

Prachanda Interview on the Nepalese Army

The following is an excerpt from Chairman Prachanda's interview with Sudheer Sharma and Prashant Aryal published in Nepal Magazine, February 11, 2009. (Thanks to UWB for the translation from Nepali).

Q. Regarding the kind of relationship that has been there for centuries between the king and the army, don't you think the army is still loyal to the palace?

A. Royal Nepali Army's name was changed to Nepali Army and its command system was also changed after the peoples' movement (of 2006 April). After the top to rank and files of the army have said that they would execute the orders of the government elected by the people, our evaluation is that the total thinking of the Nepali Army has undergone change. The army is talking about being loyal to the democratic system and people. That shouldn't be understood as the change in name only; that could be taken as a huge change. Along with the name change, the army, in essence, has become the one that is for the people, not to the king.

Q. But before the election you and your comrades used to say that there was no change in the Army except the change in name.

A. We should take the fluctuations that may occur before the elections normally. We accepted the Nepali Army as the State's when we signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Other parties also accepted the PLA as the State's. What I want to make clear now is that Nepali Army is our army, the State's army. And PLA is also everyone's army, the State's army. The statement of Army that it would be loyal to the democratic government could be taken as a huge change in the army. The assumption that the army's loyalty is to the king is imaginary.

Q. How would you address the question of the integration of PLA and Nepali Army?

A. We will easily solve it by being pragmatic and doing serious discussion in the Special Committee that will decide how many will be integrated where and how many will be taken to the Industrial Security, how many will be to the Border Security.

Q. That means no question of integrating two armies?

A. We haven't understood that in the mechanical manner like that. What we have understood is that Nepali Army should be moved forward by making it more and more democratic. PLA should be moved forward in a professional manner. The Special Committee will decide after discussion about the number of personnel for the armies.

Q. Do you want to improve relationship with America?

A. We are willing to create diplomatic relationship with America even though we have different ideologies.

Q. That means words like 'imperialism' and 'expansionism' have disappeared, haven't they?

A. It's not that we will stop using those words. It's not that we, the party that is going to lead the government, will use the words as we used to when we were insurgents. That doesn't happen anywhere in the world. The wording while speaking is understandably slightly different when you are an insurgent and when you are leading a government. But as an ideology, we will continue the debate about what imperialism is and why we are against that.