

Interview with Maoist Leader CP Gajurel

[May 2010]

by Kaveri Rajaraman

Chandra Prakash Gajurel is a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

Q: Let me start with the most pressing question of the day. Now that the strike has been called off, and it looks like the May 28, 2010 deadline for writing the constitution will not be met, what are the expectations and conditions under which the party will extend the tenure of the Constituent Assembly, and what is the party strategy if its conditions are not met? What will happen after May 28th?

A: The political environment around May 28th will decide our strategy. Right now NC, UML and India are continuing to hope that we will change our minds at the eleventh hour. Even if we deny this now, they are hoping for our last minute acceptance of the extension of the CA's tenure without our conditions being fulfilled. But I can say this: no, we will not.

This means there are the following options for what happens after May 28th: one, that the CA's tenure is extended under our party's leadership, an option provided for by the interim constitution; two, that the government will declare emergency, in which case the CA's tenure will be extended by 6 months as per the interim constitution; three, worst of all, that Presidential rule will be established on an unconstitutional basis. If emergency is declared, this will be an unpopular move and we will oppose it. It is supposed to be declared, as per the constitution, based on the fulfillment of one of three conditions: external intervention, uncontrollable internal chaos, or severe economic crisis. If President's rule is declared, we will oppose it and view it as basically a military coup. Our tactics of opposition will depend on the mood of the masses.

Q: What about the conditions of negotiation of leadership of a national unity government for extension of the CA's tenure? How flexible are you about the following options: having another party's leader as president, and having another Maoist party leader of the national unity government other than the Chairman?

A: If the proposal is to replace Madhav Kumar Nepal with a leader from a party that is not ours, we will not accept this. In any case, he will not resign voluntarily, and any negotiation to replace him with another party member will not be smooth, and will involve their putting more conditions before

us. As for other leaders within the party, the party had decided long ago that if we came to power, it would be best for the Chairman to lead. However, we can be a little flexible about this. The important thing is the party should lead, and any discussion of the conditions of leadership can be discussed in the Central Committee or Politbureau, depending on the new emerging situation.

Q: Will the strike resume?

A: This is not likely before the 28th, but these last few days are crucial for deciding tactics. Right now we have just planned for a centralization of people around the 25th. Again it will be peaceful.

Rumours of violence and clashes with the army were employed before May 1 to scare people from joining the marches and rallies. But our cadre were very disciplined and so many people joined us. Even the OHCHR commented that the peace and discipline was “unprecedented”.

Q: Why are fresh elections not an option that the party is seriously considering?

A: The present CA was unable to fulfill its responsibility. This CA has no right to write the constitution. However, fresh elections are not an idea many people or parties are considering seriously. Some trends within the NC and some monarchists are in favour of this, but it is not a logical outcome of the expiration of the CA. If the CA tenure is not expanded, then emergency is the only constitutional option. Of course President’s rule is also an unconstitutional possibility. If the present government continues, it will be merely a puppet government.

Q: In Nepal, Madhav Kumar Nepal is clearly seen as a puppet of the Indian government. What are India’s interests in Nepal and what was their goal earlier in helping broker the peace deal between the Maoists and the 7-party alliance?

A: The present government has been installed by India to serve its interests, since India wishes to control all sectors of the political economy of Nepal. This government has not been put in place by internal forces. Madhav Kumar Nepal is a rotten candidate. Having suffered two electoral defeats in different constituencies, he is clearly unpopular and has no moral ground.

India is the major player waging a proxy war against us and they chose UML as their backer as part of a strategy to use a so-called communist party as the main opposition to a true communist party.

They prefer to back the UML than the NC against us, although the NC was their main force to use against the king. They were turning against the monarchy partially because the king began to defy India’s advice, by opposing emergency and purchasing arms from China. Therefore at that time, India was supportive and in fact instrumental in organizing the 7-party alliance. The alliance was supported against the monarchy up to a limit. Their interest was to keep the monarchy, but with reduced

powers. They just wanted to teach a lesson to the king, to put the king in his place. But they needed a mass movement against the monarchy, which is where we entered the picture.

When our movement went beyond their control, they sent Karan Singh to negotiate and broker the peace process between the Maoists and the 7-party alliance, because they thought the Maoists can be controlled by the peace process. There are two ways to control a political party. One is through conflict, and the other is the soft way, through political compromise. Initially they tried the second approach, hoping that the process of mainstream parliamentary participation would transform our party into something like the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM). The CPM was once radical, discussing even ideas of Mao and New Democracy, but elections made it friendly to the establishment and now it is playing a role against people's movements in Lalgarh, etc. India tried to tame our party the friendly way but failed. Now India is opting for conflict with our party, and they are backing Madhav Kumar Nepal knowing that if he does not resign, conflict will ensue after May 28th.

Q: What about the role of other imperialist or foreign forces in this situation?

A: The US is not very involved in this particular situation, or they have a lower role. They are not a deciding factor. We have had ten or more discussions with representatives of the US when they called us during the strike. They questioned UML and NC about how long Madhav Kumar Nepal would stay in power. They see his unpopularity as something that will aggravate this crisis. The EU has been even more proactive, with Madhav Kumar Nepal even replying and telling them to mind their own business. Both these forces do not support the Maoists. But they think Madhav Kumar Nepal should resign because his unpopularity is undermining stability.

Q: What about the role of China?

A: Like the US and EU, they will not like Indian interference in Nepal beyond a limit.

Q: What has the process of constitution-writing been like and how is input being solicited from the masses on the nature of the constitution? Is this input being solicited inside or also outside the party structure?

A: We put forward our declaration before the people, as our election manifesto. When people voted for our party, we modeled the content of our draft of the constitution on the election declaration. We collected responses from the people not just through the party, but through the process of participating in the Constituent Assembly. As part of this, we as well as representatives of other parties visited constituencies and took suggestions made by ordinary citizens.

Q: As you continue to participate in parliamentary politics, what guarantee do the people have that you will not turn into the CPM? What policies or structures will you put in place to ensure people are not dispossessed in the interests of the state or corporations?

A: We want to implement revolutionary land distribution. We want to confiscate the land of big landowners, without compensation, and distribute to the landless and poor. Also the federal structure we propose will provide rights to local people over natural resources, especially over land and water. Ethnic groups will have rights over their forests, land, and rivers.

Q: What is the stand of the party on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)?

A: We will have to decide on something since there are so many foreign corporations and INGOs not working in Nepal's interests now. We are not saying we are against foreign investment or foreign aid. But whether we welcome it depends crucially on it being in the interest of the Nepali people. But, our concept of development is not based on FDI, which can cause rapid economic development, but at a cost.

Q: What about installing safeguards against something like the Bhopal disaster, where corporations get away with deep misconduct in the interests of quick profits?

A: Again, we will only invite foreign corporations if we are sure they will help the Nepali people. We will not pursue projects not in the people's interest, and the local people will have a say. To control the behaviour of the corporations, we would depend on the judiciary for strong laws.

Q: How will the rights and interests of women, dalits, janjatis, different ethnic groups, and the LGBT community be safeguarded and represented?

A: Categorically we want women represented as constituents in all spheres of life, including political institutions. In our current draft constitution, we would reserve 33% seats for women, but aim for full equality. Adivasis or janjatis and dalits would also have reservations. Also the federal structure in our proposed constitution aims for more local autonomy, which will give more rights to women and dalits, as compensation for years of oppression.

This article was posted on [MRZine](#) in May 2010 (but has apparently been deleted there).