are profoundly different. But as true and as important as that is, that's still not enough, there is still more to be wrestled with in the sense of: the party cannot, simply and arbitrarily and by going "outside of the rules," overturn what may be happening in society, according to the "rules" of society at any given time—mobilizing the army, once again, or other organs of the state, to do that. If revolutionaries in the party, or the party collectively, feel that the society is going in the direction back to capitalism, and there's no way to prevent this other than through the kind of thing that Mao unleashed in the Cultural Revolution, then that's what the Party will have to unleash—and then everything is up for grabs, "all bets are off," so to speak. But, in my opinion, if you allow the party to simply and arbitrarily decide what the rules are, what the law is, how the judiciary should operate, whether or not constitutional provisions should be extended or whether rights should be taken away, without any due process of law; if you allow that, you are increasing the potential and strengthening the basis for the rise of a bourgeois clique to power and for the restoration of capitalism.

So these are all things that need to be further wrangled with. But the contradictions that are being touched on here have to do with the character of socialism as a transition to communism, and not yet communist society itself, and with the need to draw the masses into—first of all, the need to draw the masses more fully into the running of and the transforming of society; and second of all, it has to do with the whole new synthesis and, in particular, the epistemological dimension of that and how that interpenetrates with the political dimension. In other words, to put it in concentrated terms, how are the masses going to come to know the world as fully as possible, in order to actually transform it; how are they going to more fully understand the complexity of things and what is right and wrong, what is true and not true, in order to be able to become more fully the masters of society and to transform it toward the goal of communism? The things that I'm wrestling with have to do with and are being taken up in *that* kind of framework. But we can't get away from the fact that *there is one thing that CANNOT be done*, and that is: the proletariat *cannot, in a fundamental sense, share power* with other classes—that is, the state in socialist society cannot be a state that serves different class interests—because, even while the proletariat must maintain and apply the strategic orientation of building a united front under its leadership, all the way to the achievement of communism, it remains a profound truth that only

the proletariat, as a class, has a fundamental interest in abolishing all class distinctions and everything bound up with class divisions, in both the economic base and the political and ideological superstructure of society. What exists and is concretized in law, in a Constitution, in the nature of the state, has to reflect not only the rule of the proletariat but also the objectives of the proletariat in advancing toward the abolition of class distinctions and the "4 Alls" and thereby the need for the state. And this has to take concrete forms, which will get embodied in *successive* Constitutions. But, as important as that is, on another level that is only the outward, superstructural expression of what needs to be going on in terms of transforming those "4 Alls"—continuing to transform the economic base, to revolutionize the world outlook of the people, within the party as well as in society overall, and to transform the political institutions to draw more and more masses into them, and to move to continually narrow and eventually eliminate the difference between the party and the broader masses in the running of the state and in the determination of the direction of society.

This is the way in which the proletarian state has to be firmly in the hands of the proletariat; but, at the same time, in accordance with the interests of the proletariat, it has to be different than every other kind of state: it has to be not only *reinforcing* the existing economic base and superstructure, but actually *transforming* the economic base and the superstructure, together with the advance of the world revolution, toward the goal of communism. This has to be reflected in all these institutions I'm talking about—of the state and of government, of law and Constitution. And all this, once again, involves very acute contradictions. As I have pointed out many times, it is very easy to promulgate, to theoretically conceive of and popularize, the idea of all elasticity—which is another way of saying bourgeois democracy, because that is what it will devolve into, that is what it will become. And we've also learned from experience that it is easy to veer in the direction of all solid core and a linear view of how you advance toward communism, how you carry forward the socialist transition: linear in the sense that everything is extended out as a line from the party—it's the party leading the masses to do this, the party leading the masses to do that. Yes, in an overall sense, it is necessary for the party to lead the masses, as long as there is a need for a vanguard party; but it is a very complex and contradictory process that I think we have to envision and that is envisioned in this new synthesis, which has to do with unleashing a lot of mass upheaval, turmoil, tumult, debate, dissent, and thrashing it through among and together with the masses, in order for *the masses*, in growing numbers, to synthesize what's true and correct and revolutionary out of all that. And, yes, on that basis, to suppress what actually needs to be suppressed, but also to carry forward what needs to be carried forward, and to deal correctly, at any point, with the two different types of contradictions (contradictions among the people and contradictions between the people and the enemy). This is a different way, a not so linear way. It's not like you're fly-fishing [*laughing*] and throwing a line out—it's much more "throwing out" a process that goes in many different directions and then working through, together with the masses, to synthesize it, without letting go of the core of everything. And that's the very difficult part, to do that *without letting go of the core of everything*.

So there is the challenge of *continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat*, to dig up the soil—materially and ideologically, in the economic base and the superstructure—that must be uprooted and abolished, in order to get to communism, to the realization of the "4 Alls,"

in relation—and yes this definitely involves contradiction—to continually giving fuller expression to the ways in which the socialist state actually is radically different from all previous kinds of states and actually is moving toward its own eventual abolition, even while—and here's another contradiction—even while that abolition will require a whole process, constituting a whole world-historical epoch, through which the necessary material and ideological conditions for communism are created, not just in a particular country but on a world scale.

I think we have come to see, from the experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat so far—in sifting through and summing up this first stage of proletarian revolutions and socialist society and projecting to the future, we've come to understand more fully, and have much more a sense of the complexity, of the fact that this is a long-term process, involving a whole historical epoch, as contrasted even with what Lenin understood at the time he died in 1924, and certainly in contrast with what we would have to say, with historical perspective, were the more naive views of Marx and Engels concerning the abolition or the "withering away" of the state. Marx and Engels more or less thought that once you socialize things—they were looking at this happening first in a more capitalistically developed society—that once you socialize ownership of the means of production under the rule of the proletariat, it would be not that long of a period, and not that profound and complex a struggle, to get to where more and more of the people would be drawn into the administration of society, and the state could accordingly wither away. And we've learned that this is rather naive, not surprisingly. [*Using a deliberately sarcastic sounding voice:*] "He said Marx and Engels were *naive*." [*laughter*] Yes, he did. Because we're historical materialists and not religious and idealist people; and in this aspect, the understanding of Marx and Engels was very undeveloped, not surprisingly. But we've learned much more through, first (after the very short-lived and limited experience of the Paris Commune), the Soviet Revolution and then the Chinese Revolution and the Cultural Revolution in China—and looking at the international dimension of this much more fully in dialectical relation with the advance in any particular socialist country—how complex this will be, and how repeatedly the contradictions that are driving this will assume acute expression and there will have to be another leap forward, in order, first of all, to preserve proletarian rule, but much more fully in order to advance it further, to carry out further transformations in the base and the superstructure, together with supporting and advancing revolutionary struggles throughout the world.

So, in this context I want to come back and speak more directly to the solid core with a lot of elasticity—and elasticity *on the basis of the necessary solid core*. Now in talks I've given on "Elections, Democracy and Dictatorship, Resistance and Revolution,"³ I spoke about four objectives in relation to the solid core with state power. Now, the whole thing can be characterized, and I have characterized it, in the formulation that the point is "to hold on to state power while making sure that this state power is worth holding on to." And of course that's a boiled down, or basic and simple, concentration of a much more complex phenomenon and process. But the four objectives that relate to that are: 1) holding on to power; 2) making sure

³ This was a talk given by Bob Avakian before the elections in 2004. Audio file of this talk is available online for listening and downloading at bobavakian.net.

that the solid core is expanded to the greatest degree possible, and is not a static thing, but is continually expanding to the greatest degree possible at every point; 3) working consistently toward the point where that solid core will no longer be necessary, and there will no longer be a distinction between that and the rest of society; and 4) giving expression to the greatest amount of elasticity at any given time on the basis of that solid core.

The dialectical interplay of these things is another way of expressing what's involved in what I've described as a nonlinear process of, on the one hand, continuing to exercise the dictatorship of proletariat, and on the other hand—through this whole tumultuous and wrenching process, and through a succession of leaps—not only holding on to power, but transforming the character of that power, as the economic base and the superstructure as a whole are transformed, in dialectical relation with each other and in dialectical relation with the advance of the overall world revolution toward the goal of communism on a world scale.

On Developments in Nepal and the Stakes for the Communist Movement: Letters to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, 2005-2008 (With a Reply from the CPN(M), 2006)

Many people in the world today are wondering how to evaluate the recent developments with the revolution in Nepal—where, after 10 years of an inspiring People’s War led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), that war has come to an end, the CPN(M) is now the leading party in the recently elected Constituent Assembly and the Party’s Chairman, Prachanda, is the Prime Minister of the government. Does the current trajectory in Nepal and the course taken by the CPN(M) represent an historic new thing, a victory and breakthrough in advancing the communist revolution in the 21st century, as some have claimed; or—as many others fear—does this represent a setback and betrayal of the goals of the revolution and of the heroic struggle waged to achieve them, and a serious departure from the communist cause that the CPN(M) claims to be fighting for?

The answer to this is of great importance, and can only be arrived at by going deeply into the key questions of ideological and political line that are involved; and this needs to be seen in the context of the crossroads that the international communist movement is facing, which focuses on the fundamental question, as posed in *Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage, A Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*: whether to be a vanguard of the future or a residue of the past.

This article serves as an introduction to an exchange between the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (RCP,USA) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)¹ (CPN[M]) over a period of several years between October 2005 and November 2008—three letters written during this period by the RCP,USA and one reply by the CPN(M)—which deal with mounting disagreements on key questions of communist principle and revolutionary strategy. (These letters can be found online at revcom.us.)

Some History and Background

Revolutions, and especially revolutions of the oppressed led by genuine communists, are all too rare in the world today—a world which cries out desperately for such revolutions. Whenever a struggle emerges that is aimed at opposing the hold of imperialism on even a small part of the globe, and when that revolution has the goal of transforming fundamental relations that have a grip on humanity today, the success or failure of that struggle is of great importance and has profound implications. In February 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) dared to begin such a struggle, launching a revolutionary People’s War and raising the red flag of communist revolution on “the roof of the world.” This raised the hopes of not only the people in Nepal and that region of the world, but of all those who are yearning for this kind of liberating struggle to be undertaken, and to achieve a new revolutionary state power, in many more places all over the

¹ The CPN(M) has changed its name to the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) following the merger in January 2009 with the revisionist Communist Party of Nepal-Unity Centre (Mashal).

world. At a time when people have been sold the lie that communism is dead, and that there is no real possibility of breaking free from the death-grip of imperialism (and relations of exploitation and oppression in general), when it is constantly repeated that there is no viable alternative to the monstrous system of capitalism-imperialism, many people were greatly inspired by the daring and lofty goals that these revolutionaries had taken up.

For 10 years battle raged back and forth in the Himalayan kingdom, but despite vicious repression, the revolutionary forces grew, as they drove the armed forces of the old state out of most of the countryside and set up red base areas where peasants, ethnic minorities, women and millions of other oppressed got a first taste of real liberation. The stated goal of the People's War was to oppose the monarchy that had ruled Nepal for over 200 years, to establish a new democratic state—a state which would result from the overthrow and defeat of imperialism and feudalism, and other reactionary forces aligned with imperialism and feudalism, and which would represent and embody the rule of the proletariat, led by its communist vanguard, heading an alliance with the masses of the peasantry and other classes and groups that had been united in the struggle against imperialism and feudalism—and then to carry forward the revolution to socialism and communism. This was explicitly seen by the CPN(M) as part of, and as contributing to, the world revolution.

This was given political and ideological support by revolutionary communists through-out the world, including the RCP,USA. Our Party made significant efforts to popularize the heroic struggle and the communist aims of this rising of the most oppressed masses in Nepal, led by the comrades of the CPN(M). We followed closely the twists and turns of the People's War and the revolutionary new things that the struggle brought forward. And we paid attention to how the leadership was applying the basic principles of Marxism to the concrete conditions they were confronting, with specific focus on the fact that they were popularizing the final goal of communism and the establishment of revolutionary state power as the necessary next step toward that final goal; how new democracy—as opposed to bourgeois democracy— was being aimed for; how they envisioned the united front under the leadership of the proletariat; and questions of strategy for winning the revolution and establishing a new, revolutionary state power.

As the revolution advanced, it not surprisingly encountered new difficulties and challenges that centered on how to actually accomplish winning state power, how to transform the economy of a backward country in a world dominated by imperialism and especially threatened by the powerful neighboring countries of India and China (the latter no longer a socialist country but a reactionary state ruled by communists in name but capitalists in fact), and how to forge a united front drawing in the middle strata of society while maintaining the focus on the revolutionary goals and continuing to provide communist leadership. These are the kinds of challenges that any genuine revolutionary struggle will encounter, and there are never simple solutions, or ready-made formulas, that can be applied to solving these complex problems. In this context, in the larger context of the defeat of the first stage of communist revolution in the world (which came to an end with the reversal of the revolution and the restoration of capitalism in China, shortly after the death of Mao Tsetung in 1976), and in response to the need to further develop, in theory and practice, a new stage of communism capable of meeting these challenges, struggle emerged over what the actual goals of the revolution should be and how to achieve them.

Our Party paid attention to all of these developments, in accordance with our fundamental internationalist orientation—our understanding of the responsibilities of all communists to approach revolution as a process of world-historic struggle which must aim for, and finally achieve, communism on a world scale. From this standpoint we became increasingly alarmed at the direction the CPN(M) leadership was taking, both in its theoretical formulations and in the related abandoning of the original objectives of the revolution. These disagreements centered on: 1) the nature of the state, and specifically the need to establish a new state led by the proletariat and its communist vanguard, as opposed to a strategy centering on participating in, and what amounts to “perfecting,” the reactionary state (minus the monarchy, in the case of Nepal); 2) more specifically, the need to establish, as the first step, upon the overthrow of the old order, a new democratic state which would undertake the development of the economic base and corresponding institutions of the nation free from imperialist domination and feudal relations, based on new production and social relations brought forward through the course of the People’s War, as opposed to establishing a bourgeois republic which focuses on developing capitalism and finding a place within the world imperialist network; 3) the dynamic role of theory and two-line struggle (struggle within communist parties and among communists generally over questions of ideological and political line), vs. eclectics, pragmatism and attempts to rely on “tactical finesse” and what amounts to bourgeois *realpolitik*—maneuvering within the framework of domination by imperialism (and other major powers) and the existing relations of exploitation and oppression.

With regard to each of these three decisive dimensions, the leadership of the CPN(M) has increasingly insisted on the wrong view and approach, which has tragically led them to the abandonment and betrayal of the cause they were initially fighting for. In the face of these very disheartening developments, we have been faced with the need to carry out sharp struggle against this disastrous course, and we have consistently sought the best and most appropriate means to make our criticisms known to the CPN(M), and to the parties and organizations that make up the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM)—to carry out this struggle in a way that would actually be of political and ideological assistance to the revolution and would not aid the imperialists and reactionaries, who are the bitter enemies of the emancipation of the oppressed (and ultimately all humanity) and are constantly seeking to divide, defeat and crush the forces of revolution and communism.

In approaching this line struggle, the RCP has proceeded from the understanding that communists the world over not only have the responsibility to apply the science of communism to the problems of making revolution in “one’s own” country but also, to use Lenin’s words, to support “this struggle, this, and only this line in every country without exception.” It is the duty of communists to understand to the best of their ability the crucial questions of political and ideological line as they take place on an international level, and to do everything in their power to help the revolutionary communist line defeat the influence of revisionism (betrayal of communism in the name of communism) in every country, and all the more so when the outcome of the struggle over ideological and political line has so much immediate impact on a very advanced revolutionary struggle such as that taking place in Nepal.

This two-line struggle has been conducted in a serious and disciplined way. Even as the CPN(M) took further steps toward the destruction of the revolution it had been leading, the RCP,USA

continued to carry out the struggle privately, in light of the fact that the CPN(M) had made clear it favored such an approach, and with the aim of limiting the ability of the imperialists and other enemies to speculate on differences in the communist ranks and of creating the most favorable conditions for the CPN(M) itself to debate and struggle out these line questions. Unfortunately, the CPN(M) leadership has failed to really respond to, or to engage in any substantive way with, the fundamental questions at issue during this whole period, instead insisting that the heart of the matter is tactics, and not basic principles and strategic orientation, from which tactics must and will flow. In effect, they have dismissed criticisms over these fundamental questions with a repeated message that was itself a gross expression of pragmatism and empiricism: We appreciate your concerns, but there is no need to worry—trust us—we have been successful so far, so what we are doing now must be right.

At this point, however, developments in the CPN(M), and in particular the further acceleration of the revisionist degeneration of its line, have made it necessary to conclude that the policy, so far carried out by the RCP, of only conducting this struggle privately, is no longer correct. We believe it is necessary at this point to make this struggle public, with the aim of enabling the revolutionary movement throughout the world, and people who support revolution and communism (or who are wrestling with the question of whether revolution and communism are not only necessary but possible), to have as accurate and full an understanding as possible of the nature and development of this crucial two-line struggle.

The Current Situation

Today, as a result of elections held in April 2008, the CPN(M) is the leading party of the newly formed Constituent Assembly in Nepal. The central Party leaders loudly promise to be faithful to the new “federal democratic republic,” i.e., a *bourgeois* state which is founded upon and protects the reactionary class relations in Nepal, and these leaders multiply their assurances to the “international community” (read: imperialist and reactionary states such as the U.S., Great Britain, India and China) of their intention to keep Nepal firmly cemented into the world imperialist system. The organs of people’s power built up in the countryside of Nepal through the revolutionary war have been dissolved, the old police forces have been brought back, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), although never defeated on the battlefield, has been disarmed and confined to “cantonments” while the old reactionary army (formerly the Royal Nepal Army, now renamed the Nepal Army) which previously feared to travel outside its barracks, except in large heavily armed convoys, is now free to patrol the country—with the blessing of a CPN(M) Defense Minister. The naked renunciation by the CPN(M) of communist principles—such as the need to smash the old bourgeois state and establish a new proletarian power, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the actual goal of communism itself, to make a radical rupture with all traditional relations and traditional ideas, in both words and deeds—has shocked many inside and outside of Nepal. Within the CPN(M) itself many are recoiling at these open manifestations of *revisionism*—in which some communist slogans and verbiage are used to dress up what is essentially a capitalist worldview and political program. Outside of Nepal, revisionists all over the world, few of whom ever supported the People’s War, are overjoyed at the course of events and write article after article lauding the CPN(M) and the current line it is carrying out. On the other hand, those who had supported the People’s War, in the hopes that it would usher in a new social order and serve the advance of the world revolution, are increasingly frustrated and disheartened by developments in Nepal.

While there has been opposition within the CPN(M), it has unfortunately become increasingly evident, especially after the November 2008 National Convention (which will be addressed below), that the main opposition forces inside the CPN(M) who have been upset by the abandonment of the revolution have themselves been unable to develop a coherent critique of the revisionist line and, as a result, are deceiving themselves, and are at least objectively serving to deceive others, as to the actual program and nature of the CPN(M), a party headed for complete abandonment of the cause of communism in reality, while (at least for a time) upholding it in name.

The Turn to Revisionism, Its Roots and Implications

In fact, the bitter fruits that we see today in Nepal are not a sudden act of betrayal by a few Party leaders—they are the logical and foreseeable outcome of a process that has been emerging in the CPN(M) over a number of years, a process in which the revolutionary communist *line* that (with whatever weaknesses and shortcomings it may have had) led to the initiation and the advance of the People’s War, was replaced in the CPN(M) by a revisionist line on a whole series of questions. By “line” we mean the outlook and orientation, strategic conception and method which guide political activity in one direction or another. The decisive turn took place in October 2005 when a sharp struggle within the Party was “resolved” in a revisionist fashion, as we will discuss below. This whole experience shows once again how insightful Mao Tsetung was when he emphasized that ideological and political line is decisive. As Mao put it:

If one’s line is incorrect, one’s downfall is inevitable, even with the control of the central, local and army leadership. If one’s line is correct, even if one has not a single soldier at first, there will be soldiers, and even if there is no political power, political power will be gained. This is borne out by the historical experience of our Party and by that of the international communist movement since the time of Marx. The crux of the matter is line. This is an irrefutable truth.

When the line struggle first erupted in the CPN(M) it focused on what might have appeared to many as abstract questions of democracy and the experience of socialist revolution, and many communists in Nepal and around the world failed to understand the life and death implications of these questions for the direction and fate of the revolution. But the questions involved in the ideological struggle regarding the revolution in Nepal are, fundamentally and in the last analysis, a matter of whether to fight for a communist world, or to “make the best” of the existing imperialist-dominated world; whether to accept the proposition that society is, and will indefinitely be, organized on a capitalist basis, or whether to fight to overthrow that system and build a wholly different kind of society without classes and exploitation. Not surprisingly, the terms of struggle in Nepal did not express themselves openly in this way, and even less so at the early stages of the struggle. While a few leaders of the CPN(M), especially Baburam Bhattarai, have loudly proclaimed loyalty to “democracy”—meaning Western-style bourgeois democracy—and expressed a negative verdict on the whole first wave of proletarian revolution, most of the other central Party leaders proclaimed just as loudly their support for the goals of establishing new democracy, socialism and communism while insisting that limiting the struggle to a fight for a “transitional” (read bourgeois) republic was only a “tactic.” Indeed, CPN(M) leaders in general have continually tried to focus the debate on the question of “tactics,” as if the essential question were *how* to achieve a “federal democratic republic,” not

what kind of state, and more fundamentally what kind of social system, was needed in Nepal and the world.

In its letters, the RCP,USA did not focus on the specific tactical questions involved, concentrating instead on the overall questions of line and general direction, while continually listening to and examining the arguments of the CPN(M) about how their tactics, in their concrete conditions, could lead to a revolutionary solution to the real problems the revolution faced. It is not that questions of ceasefire, negotiations, even participation in the Constituent Assembly elections were unimportant; the crucial point was that the correctness, or incorrectness, of such tactics could not be examined and evaluated outside of the fundamental framework of what the Party was seeking to accomplish and what outlook and orientation was guiding its actions. Those who opposed the direction the Party was taking but focused on the tactical questions as the decisive arena, as the CPN(M) leadership insisted on doing, were paralyzed, unable to develop a clear critique of the Party's line, and thrown into disarray and confusion at every successive twist or turn in the political situation in Nepal or the latest political maneuver of the Party leadership.

Understanding the dangers facing the revolution in Nepal required really digging into the issues as things unfolded—being able to use the outlook and method of communism to penetrate beyond the surface phenomena to understand the essential questions involved. Even now, when it may appear easier—at least to those who have maintained a revolutionary orientation—to see the non-revolutionary conclusion of the CPN(M)'s course over the past few years, anyone content with a facile dismissal of the Party's actions, without a serious examination of the political arguments justifying and rationalizing those actions, will risk falling into a similar trap in new forms in the future. For all of these reasons, and not merely or mainly out of a concern for the historical record, it is necessary for the important exchange between the RCP,USA and the CPN(M) to be examined by all who are concerned with the problems of making revolution.

Struggle Erupts

What was the situation in 2005, when the line struggle first fully erupted? The forces led by the CPN(M) had liberated most of the countryside in Nepal and advanced to the point, both militarily and politically, where the prospect of nationwide victory began to loom on the horizon. Faced with this, the ruling monarch, King Gyanendra, had centralized all political power in his hands and dismissed parliament and suppressed the mainstream parliamentary parties in an effort to rally by force the entire ruling class of Nepal to smash the People's War. The Royal Nepal Army under the command of Gyanendra was backed by the U.S., India, China, Great Britain and other reactionary states. On the battlefield, fierce fighting took place with mixed results: some battles were won by the People's Liberation Army, but in other cases the Royal Nepal Army was able to withstand large-scale attacks and the PLA was forced to retreat with significant casualties. The question of who would win out—the old state, represented by the king, or the new state being built up in the liberated areas of Nepal—was very real and palpable. The question of what the intermediate classes in Nepal would do, especially the urban middle classes in the Kathmandu Valley, took on a particular importance as possible “end games” came into focus.

It is not surprising that the military and political struggle on the ground was helping to focus up a theoretical and ideological struggle in the Party itself. What kind of state system would the revolution put in power once the power of the king had been defeated? How would it be similar to and how would it be different from the socialist states of the 20th century, the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin, and the People's Republic of China under Mao? What type of democracy would be practiced in such a system? What would be the role of political parties and elections? What kind of economic and social transformations would be carried out, and by what means? What would be the relationship between a people's revolutionary government in Nepal and the imperialist and reactionary states? How would a revolutionary Nepal serve the world revolution—or would it?

In February 2004, an article appeared in issue #9 of the English language organ of the CPN(M), *The Worker*, entitled “The Question of Building a New Type of State,” written by Baburam Bhattarai. “The New State” advanced a series of arguments about democracy and dictatorship and how they related to the struggle in Nepal that, the RCP argued, “...would, if followed, lead to not establishing a proletarian dictatorship or to abandoning it if it were established.” At the time this article appeared, there were also indications of an internal struggle between Bhattarai and a few others grouped around him, on one side, and, on the other side, the central Party leadership led by Chairman Prachanda. The RCP, alarmed by the positions put forward in the “New State” article but also hopeful that the inner party struggle could serve as a means for the CPN(M) to reaffirm and clarify its understanding of the goals of the struggle, called on the CPN(M) to “cast aside those aspects of its previous understanding and political line which go against the mainly correct orientation” which had characterized the CPN(M)'s line and leadership up to that point, and had enabled it to lead crucial and inspiring advances.

The “New State” article basically placed the extension of formal democracy (including elections with competing political parties) at the heart of the socialist transition and as some kind of supposed “guarantee” for the prevention of capitalist restoration, and proposed that upon reaching socialism the standing army could be dissolved and replaced by militias, and in general the model of the Paris Commune, with direct elections and recall of officials, was raised as a more positive model than the experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union and China.

The October 2005 letter from RCP,USA challenged the views expressed in “New State” and its promotion of formal democracy as the key to a new state power. Quoting Bob Avakian, it pointed out:

In a world marked by profound class divisions and social inequality, to talk about “democracy”—without talking about the *class nature* of that democracy and which class it serves—is meaningless, and worse. So long as society is divided into classes, there can be no “democracy for all”: one class or another will rule, and it will uphold and promote that kind of democracy which serves its interests and goals. The question is: *which class* will rule and whether its rule, and its system of democracy, will serve the *continuation*, or the eventual *abolition*, of class divisions and the corresponding relations of exploitation, oppression and inequality.

The RCP Letters could not of course go deeply into the dynamics of the socialist transition, but instead referenced the works of Bob Avakian that have examined these issues in great depth and have brought forward a radical re-envisioning of communism that has addressed many of the weaknesses of the first wave of the world proletarian revolution. But it was vigorously pointed out that it was a serious mistake to make the most essential question in the socialist transition

formal democracy (and its expression in elections, competing parties, and the like) and that this would strengthen tendencies toward the abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The arguments advanced in “New State,” which came to characterize the CPN(M)’s overall approach, negated the need for a powerful proletarian state that could actually allow the masses to transform the world—and to transform themselves—as part of the larger battle to overthrow imperialism throughout the world, uproot and eradicate all relations of exploitation and oppression, and emancipate all humanity.

The RCP’s first letter drew the very correct and important conclusion that, “the proletarian dictatorship is portrayed in the New State as, at best, a ‘necessary evil.’” And the question inevitably arose: with an approach like this, would it really be possible for the CPN(M) to wage the arduous uphill battle required to shatter the old state and throw off the thousands-year old domination of society by exploiting classes and establish proletarian rule, with all the painful sacrifices that requires?

The Manifesto from the RCP, USA, *Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage*, published in September 2008, analyzes that while two opposing tendencies have arisen in the International Communist Movement (ICM)—“either to cling religiously to all of the previous experience and the theory and method associated with it or (in essence, if not in words) to throw that out altogether”—at the same time, “these ‘mirror opposite’ erroneous tendencies have in common being mired in, or retreating into, models of the past, of one kind or another (even if the particular models may differ): either clinging dogmatically to the past experience of the first stage of the communist revolution—or, rather, to an incomplete, one-sided, and ultimately erroneous understanding of that—or retreating into the whole past era of *bourgeois* revolution and its principles: going back to what are in essence 18th century theories of (bourgeois) democracy, in the guise, or in the name, of ‘21st-century communism,’ in effect equating this ‘21st-century communism’ with a democracy that is supposedly ‘pure’ or ‘classless’—a democracy which, in reality, as long as classes exist, can only mean *bourgeois* democracy, and *bourgeois dictatorship*.”²

The reversals of the revolution in the Soviet Union (in the mid-1950s) and in China (20 years later), if correctly understood, should not, and do not, provide a justification for this kind of retreat into the past, in one form or another. As the RCP’s October 2005 Letter argued:

It is definitely true that the very existence of the proletarian state, a vanguard proletarian party, a standing army, etc., all can be transformed into their opposite—a state of the bourgeoisie oppressing the masses of the people. The same can be said for the revolution itself—there is no guarantee that it will continually advance toward communism—revolutions can be and unfortunately many have been aborted or turned into their opposites. But this is no argument not to make a revolution. Whether a state continues to advance toward the ultimate goal of communism, and its own eventual withering away, depends on whether and how that state is fighting to transform all of the objective material and ideological conditions that make the existence of the state still necessary. There is no easy way around this. Relying on the institutions and practice of formal democracy will not solve the problem—it will not remove the contradictions that make the dictatorship of the proletariat absolutely necessary, it will only strengthen the hand of those forces who are seeking to overthrow and abolish the dictatorship of the proletariat, and who can draw strength in these efforts from the remaining

² We would suggest our readers study *Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage, A Manifesto from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA* which situates the principal political tendencies within the international communist movement within the context of the summation of the whole first wave of communist revolution and the need to unfurl a whole new wave.

inequalities in socialist society and from the existence of reactionary and imperialist states, which for some time are likely to be in a position of “encircling” socialist states as they are brought into being through revolutionary struggle. Abolishing or undermining the monopoly of political power and, yes of armed power, by the proletariat, and its vanguard leadership—in whatever form this is done, including by having elections in which the vanguard party and its role is put up for decision in general elections—this will, for all the reasons we have spoken to here, lead to the *loss of power by the proletariat* and the restoration of *reactionary* state power, with everything that means.

The Resolution of the Line Struggle and the “Fusion” of Two into One

Unfortunately, the line struggle within the CPN(M) at that time was resolved on a very bad basis by the Central Committee (CC) meeting held in October of 2005, even as the RCP letter was arriving. Far from repudiating the arguments of Bhattarai’s “New State” article, the Central Committee adopted his core arguments. In a Communique of the CPN(M) CC, the line differences in the Party were dismissed as a “misunderstanding.” The plan to go for a “transitional republic” was adopted by the Party, with the proviso that this was only a “tactic” while it was asserted that the Party remained true to its long term goals of new democratic revolution, socialism and communism. Bhattarai was reincorporated into the leadership of the Party on this basis. This method of uniting two contradictory opinions was heralded as a great achievement and was upheld as a model for the whole international communist movement.

This particular form of revisionism—*eclecticism*, or the attempted reconciliation of irreconcilable opposites, the combination of Marxism (in words) with revisionism in essence—had long been a problem in the thinking of the CPN(M) leaders but became enshrined and defended as a principle in the aftermath of the 2005 “inner party struggle.” And it was this political line and orientation that piloted the CPN(M) through the next turbulent period of class struggle in Nepal.

The CPN(M) Answers the RCP,USA—in Practice and in Theory

The CPN(M) leadership did not answer the RCP’s October 2005 letter until July 2006; but, even before there was a response in the realm of theory to the arguments that had been raised, the practical consequences of the CPN(M)’s line came pouring out.

One of the key theses put forward by the 2005 CPN(M) Central Committee meeting that adopted core positions from “New State” was the notion that the immediate goal in Nepal was not new democratic revolution—the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat appropriate to the oppressed nations that Mao Tsetung pioneered—but instead a “transitional republic.” The CPN(M)’s July 2006 letter explained the thinking behind this:

“[O]ur Party has viewed the democratic republic neither as the bourgeois parliamentary republic nor directly as the new-democratic one. This republic, with an extensive reorganization of the state power as to resolve the problems related with class, nationality, region and sex prevailing in the country, would play a role of transitional multiparty republic. Certainly, the reactionary class and their parties will try to transform this republic into a bourgeois parliamentary one, whereas our Party of the proletarian class will try to transform it into a new-democratic republic.”

As the RCP letters explain in greater depth than can be gone into here, this concept of a “transitional republic,” and the underlying notion that it is some kind of neutral apparatus that can be transformed into a bourgeois state or a proletarian state, deny a basic truth of Marxism—one that is not a matter of some ossified dogma but has been established, and verified over and over, through the scientific summation of wide-ranging, profound and repeatedly acute experience in class society over the centuries: There is no state that is not ultimately an organ of the rule of one class or another. Which class will the army and the other organs of institutionalized power serve in this “transitional republic?” Will they serve the struggling masses to uproot the foundations of their oppression and to fight to advance the world revolution—or will they be in the hands of, and carry out and enforce the interests of, the reactionary classes? The RCP letters put emphasis on the class nature of the state and point out, from many different angles, that in the world today every state will have a class character and enforce definite class interests—those of the proletariat, or those of a reactionary class (or some combination of reactionary classes). In this light, the letters examine, and refute, the CPN(M)’s argument that the existence of a monarchy makes Nepal an exceptional case, which justifies not just a temporary united front against the monarchy but uniting anti-monarchy forces in the “transitional republic” and “restructur[ing] the state” in what amounts to a whole stage, which is separate from and not yet new democracy.

Once the CPN(M) had decided to accept the “New State” position and the goal of a “transitional republic,” it is not surprising that this orientation and commitment on its part became a major factor in the politics of Nepal. A series of agreements was reached with the reactionary political parties that had been frozen out of power by King Gyanendra’s dissolution of parliament on February 1, 2005. The RCP, USA has made clear that its orientation—and the substance of its criticism—does not involve an infantile approach that would rule out reaching agreements even with reactionary political parties to accomplish specific objectives, for example in opposition to the monarchy. However, in the case of the CPN(M) it can be seen that these agreements were based upon and reflected the theses that its leaders were adopting about the “transitional republic” and related questions. In other words, the agreements with the reactionary parties were *based on the renunciation of communist objectives and principles*, as expressed especially in the acceptance of a (bourgeois) “democratic republic” as the goal of the struggle, which again would actually correspond to a whole stage, separate from new democracy.

With these political agreements—and a developing broad opposition to the denial of democratic rights by the king along with the continuing progress of the People’s War centered in the countryside—as a backdrop, in April 2006 a huge mass movement took place in the urban centers of Nepal directed against the monarchy. This movement involved not only the proletariat and urban poor but large sections of students, intellectuals, shopkeepers and middle class elements generally in the cities. The main parliamentary political parties—such as the revisionist Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist Leninist) which, while communist in words, had been a vicious opponent of the People’s War, and the Nepal Congress Party, which had deep connections with the Indian ruling class and had been the historic political party of Nepal’s comprador bourgeoisie (a section of the local bourgeoisie that is tied to and serves imperialism and foreign powers)—also supported this movement and strived to lead it. Faced with the massive outpourings in the urban areas, and in particular the capital, Kathmandu, on top of the powerful People’s War, the ruling classes of Nepal and their foreign backers in the U.S., India

and elsewhere, decided that it was necessary to abandon the policy of counting on the absolute monarchy to restore order. A ceasefire took place and negotiations began between the parliamentary parties and the CPN(M) which led in November of that same year to the Comprehensive Peace Accords, establishing an interim government with the participation of the CPN(M), restricting the PLA to cantonments, and setting the ground rules for elections for a Constituent Assembly charged with writing a new constitution for the country.

Clearly, the eruption of the urban mass movement and the end to the absolute monarchy created important new conditions for the revolutionary struggle in Nepal, and certainly it was necessary for the communists to take these new conditions into account, make necessary changes in their tactics and policies and strive to win over the vacillating urban sections who had risen up against the king but were full of illusions that the “return to democracy” would solve the problems of the country.

It was in this context of the end of the absolute monarchy that the CPN(M) leadership finally answered the RCP,USA in a letter dated 1 July 2006. The CPN(M) response indignantly dismissed the arguments of the RCP as being a mere repetition of “the ABCs of Marxism.” It’s true that the correct understanding of the class nature of the state is one of the “ABCs of Marxism”—that is, it is a fundamental truth established through scientific analysis and synthesis of vast, and all-too-often bitter, experience, with tragic consequences when this truth has been ignored. In this connection, the question sharply poses itself: Even if it were true—which it was not—that the RCP’s criticisms of the CPN(M) merely restated certain “ABCs” of Marxism, including on the basic nature of the state, how would that justify *abandoning* such basic principles (“ABCs”), as the CPN(M) has done?

In its response, the CPN(M) seeks to wriggle out of this by declaring that of course it agrees with the RCP that “strategically” it is class relations that determine the nature of the state, but then it goes on to argue that its demand for a transitional republic is really just a “tactical slogan.” But this argument is yet another self-exposure that only compounds the problem. Suddenly the goal of the revolutionary struggle is no longer to smash the old reactionary comprador-feudal imperialist-backed state and establish new democratic rule under the leadership of the proletariat, but instead to settle for some kind of democratic republic which supposedly has no clear class nature, a state which both bourgeoisie and proletariat alike will try to use. But, with classic eclectics, it is argued that this doesn’t revise the heart out of the Marxist understanding of the state because this is only a “tactic”! Events since 2005 demonstrate clearly that the eclectic, muddled understanding of the state reflected in this slogan (“transitional republic”) goes far beyond mere “tactics”—and it is no surprise to find articles in *Red Star* (the biweekly online newspaper that presents the views of the CPN[M] in English) a few years later insisting that the current state in Nepal is a “joint dictatorship of both the proletariat and the bourgeois class.” (*Red Star* #15, “Fall of Koirala Dynasty”) This is declared to be a great theoretical innovation. But in reality there is nothing great, or innovative, about a state that is based on the old society, with new faces in high places who claim they can use that state to fulfill the interests of “the people.” In fact, this conception of the state standing apart from the class divisions in society is the very same deception that exploiting classes always utilize to hide their class domination. In the communist movement as well, the abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in favor of a “state of the whole people,” has also been a hallmark of revisionism. As with revisionist efforts of this kind in the past, the attempts in Nepal now to implement such conceptions, and the

tactics that go along with this, can only lead to further and further setbacks for the revolutionary cause, disarm the revolutionary forces, and masses, ideologically as well as otherwise, and set them up for disaster. The fundamental truth, which no erroneously conceived “tactics” can change, or get around, is that proletarian rule can only be established by smashing and dismantling—and not seeking to “perfect,” or “restructure”—the old, reactionary state; and the interests of the masses of people can only be served by digging up the roots of class society, while the rule and the interests of the imperialists, and other reactionaries, can only exist and be served by reinforcing those very roots of exploitation and oppression.

In March 2008 the second major letter of the RCP,USA answered the arguments of the CPN(M) and further developed many of the themes of the RCP’s previous letter (of October 2005) in the context of the evolving political situation in Nepal. Through a whole course of maneuvers and attempts to carry out the agreements that had been reached between the CPN(M) and the other political parties, elections for the Constituent Assembly in Nepal were finally set to take place in April. The question of a “transitional republic” had gone from only being one of basic principle and theory, as it was in 2005, to becoming an immediate practical question as well, as the whole country was preparing to go to the polls for the April 2008 Constituent Assembly elections.

The RCP letter of March 2008 examines the CPN(M)’s call to “restructure the state” and argues that it amounts to a call to “perfect the existing state machinery”—which in fact serves the reactionary classes—rather than to *smash* the reactionary state (to borrow Marx’s formulation). Numerous historical examples are drawn on, in the RCP’s argument on this crucial point—bourgeois democratic revolutions in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, the 20th century revolutions (or regime changes) in Russia, Iran, Spain and other countries—to show that time and again revolutionary struggles have fallen short of liberating the oppressed because they have settled for ridding the state machinery of obsolescent aspects, like a monarchy, that no longer corresponded to historical developments—and/or to the needs of the reactionary classes at the time—rather than destroying the state machinery entirely and clearing the ground to establish the rule of those who were exploited and oppressed in the old society.

This RCP letter continues to examine why countries like Nepal, which of necessity must carry out the anti-feudal struggle (and which, in Nepal specifically, did involve uniting forces broadly against the monarchy), will require a form of “two stage” revolution but why the first stage—which corresponds to the achievement of bourgeois-democratic tasks, such as overthrowing feudalism (and, again, in the case of Nepal, abolishing the monarchy)—cannot be allowed to fall under the leadership of bourgeois forces, and to result in the establishment of a bourgeois-capitalist republic (in whatever guise and with whatever name), but instead must be led by communists, representing the fundamental interests of the proletariat, and must result in the establishment of a new democratic state, consciously built as part of the world proletarian revolution. In Nepal the capitalism that has developed under the impetus of the world imperialist system is intertwined with feudal forms of exploitation and oppression, and there cannot be any democracy of the capitalist type without the “stench of feudalism.” Thus, without new democratic revolution any half-measures will mean that the country and the masses of people will not only fail to break free of -foreign domination and continuing subordination within the international network of imperialist relations, with all the terrible consequences of that, but

significant aspects of feudalism will also remain—in reality and regardless of anyone’s professions or intentions. Along with that, whatever progress might be made in perfecting the reactionary state machinery will only lead to more fully establishing the bourgeois republic that Lenin described as being the “most suitable shell” for the growth of capitalism.

Here once again is the fundamental principle—yes, an “ABC” of Marxism, and one that it has repeatedly proven disastrous to ignore—that breaking free of the hold of the reactionary classes, and abolishing exploitation and oppression, cannot be accomplished through some gradual(ist) approach, but only through a radical rupture: an overthrowing and breaking up of the old organs of political power, serving the old society, and the establishment of radically new organs of political rule, serving and carrying forward the radical transformation of every sphere of society, as part of the overall world proletarian revolution.

As the RCP’s March 2008 letter argues:

One of the central political questions we raised in our debate with the CPN(M) was whether the current stage of the struggle is for the establishment of a New Democratic republic, that is, the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat appropriate in the conditions of Nepal, or whether the revolution must ‘pass through’ the process of consolidating a bourgeois democratic republic. This question that we were debating in theory has, over the last two years, taken on flesh and bones. *Two states* had emerged in the course of the ten year-long People’s War: the old reactionary comprador-bureaucrat-capitalist-feudal state led by the monarchy in league with imperialism, and the embryonic new democratic state that had emerged in the countryside on the basis of the strength of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The objective question facing Nepal is *which* of these states will emerge victorious and be consolidated on a nationwide level and which of them will be defeated. The great tragedy is that the political line and muddled thinking of the comrades of the CPN(M) has to a large degree *delegitimized* the revolutionary state that had emerged in the countryside and *relegitimized* the dictatorship of the reactionary classes linked to the world imperialist system...

Indeed, the People’s War had already succeeded in making real advances in transforming social and economic relations in the liberated areas, on the basis of the red political power established there. These changes showed in practice how it is only by clearing away the old state power through new democratic revolution that it is possible to carry out basic bourgeois democratic tasks, such as doing away with the caste system, making a genuine leap toward uprooting the inequality and oppression faced by women and the minority nationalities, distributing “land to the tiller,” and establishing genuine national independence from imperialist domination.

This last point is crucial: without a people’s army and a new democratic state led by the proletariat, it will be impossible to break free of imperialist domination. And, as the RCP letter of November 8, 2008 argues:

Time and again we have seen the inseparable link in the oppressed countries between achieving the social emancipation of the masses and waging the struggle against imperialism.... Exactly because imperialism is a world system that is ever more deeply penetrating all aspects of the social and economic structure, it is impossible for meaningful social transformation to take place without a radical rupture with imperialism....

Switzerland of South Asia, or Base Area of Revolution?

The RCP’s November 2008 letter argues sharply against the path being taken by the CPN(M), which is concentrated in its promise to make Nepal the “Switzerland of South Asia”—a promise that featured prominently in the Party’s election campaigning earlier that year. First, this promise is built on the illusion that Nepal’s problems could be solved by further integration into the world

imperialist system (one key plank of this promise is making Nepal a “hub of trade” between China and India), rather than by rupturing Nepal out of the system in which it has suffered generations of domination and the distortion of its economy and society overall, in accordance with the interests and dictates of imperialists and other exploiters. And this is an illusion that is rapidly going up in smoke amidst the current global economic crisis, with Nepal suffering sharp rises in the prices of basic necessities such as energy and grain. Even more fundamentally, what does this vision have to do with communism in the first place? Switzerland is a small imperialist country that sits near the top of the imperialist food chain, feeding off the global plunder of this parasitical system. Is this the vision that should be inspiring communists—or should it not instead be the vision that Bob Avakian, Chairman of the RCP, USA, has given such emphasis to: being “emancipators of humanity?”

Once again, the base areas in the People’s War in Nepal had vividly demonstrated some of the revolutionary transformations that the masses were capable of making once they had power in their own hands. Imagine what a contribution the establishment of a revolutionary state, even in a relatively small and poor country like Nepal, could make to breaking through the all-too-widespread view that there is no alternative in the world today to bourgeois democracy serving capitalism and imperialism.

The CPN(M) threw itself entirely into election campaigning, and against the expectations of almost all observers, including the RCP, it emerged from the elections as the leading party. Elated by its victory, the CPN(M) put itself at the head of a coalition government with a number of the other main parliamentary parties.

As already noted, this represented not a step towards liberation, but a step away from it, for these elections proved in fact to be a powerful way of giving new legitimacy to the old reactionary state, which was not smashed or defeated but only *perfected* by the whole Constituent Assembly process. More generally, the CPN(M)’s declaration that it is using the existing state in Nepal, shorn of its monarchical features, as a springboard for liberation is a dangerous illusion. As has been repeatedly stressed—but cannot be stressed too many times, given how much this is a source of deadly illusions—the reactionary state is not a classless instrument that can serve the proletariat or bourgeoisie alike, depending merely on who is holding it in their hands. The state is not the same as the government, and in particular parliaments—which, as Lenin pointedly noted, can be readily dissolved, if the core of the ruling class finds it in its interests to do so. The state, on the other hand, is an integrated, historically evolved machinery of military and bureaucratic power that reflects, embodies and serves the dominant social and economic relations and the ruling class (or classes) that sit atop them. The idea that the machinery of the exploiting classes can be taken over as it is, or “restructured”—but not smashed and dismantled—and then can be used for the ends of emancipating the oppressed, and ultimately humanity as a whole, goes against the scientific summation of the class character of every state and of countless experiences where the exact opposite has occurred instead: those who began with revolutionary aspirations but fell into these illusions about the state have been swallowed up time and again and transformed into upholders of the very system which oppresses the masses, and/or they have been ruthlessly crushed. The March 2008 letter from the RCP examines the bitter experiences of the communist movement in France and Italy, and concludes that, “once the basic framework of the bourgeois state institutions is accepted as legitimate, then the efforts of the communists to organize the proletariat and the masses

to exert their interests *within* this framework (through both electoral and non-electoral means) has the objective effect of strengthening and perfecting these reactionary institutions themselves.”

It is no accident that one institution that has gone virtually untouched by any changes sought by the CPN(M)-led government is the Nepal Army (NA), the pillar on which the old state stands. But while the NA, which waged a vicious counter-revolutionary war for years, and racked up one of the worst human rights records in the world, still stands fully intact, the PLA has been disarmed and confined to UN-supervised cantonments for almost three years and is now threatened with liquidation through the process of being integrated into the NA. All too often, revolutionaries have indulged themselves in illusions rather than face the basic truth that Mao so incisively summed up: “Without a people’s army, the people have nothing.” On the other hand, the reactionaries and imperialists never fail to maintain an iron grip on this basic question of state power. While the CPN(M) constantly talks about the two armies as if they occupied an equivalent status, it speaks volumes about the reality of the situation that the idea of the NA being integrated *into the PLA*, instead of vice versa, is non-existent in public discourse, and in Kathmandu’s halls of power the only response this idea would provoke is bemused laughter.

A Compromise with Revisionism When a Radical Break is Needed

During the period since shortly after the CPN(M)’s electoral victory, a growing number of Party cadres began to recoil at the direction that the Party had taken. They launched struggle within the Party, and a sort of “opposition” coalesced around some senior figures in the Party who raised criticisms that the Party was settling into parliamentary politics in Kathmandu and forgetting about continuing the revolution, and other serious concerns.³ This struggle culminated at a National Convention held in mid-November 2008. Unfortunately, what did *not* happen at that Convention was a radical break with the dominant line in the Party and a rejection and repudiation of the bourgeois democracy and eclecticism which has come to characterize the Party’s line overall, and which had led it into the morass that had angered so many cadres.

Indeed, it seems that most of the opposition forces themselves remained trapped within this same approach of half-way measures, centrism (trying to find a compromise position between communism and revisionism) and eclecticism, and instead of a decisive struggle, wound up in an eclectic compromise (a classic case of combining “two into one,” as the RCP’s polemics examine). Basic points of the two papers presented by CPN(M) Chairman Prachanda and opposition leader Kiran were combined into a single common platform. Based on this common platform, the Party will continue to head up a coalition government, but the Party’s work will now be carried out through a three-pronged front, consisting of the “government, the Constituent Assembly, and the street.” (Even the new name they propose for the government—People’s Federal Democratic National Republic—reveals the eclectic resolution of this struggle.)

This compromise shows how little most of the opposition leaders have understood what is wrong with the current overall line of the CPN(M). However much one professes in words that “the street” will be principal, so long as state power continues to remain in the hands of the

³ See the articles by comrades Kiran and Gaurav among others in issues of *Red Star* published in September to November 2008.

reactionary classes in Nepal and their imperialist backers, what will define Nepalese society and determine the country's future development will not be "the street" but the workings of the capitalist-imperialist system worldwide and in Nepal. In this situation, "the street" can never be more than a pressure group on parliamentary politics, to be unleashed or reined in based on the workings of these more fundamental factors, and limited to achieving reforms within the overall reactionary framework. Even if one holds the position of Prime Minister, the rules that one will be forced to abide by, the agreements one will have to make, and the interests one will be forced to uphold and serve will prevent "the street" from being anything more than a pressure group used to tack and negotiate.

The RCP,USA letter of November 2008 notes:

One of the particularities of centrism and eclecticism is its refusal to make a clear-cut demarcation between Marxism and revisionism, but instead to try to carve out a position "half-way" between a revolutionary communist ideology and politics and outright capitulation and opportunism. In Nepal it is this form of centrist revisionism that has become the greater danger, not those who unabashedly proclaim their adhesion to the ideology of multiparty democracy and the glories of capitalism. The tired refrain is that there is the danger of revisionism or rightism "on the one hand," but there is also the danger of "dogmatism" on the other, and that by skillfully maneuvering between these two obstacles the Party has gone from victory to victory. Or, there is the recognition—in-words of fundamental principles, the "ABCs of Marxism," such as the need to smash the existing state apparatus, while the Party's actual policy goes completely contrary to this goal.

In particular, Baburam Bhattarai has been arguing openly for a long period of capitalist development in Nepal, and has been a target of dissatisfaction among broad ranks of the Party for some time now.⁴ But the greater obstacle recently is the eclecticism and half-measures that have come to characterize the line of Party Chairman Prachanda and the forces around him, who time and again combined verbal assurances, to the rank and file and discontented sections of the leadership, of the Party's intentions to carry the revolution through to victory while continuing to carry out the basic revisionist line and policies advocated by Bhattarai. This "fusion" of two into one is heralded as a great contribution to Marxism, under the signboard of "avoiding splits," but it actually amounts to avoiding the necessary sharp, decisive struggle and rupture to a fundamentally different and revolutionary line and uniting all who can be united through *THAT* line struggle. It is becoming increasingly clear in practice that this "avoiding splits," and the more general eclecticism it is part of, really means abandoning the fundamental interests of the proletariat and other oppressed masses in the name of unity with exploiting classes, their political representatives and their ideology, and abandoning the mission of the proletariat to thoroughly sweep away imperialism and reaction in Nepal as part of advancing the world proletarian revolution.

In this situation, it was crucial, especially for those wanting to build the necessary opposition to the revisionist line now dominant in the CPN(M), to make a radical rupture with precisely this kind of half-stepping centrism and eclecticism and break with an orientation that was framed in terms of an illusory and classless democracy, which could only mean the kind of bourgeois democracy that the Party was settling into. To instead take half-measures and conciliate yet again

⁴ Bhattarai argues that Nepal must first develop the productive forces before the revolution can advance further, and that only capitalism can achieve this. While some compare him to China's Deng Xiaoping, it could be said that to invoke the "theory of the productive forces" like this in Nepal, in conditions where, unlike in China, socialism has not even been achieved, is a classic example of Marx's ironic phrase, first time tragedy, second time farce.

with revisionism and with eclecticism means reinforcing this erroneous outlook, which had led to the situation that had provoked the rebellion in the first place.

In a situation that demanded decisively going after the causes of the illness, the opposition wound up confining attention once again simply to the symptoms. To take just one example, the “opposition” recoiled at the prospect of the Party being swamped in parliamentary reformism, but persisted in hailing the April 2008 election victory as a great success. The resulting compromise at the November National Convention was, like the April 2008 election “victory,” not a stepping stone towards setting the Party on a more revolutionary path, but instead represented reconciliation with revisionism, taking all the anger and rebellion that had erupted among a significant section of the Party and once again pulling it back within the orbit of an overall wrong line. As the RCP,USA letter of November 2008 put it, “We should remind comrades that every revisionist party always has a ‘left’ whose role objectively is to provide an outlet for the discontent of the masses and sections of the rank and file, while keeping these same sections bound to the political programme of the party leadership.”

Further evidence that there was no significant change in the Party’s trajectory came to light almost immediately, when in January 2009 the CPN(M) completed a process of uniting with the Communist Party of Nepal-Unity Centre (Mashal). This latter party was the product of an earlier split in the communist movement of Nepal before the People’s War was launched. Indeed, splitting with these and other revisionists had been a necessary and vital part of the process of preparing to launch the People’s War in the first place. The fact that the CPN(M) has now re-united with these die-hard revisionists, and has hailed this as a great accomplishment on the road to uniting “all Nepal’s communists,” represents a further step in putting the People’s War, and the revolution it embodied and spearheaded, into the museum of ancient history. In fact, the People’s War is increasingly treated as an action that, though it legitimated the Party among the poorest sections of society, has no relevance for the future.

A recent issue of *Red Star* gave another indication of where the path that the CPN(M) is taking will lead. Issue #21 featured an article by a *Red Star* reporter, Roshan Kissoon, entitled “Negation of the Negation,” which took the CPN(M)’s eclectics and revisionism to new depths. Kissoon’s article repudiates the whole history of the international communist movement and the pathbreaking contributions of its founding and leading figures, beginning with Marx. He reverses the verdict on almost every major struggle between revolution and counter-revolution. The result of Kissoon’s article is to effectively liquidate all dividing lines in the experience of the ICM—as if nothing whatsoever had been learned since the proletariat came onto the stage of history, as if the struggle and sacrifices of the hundreds of millions who fought heroically to wrench the beginnings of a new world out of the grip of the capitalist exploiters was all for nought.

This contempt for the achievements of the communist movement, historically and internationally, and the lessons learned at such great cost, is in service of outright capitulation, for Kissoon’s conclusion is that nothing can be done in Nepal today but to build capitalism, and he approvingly echoes a comment from Bhattarai that “communism should be left to our grandchildren.” The point, however, is that future generations will never achieve communism until and unless revolutionaries take the initial but decisive steps that go in the direction of socialism and ultimately communism. Going full steam toward capitalism will only retard and

undermine the struggle for communism, and with regard to Nepal in particular it will mean throwing away the great opportunity that was wrenched through the process of People's War—of opening the door to the socialist and communist future.

It is no wonder that Kisoorn reserves his greatest bile for Bob Avakian, for it is the work that Avakian has done to rescue communism from being turned into a museum piece—and to revitalize and strengthen it as a scientific outlook and method capable of leading the masses to advance the revolutionary struggle toward the goal of communism—that poses the greatest danger to this brand of revisionist “cynical realism.” The CPN(M) itself has not—yet—adopted this kind of outright liquidationism but giving revisionists a platform to spew their venom in a Party-led newspaper, as they have done with Kisoorn, is a reflection of a line that has already taken the Party a long way on the road to liquidating the communist content in the Party's line.

The Stakes of This Struggle, and the Need Now to Take It Out Into the World

The RCP is making these letters public at this point based on its assessment of how best to carry the struggle forward to do whatever is possible to save the revolution in Nepal, and to assist others around the world in learning from this experience so as to sharpen the overall understanding of the diverging lines that are becoming evident in the international communist movement. This is no time to mince words: the revolution in Nepal has been sinking into quicksand and will not “self correct” unless and until there is a conscious and energetic repudiation of the ideological and political line that has led it to this disaster.

In deciding to make these letters public, the RCP is proceeding from the bedrock understanding that communists are not representatives of this or that nation, but of the world proletariat, and that their cause is the cause of emancipating all humanity. Proceeding from this viewpoint, communists should pay particular attention to, and focus political and ideological support and assistance on, those struggles that offer the greatest chances for making revolutionary breakthroughs against imperialism. The RCP therefore has viewed the growth of revisionist views in the CPN(M) with the utmost seriousness and concern, and has worked hard to figure out how to conduct struggle with the CPN(M) in a way that is consistent with communist principle and would offer the greatest hope for a positive outcome.

Some critics have derided the RCP for its “silence” over Nepal up to this point. But the exchange of views between communist parties and organizations—including at times sharp disagreements over matters of principle—takes place in the context of extremely complex struggle, with monumental stakes, against ferocious enemies; this must be constantly kept in mind by anyone who is serious about advancing this struggle. The RCP has proceeded on the basis of the understanding that, “the work of communists and the revolutionary struggles they lead are matters of profound importance for the masses of people, not only in the particular country immediately involved but indeed in the world as a whole” and that the airing of differences has to be weighed and approached very carefully, because doing so “can easily be of aid to the imperialists and reactionaries who relentlessly seek to crush and annihilate revolutionary struggles and vanguard communist forces.” (From “Stuck in the ‘Awful Capitalist Present’ or Forging a Path to the Communist Future, Response to Mike Ely's Nine Letters”)

The international communist movement must be full of vigorous debate and struggle, but it is not and should not be turned into a mere debating society. It is only when the RCP had become thoroughly convinced that it was not possible through the channels available to it to persuade the leadership of the CPN(M) to turn aside from the disastrous path it was pursuing that the decision was made to open up the struggle to the broad public.

It is undoubtedly true that the CPN(M) has dug itself a deep hole, and it is getting deeper. To speak frankly, it is very hard indeed for a party to extricate itself from such depths. But communism will never be reached without communists going up against great obstacles and overcoming tremendous difficulties, in order to make unprecedented breakthroughs—and this is what is called for today. The first thing that needs to be done is to accept the fact that *the problem is the basic line of the Party*. It is the revisionism, and the centrism and eclecticism and promotion of illusions of classless democracy that have led the Party into the swamp, and it is a radical rupture with this that is required. This means above all a reaffirmation of the basic principles and goals of communism, which in Nepal means carrying forward—through revolutionary means and not by attempting to rely on, and promote, gradualist illusions and reformist schemes—the struggle to complete the new democratic revolution as the first step toward socialism and the final aim of communism.

The comrades in Nepal are not alone in facing this challenge, but to make the necessary ruptures will require a definite break with nationalism, empiricism and pragmatism—and, as a particular expression of that, the elevation of one's practice, with whatever successes it may have involved up to a certain point, as beyond criticism and as more important than the fundamental principles of communism, which are themselves the distillation and scientific synthesis of a vast range of human practice and struggle, in the realm of revolution and in many other dimensions of human thought and activity. As the November 2008 RCP Letter points out:

[T]he belief that the advanced practice of the Nepal revolution has made it unnecessary to learn from advanced understanding from other comrades is part of the pragmatism and empiricism that has, unfortunately, been a growing part of the CPN(M) leadership's ideological orientation for some time now. Any effort to resolve the crisis in the CPN(M) only "on its own terms," and on nationalist or empiricist grounds to ignore or resist the advanced revolutionary communist understanding developing elsewhere is to severely handicap the struggle for a correct line. In particular, we sincerely hope that the comrades of the CPN(M) will give serious attention to engaging with the body of work, method and approach, the new synthesis, that Bob Avakian has been bringing forward.

This introduction and overview of the polemical exchange between the RCP,USA and the CPN(M) has only touched on some of the many important points that were raised in the Letters, including the relation between strategy and tactics, the international dimension of the revolution in Nepal, the relation of new democracy to carrying out bourgeois democratic tasks, the role of formal democracy under socialism, the CPN(M)'s history, and many more. But one thing is clear: these polemical exchanges represent one of the most important two-line struggles that have taken place in the international communist movement in many years. Like other such major struggles, they involve profound stakes and far-reaching ramifications, and they are an important "school of revolution" that can help a new generation to learn what is involved in the inevitably complex process of revolution and what is required to actually carry revolution through all the way to victory—and on that basis to contribute to doing whatever is possible to save the revolution in Nepal. As the RCP's March 2008 letter concluded:

This very important battle is part of a greater process of rescuing the communist project in the only way

that it can be rescued, by confronting the ideological and political questions of revolution in the 21st century, daring to examine and reexamine our precepts and understandings and forging the solution to the problems of humanity. Our own steps along this process have convinced us, more than ever, of the viability and necessity of the communist revolution.