

Editorial

Nepali People Vote to Abolish the Monarchy and Establish a Democratic Republic

The people of Nepal went to the polls on April 10 to elect a constituent assembly. The constituent assembly is mandated to draft a new constitution for the country. Initial results indicate that the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN(M)) won a decisive victory in the elections and is expected to end up with almost half of the seats in the constituent assembly. The Nepali Congress Party (NCP) and the Communist Party of Nepal – United Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML), which together dominated the previous parliament, have been reduced to minor parties. The leader of the CPN-UML resigned his position after going down to personal defeat in his constituency.

Over 60 percent of Nepal's 17.5 million eligible voters turned out to the polls to elect 575 members
For Your Information

Background on the Situation in Nepal

Nepal is a small country of about 28 million people situated in the Himalaya Mountains between India and China. It is one of the poorest countries in the world with a semi-feudal, semi-colonial economy. Over 80 percent of its population lives in rural areas. It has very little industrial production and a very small industrial working class. It has been a dependency of India for much of its history. Today it is used by India as a source of resources and cheap labour. The country has considerable potential for hydro-electric generation, but this potential remains largely untapped.

Officially, Nepal has been ruled by a constitutional monarch since India achieved independence from Britain in 1948. However the king has always treated the legislative institutions as

to the Constituent Assembly. Of those 335 will be elected on the basis of proportional representation while the other 240 will be elected in constituencies through a first-past-the-post system. An additional 26 members will be selected on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, for a total of 601 members. Ballots are still being counted and re-ballotting will take place in 98 constituencies, so there is still a possibility that the CPN(M) could win an absolute majority of the seats.

The Maoist leader Prachanda (Pushpa Kamal Dahal), who led a decade-long armed struggle against the monarchy and the parliamentary parties, has announced that he will form a new government and the monarchy will be abolished. He gave King

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advisory bodies rather than as independent governing bodies. Furthermore, the Nepali king and royal family own or control most of the main corporations in the country.

A popular movement forced King Birendra to accept constitutional reforms in 1989 and, in 1991, general elections were held for the first time. The Nepali Congress Party (NCP) and the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) received the most votes and the NCP formed the first government. During the early 1990s most of Nepal's nine communist parties united to form the Communist Party of Nepal -United Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) and this party formed a minority government for a short time.

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However, the obvious contempt for parliament displayed by King Birendra and the slow pace of the promised reforms led to a split in the CPN-UML in 1995. A section, mainly from the former CPN, left to create the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN(M)), which initiated an armed insurrection, or People's War, in the countryside in 1996. Within a few years, the CPN(M) had taken control of the vast majority of the rural areas of Nepal.

The People's War led by the CPN(M) threw the monarchy and parliamentary parties into crisis. Both the NCP and CPN-UML supported the use of the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) to suppress the insurgency. However, despite military assistance from India and the U.S., the RNA was completely unsuccessful in doing this. This led to a coup in 2001, widely suspected to have CIA involvement, in which King Birendra and most of the royal family was killed. Birendra's brother, Gayanendra, was proclaimed king on June 4, 2001.

King Gayanendra installed and dismissed several governments over the course of several years, all of which failed to end the CPN(M) insurgency. Peace talks broke down in 2004 when the king refused to accept the CPN(M) demand for an elected constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. In February 2005 Gayanendra dissolved parliament and arrested many of the leading parliamentarians from both the NCP and the CPN-UML. This led to increasing pressure on the parliamentary parties to accept the offer of the CPN(M) to join forces with it to overthrow the monarchy.

In April 2006 mass protests erupted throughout Nepal demanding that the king reinstate parliament

and release imprisoned political leaders. King Gayanendra was forced to accept the demands of the people and the restored parliament moved quickly to curb his powers and strip him of control over the armed forces. The new parliament also ordered the election of a constituent assembly to determine whether Nepal would remain a monarchy (constituent or otherwise) or would abolish the monarchy and become a republic. The constituent assembly elections were postponed twice during 2007, but were finally held on April 10, 2008, resulting in a decisive victory for the CPN(M) and for the abolition of the monarchy.

Although Nepal has very little economic importance, it has a certain amount of strategic importance because of its geographic location between India and China. The U.S. sees Nepal as a potential client state to use in its strategy of encircling China and containing China's influence in southwestern Asia. India, while exploring closer economic ties with China, would like to keep Nepal's potential energy resources for its own use, while preventing Nepal from becoming a gateway for a flood of Chinese goods into India. For its part, China would like to prevent Nepal from becoming a client state of the U.S. and gain access for itself to Nepal's energy resources. Both India and China also have an interest in defusing the revolutionary movement in Nepal because Nepal borders on regions in both countries where revolutionary and/or separatist groups are active. They fear that a successful revolution in Nepal could further destabilize the situation in their own countries. Japan also has an interest in Nepal as part of its strategy to contain China's expanding influence in the region.

Marking the 60th Anniversary of the State of Israel - *Background*

May 11 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel. On May 11, 1948 the civil war between Jewish paramilitaries and Palestinian Arabs ended with the establishment of the Israeli state. However, this really only marked a pause in what has been a virtually continuous war waged by Israel against the Palestinian people. In addition, Israel has waged frequent war with its northern neighbour Lebanon and occasional war with its Arab neighbours - Egypt, Jordan and Syria.

This constant warfare, that has been a feature of the Israeli state since long before its inception, results from the very nature of the Zionist project itself. Violence will always be a part of Zionism as its fundamental premise is the conquest and seizure of land along with the dispossession of the former owners and occupants of that land. In this, the Zionist philosophy does not limit itself to Palestine alone. Rather, its goal has always been the domination and control of the entire Middle East region, “from the Nile to the Euphrates” as then Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion declared at the end of 1948.

The Zionist movement began in the 1880s primarily among the Jews of Eastern and Central Europe. It made use of a Jewish religious tradition that yearns for the return to a biblical Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*) as well as the atmosphere of ethnic and nationalist ideology that pervaded Europe in the late nineteenth century. It was also presented as a response to the upsurge of anti-Semitism at the time in countries that were home to significant Jewish communities.

Although it is a matter of dispute whether an actual physical return to a biblical land of Israel is indeed part of Jewish religious tradition, this claim was used by early Zionist leaders to promote the idea of creating a Jewish nation state in Palestine. This Jewish nationalist dogma was aided by the fact that, at the time, a large number of the world’s Jews lived in the European part of the Russian Empire where the Czarist regime subjected them to extreme discrimination. Jews were denied such basic civil rights as freedom of movement, residence, occupation and worship. They were also denied the right to own land and thus were kept impoverished and socially isolated. During this period Jews were

also subject to military conscription into the Czarist army sometimes for periods as long as 25 years.

At the end of the nineteenth century Czarist Russia was experiencing political upheaval as a result of the oppressive nature of the state, the semi-feudal condition of the countryside and the exploitation of workers in the developing capitalist economy of the cities. The unrest that accompanied these conditions was brutally suppressed by the Russian regime which, characteristically, blamed the violence and appalling conditions of the population on the usual scapegoats – in this case the Jewish population. In pursuit of this strategy, between 1881 and 1884 the Czarist government unleashed a series of pogroms against the Jews in Russia.

These conditions set the stage for birth of the Zionist movement. The Zionist leaders argued that Jews would never be allowed to live in peace and in possession of civil, social and economic rights while they continued to live in Czarist Russia. The solution they proposed was the wholesale emigration of Russian Jewry and the creation of a Jewish state in the so-called biblical home the Jewish people in the Middle East. The area they had in mind was then under the control of the Ottoman Empire which, like the Czarist Russian empire, was on its last legs and would fail to survive the First World War.

A significant portion of the Russian Jewish population did in fact emigrate during the last decade of the nineteenth century and first years of the twentieth century. However, the vast majority of them chose not go to the Middle East; rather they fled to countries in central and western Europe. Large numbers also went to Canada, the United States and other places further a field. In fact, relatively few Jews in that period chose to migrate to Palestine.

By and large the Jews who escaped the pogroms and anti-Semitism of Czarist Russia chose to cast their lot with western capitalist societies where they would have greater civil and social rights and greater economic opportunities. Although anti-Semitism and social restrictions on Jews were common in most of the societies where they settled the levels of discrimination and oppression were, by comparison with conditions in the Russian Empire, an improvement. This did not mean, of course, that anti-Semitism and systematic discrimination against Jews

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Gyanendra a deadline of four weeks to step down and leave the palace. The Maoists have declared that they will turn the palace into a museum. The assembly is required to convene its first meeting within 21 days of the final election results being announced; if the king has not stepped down by that date it is expected that the assembly will order his removal.

The attitude of the U.S., India and China towards the Maoist victory is not yet clear. The Indian government, which backed the Congress and CPN-UML parties, has issued a statement welcoming the results of the election. However, India fears that the success of the Maoists in Nepal could lead to armed uprisings in its own northwestern states. The U.S. still lists the CPN(M) as a terrorist organization and has not yet released a statement on the election results. For its part, China has concerns about separatist movements in its western regions. In addition, China is busy erasing all vestiges of socialism within its own borders so will not welcome the election to power in a neighbouring country of a party that has declared itself to be dedicated to the establishment of socialism. There are also concerns that armed struggle may erupt in the Himalayan country of Bhutan, which borders Nepal.

It is too early to tell how the situation in Nepal will develop over the next few months. The CPN(M) has called on the Congress and UML parties to join with it to form a coalition government, but so far they are refusing to do so. Some members of those parties have been advocating non-cooperation with the Maoists in order to sabotage their efforts to stabilize the new republic. It is also a virtual certainty that the U.S., India and China will be doing their utmost over the coming period to subvert the will of the Nepali people and ensure that the situation in Nepal develops in accordance with their respective imperialist interests.

The MRC sends its heartfelt congratulations to the revolutionaries and all of the people of Nepal who have emerged victorious after a long and difficult struggle. We wish them further successes in eliminating all vestiges of feudalism in their country and in defeating the machinations of the imperialists to deny the people of Nepal the fruits of their victory.

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did not continue to be a serious problem.

However, the Zionist leadership was not concerned with the well-being of Jews living elsewhere than their designated location for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. In fact the struggle to end anti-Semitism and discrimination against Jews in Europe and North America was not considered helpful for the project of establishing a Jewish national state. Rather, Zionist theory held that anti-Semitism could only be dealt with through the establishment of a state consisting of Jews alone. In this, the views of Zionists coincided entirely with those of anti-Semites – that is that Jews and non-Jews could not live together in one society. Like all racist ideologies Zionism holds that the races, religions or communities cannot coexist and must be separated from one another. Thus the ongoing existence and persistence anti-Semitism in Europe and North America was extremely useful for the Zionist cause.

Zionism was born out of particular conditions that existed in a decaying society at the end of the nineteenth century. It is ironic that the oppression and violence of the Czarist Empire can be credited not merely with fostering the Zionist movement but also with giving that movement its most salient ideological characteristics. Zionist ideology embodies the same chauvinism and bigotry that was employed by the Czarist regime against its Jewish citizens. It also serves the same imperialist purposes.

To be continued: next installment – Construction of the Zionist State

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