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By Gary Leupp

Overview of the maoist victory in the Nepalese Constituent Assembly election by long-term observer and sympathiser Gary Leupp, a US academic and regular Counterpunch (www.counterpunch.org) contributor. It's not necessary to agree with Leupp that the maoists stand for 'communism' to recognize that the election result represents a major strategic success for the provisionally demilitarized 'people's war' and a geopolitical upheaval at the borders of India (where the Naxalite maoists continue to wage war) and China. More open to question, perhaps, is Leupp's claim that the event is overlooked or unreportable in Western media. The *FT* ran a remarkably positive full-page feature the day before yesterday, followed up yesterday with renewed emphasis on Party assurances the immediate agenda is not 'socialism' but the replacement of 'feudalism' with 'capitalist development'. (This is what Leupp says too, and it's the only part of his article to be criticised on the Kasama maoist website, where the article is reproduced (<http://mikeely.wordpress.com/>)). Incidentally, the article is tagged 'site-specific' (as in 'art') here because the maoists say they want to put a red flag on Mt. Everest that's big enough to see from the moon.

A Maoist Sweep
Electoral Revolution in Nepal

By GARY LEUPP

It ought to be the ballot heard 'round the world. It ought to be front page news. But chances are you haven't yet learned that the Maoists of Nepal have apparently swept to power in an election that international monitors acknowledge was free and fair. Having led a People's War from 1996 to 2006, having suspended the armed struggle and making a strategic decision to seek power through electoral means, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has apparently acquired an absolute majority in national elections for a constitutional assembly.

Prime Minister Girija Koirala, representing the Nepali Congress Party, has congratulated CPI(M) leader on the success of his party. The Congress Party, aligned with its Indian counterpart and traditionally supportive of the Nepali monarchy and its Hindu religious trappings, seems to have come in a distant third in the national vote, behind the Communist Party (United Marxist-Leninist). The latter, having spurned Maoist overtures to unite, is in crisis; its leader has resigned and declared it "morally inappropriate" to continue to participate in the current coalition government.

It looks as though Maoist leader Prachanda will emerge as national leader under the presidential system his party advocates. The constitutional assembly will shape a new Nepal as a secular republic. Land reform, laws against debt servitude and child marriage, laws liberating "outcastes" will follow. The Maoists regard Nepal as a pre-capitalist country, which requires a period of capitalist development before it can embark on socialist construction. They say they welcome foreign investment and tourism. They want friendly relations with neighboring China and India. They want to build a railroad conveying Buddhist pilgrims from Tibet to Nepali religious sites. They want, with some help from Jimmy Carter, to persuade the U.S. State Department to remove their name from the list of "international terrorist organizations."

They also want to plant the Red Flag on Mt. Everest, big enough so it might be seen from the moon, like the Great Wall of China. That's what they've said.

Realism and poetry. A vision for today, and for tomorrow. The Maoists of India (in particular, the Communist Party of India [Maoist]) continue their People's War, creating the red corridor that extends from Andhra Pradesh up to the Nepali border. They have expressed doubts about the Nepali comrades' strategy of participation in elections, and emphasized their dedication to Mao's dictum that "political power grows out of the barrel of the gun." But they will take heart in the Nepali Maoists' victory. Unless the Nepali Army (formerly the Nepal Royal Army and still led by pro-monarchist and anti-communist generals), or external forces move to prevent the Maoists' rise to power, Nepal will emerge as the base-area of global revolution. That's something else the Maoists have said.

On October 21, 2002, Counterpunch carried a column of mine on Nepal that ended as follows:

Nepal is the world's only Hindu kingdom, but there is much Buddhist influence as well. The historical Buddha was born on what is now the Nepal-India border. (Both countries claim that Lumimbi, site of the Buddha's birth, was within their present territory. This is an issue of importance to historians, archeologists, and even more so to the tourist industry catering to Japanese Buddhist pilgrims.) Two and a half millennia ago, the Buddhist movement, destined to transform the world, emerged in this region. Buddhism was at its inception not really a religion (as westerners tend to conceptualize religion), rejecting belief in a Supreme Being, immortal souls, and an afterlife. (Some Indian Marxist scholars have suggested that Buddhism was initially a kind of philosophical materialism, with a progressive social content.) The fundamental problem, for the Buddhist, was and is that of suffering. (Recall how, many centuries later, Marx identified religion as "the expression of real suffering and at the same time the protest against real suffering.") Buddhism offered no pie-in-the-sky solutions to human suffering, but a way of life that steered between sensual indulgence and asceticism.

While focusing on the individual's path to enlightenment, Buddhism did not ignore social reality. The early order of monks and nuns applied itself to charitable work, such as the establishment of hospitals and shelters for the homeless. In an extraordinary break with the social order, Siddhartha Gautama (a.k.a Buddha) rejected the caste system, declared that those of any background could be enlightened, and insisted on delivering his sermons in the local dialects wherever he traveled. He was in that sense a revolutionary. And a world-conqueror: the Buddha directed his followers to spread the word throughout the world, and thus Buddhism gradually spread from the Himalayan foothills to Sri Lanka, to northeastern Iran, to China and Japan, to southeast Asia.

The Maoists' vision, like that of the Buddhist missionaries of old, is a global one. "We insist," Prachanda told an American interviewer in 2000, "that the Nepalese revolution is part of the world revolution and the Nepalese people's army is a detachment of the whole international proletarian army." BBC correspondent Daniel Lak, visiting Rolpa, in western Nepal, last month, sat talking with one Comrade Bijaya, district committee member and political instructor, who overlooking the rice-paddies stated matter-of-factly, "We will win, not just in Nepal, but around the world" (World Tribune, Sept 24). That requires a stretch of the imagination, maybe, but world history is filled with twists and turns and surprises. Sometimes, in humankind's endless quest to overcome suffering, wildly ambitious enterprises actually succeed.

Five years later, no stretch of the imagination is necessary. It's happening. A communist revolution, led by a party charting a new path combining armed struggle and electoral politics, is sweeping the Himalayas. World journalists, as though dizzied by the altitude, seem unable to take up pen and report what they see. Maybe their editors are withholding their copy, concerned lest they depict a designated "terrorist" group in a positive or merely rational objective light.

But this moment may in the not distant future be seen as another 1917, another 1949. I think of that Buffalo Springfield song "For What It's Worth," written by Stephen Stills and released in 1967:

"There's something happening here. What it is ain't exactly clear.

I think it's time we stop, children, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down."

Yes. Everybody look what's going down. The revolution will not be televised, but it's accessible online.

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