

"Split talk" in the Nepalese Maoists

Rajesh Thapa Sun, 30/10/2011 - 16:26

Rajesh Thapa

Rajesh Thapa reports from Kathmandu on the growing divisions in the Maoists over the post civil war settlements

SERIOUS DIFFERENCES between a Maoist senior vice-chairman Mohan Baidya (Kiran) and the Party Chairman Puspha Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) has led to talk of a split in the party by some senior leaders.

The United Communist Party Nepal ? Maoist is the currently the largest party of the Nepalese Constitution Assembly and recently had one of its leaders, Dr Baburam Bhattari, elected as Prime Minister. However, in one of his first moves as Prime Minister, Dr Bhattarai caused anger within his party by signing a Bilateral Investment Promotion Agreement (BIPA) with India. This caused a lot of anger amongst many of the party faithful, principally because they are anti-Indian and they think Bhattarai is being far too friendly with the men in New Delhi. Other critics fear that the agreed provisions will make Nepal bankrupt.

Chairman Prachanda has tried to contain the growing factional feud in the party by promoting Bhattarai and by allocating limited power sharing among the top heads, but these measures have only made the problem worse. The growing division now runs right through the central committee, the party cadre and the members in the Constitutional Assembly.

Kiran?s faction, which has the support of more than 40 percent of the party?s lawmakers, has been strongly opposing a number of decisions taken by Bhattarai?s faction and the government, including the handover of the keys to the guerrilla fighters weapons containers to the state. Control of the thousands of rifles and assorted weapons used by the Maoists in the civil war was a major point of contention with the capitalist politicians, desperate to prevent the Maoists from rearming. Bhattarai, at that time supported by the party chairman Prachanda, handed over the keys unilaterally with no agreement from the party, another sign of how undemocratic the Maoists are when they are in government.

Now the opposition forces in the UCPN-M have taken to the streets demanding the agreement with India be scrapped. They have termed the deal as ?anti-national? ? a sure sign that they feel that this is a matter of political principle. The deal was again signed without any consultation within the Maoist party. The 16 member Standing Committee, unable to settle these disputes, referred it to the upcoming Central Committee meeting slated for 3 November. But everyone knows there are already sharp differences over the ?integration? and ?rehabilitation? of the former fighters from the Peoples Liberation Army.

The internal dispute within the UCPN-Maoist has stalled both this integration process and constitution drafting. In fact the Maoists have proved incapable of taking a united stance on any single issue. The fourth extended deadline of the Constitution Assembly is very unlikely to complete the drafting process. However, the major hurdle towards completing this has been the attitude taken by the opposition Nepali Congress and the CPN-United Marxist Leninists, a reformist working class party. Neither party is willing to budge on the question of PLA integration, and they argue that this must be settled first, before a

constitution can be agreed. But no compromise has been reached among the parties as to the number of Maoist combatants for rehabilitation, the support package for them and what their ranks should be.

Bhattarai set a self imposed deadline of forty five to complete the major tasks of the combatants' integration and rehabilitation. He has utterly failed. Above all, he has not been able to put the final touches to his cabinet; one major obstacle being the manoeuvres of his party's senior vice chairman, comrade Kiran. The main opposition parties – the Congress and the CPN-UML have proposed retaining the separate identity of the ex-fighters after the integration into the Nepal Army. Likewise, Congress wants to limit the number of Maoists to be integrated into the army to 5,000 while the Maoists demand 7,000 of them.

Similarly, there is no agreement on the so called 'rehabilitation package' related to ex-guerillas looking for voluntary retirement. Congress wants to limit the amount to 303,000 Rupees (£2,400) at most, whilst the Maoists are demanding at least 700,000 Rs (£5,500). Not wanting to be undone by the current leadership the Baidya faction of the UCPN-Maoist has demanded that not less than 8,000 combatants should be integrated and around Rs. 1 million (£8,000) be given to those who wish to 'retire'.

The Maoists move to the right

It is important to note that the parliamentary parties NC and the UML have now actually successfully disarmed the Maoist combatants. In the name of ending the rule of few feudal lords and bourgeois the UCPN (Maoist) has changed itself into a parliamentary party and is trying hard to strengthen the rule of capital – both national and multinational!

Lately, the Maoist secretary has accused Prachanda and Bhattarai of violating the party's revolutionary path and asked them to quit the party. He added that the revolution cannot succeed under the leadership of the chairman and the vice-chairman because their talk of revolution is just to maintain their power and policies. Moreover, he accused them of deviating from the revolutionary path in favour of mere 'peace and constitution'. The General Secretary, Ram Bahadur Thapa (Badal), has also accused a faction of his own party of working under the direction of India. He said that the political parties have shown a submissive attitude towards India whilst shouting nationalist slogans. Moreover, he added that there is no point in preserving unity in the party while putting national independence in danger. Recently, amidst strong pressure from the opposition and his own party, Bhattarai fired two ministers from his cabinet; the Defence Minister for secessionist remarks that he made, and the Minister for Land Reform for being suspected of involvement in a murder. The parliament was subsequently disrupted by the opposition for a week over this issue.

As the political crisis looms, the economy too has become a victim. According to the latest government statistics almost 26 per cent of Nepalis earn less than one dollar a day. The Maoist government has refused to expropriate the feudal lords and the rich whilst submitting Nepal to the rule of capital. It wants foreign investment to flow into the economy in an unprecedented scale. But this can only make rich richer and the poor poorer. The underlying problems of the oppressed and exploited masses can only be addressed by moving from resistance to revolution. Now it has become all too clear that the Maoists have abandoned the revolutionary struggle; now the failure of the guerrilla strategy has been exposed; a space can open up for the development of a real revolutionary party in the country. Revolutionary socialists in Nepal must now launch a fight for a 'workers and peasants' government.