

## **Sadak, sadan, sarkar – tactics of struggle or compliance?**

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When a great revolution marks time the silence is all the more ominous. The humdrum routines of peacetime often dull one from sensing it. But, no matter what, swords are being sharpened. Will the 5 years of peace end up liquidating the gains made through 10 years of people's war or will it provide new resources for the revolution to once again rage on? Much depends on an accurate assessment of the present situation and tactics derived from it. This, obviously, is beyond the capacity of a spectator. But then, the outsider view is not without its benefits too. It allows a distancing, and its objectivity, denied to those on the stage. This is an opportunity for a broader view, a critiquing from outside. It also allows one to take liberties and indulge in wayward thinking. Having thus oiled my hands in anticipation of a sticky time (literally), let me get into the messy business of carving up the jackfruit.

Two cardinal principles of the Marxist understanding on tactics can be summarised as follows: (1) tactics should serve strategy; (2) they should address the concrete, specific demands of the given situation. As put by the master tactician Lenin, *"Marxism requires of us a strictly exact and objectively verifiable analysis of the relations of classes and of the concrete features peculiar to each historical situation."* ('Letter on Tactics') Between the two the former is most important. Tactics that violate or deviate from the correct strategic orientation of any specific stage are of no use; no matter how 'concrete' they may appear to be. Regarding the second principle, the question of identifying 'demands of the given situation' also requires the guidance of the correct strategic orientation. Identifying what exactly they are, defining the 'given situation' is no straightforward, simple matter. It depends very much on one's outlook. Moreover, the 'specific demands' of the situation must be grasped dynamically, focussed on the emerging aspect. In other words the concreteness of tactics should keep in mind, or address, not just the present but the emergent future too. This is how one ensures that tactics really serve strategy. Because the task of tactics is to promote objective and subjective factors that would assist in the fulfilment of strategic aims (or eliminate/weaken those that obstruct these aims). With this perspective, let's now get on to an examination of the 'sadak, sadan, sarkar' (*'street-legislature-government'*) tactic advanced by the UCPN (Maoist). I will term it the 'SLG tactic'.

This tactic was first put forward in 2007. Though a lot has happened since then, it is still retained as the main tactics by the UCPN (Maoist). Its latest CC document states: "The party has adopted a clear-cut policy of mobilizing the people for the mass insurrection to establish people's federal republic or people's republic through according priority to struggle from all fronts including the front of peace and constitution and the front of the government with especial focus

on the front of street struggle on the basis of four preparations and four bases." The context of the SLG tactic, in 2007, was the complexity of the Interim period leading to the Constituent Assembly. We need not get into all the details here. Reactionaries, domestic and foreign, were persistently trying to block the Maoists and subvert the revolution. The tactic of SLG was supposed to check this in an all-round manner. But could it really deliver?

First of all, though the idea of tackling the enemy at all levels looks quite attractive, its actual implication is a rather one-sided application. This is inevitable. One cannot mobilise the party or the masses for any meaningful fight in the streets while being in government. It is simply impossible to put up a real fight from the streets – 1. against one's own government and 2. against a power structure one is planning to join or continue in, even if temporarily. All that can be done is some stage-managed business where both the 'fighters' and the 'defenders' stick to their pre-set roles; throw in a few broken bones on both sides for 'effect'. In other words, though positioned at the end, getting into or hanging on in the 'sarkar' is the real center of this tactic. Sadak is meant to serve this center, a pressure point. The sadan part is an obvious corollary to sarkar.

One may object that this 'sadan' is qualitatively different since it is not the usual parliamentary pig-sty but a Constituent Assembly (CA). That much can certainly be admitted. But this is precisely where the SLG tactic is shown up at its worst. The alliance between the parliamentary parties and the Maoists continued in the form of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Interim government even after the monarchical dictatorship was ended. But, objectively, while still under the common banner of Interim Setup and Constituent Assembly, the interests of the two sides within the alliance had started diverging sharply. The outstanding feature of the post-Jan Andolan 2 period is the urge of the broad masses to push ahead towards a new society, towards revolution. In opposition to this stand the conspiracies of domestic and foreign reactionaries to prevent revolution at all costs. So far as they were concerned, the matter of retaining or disposing of the monarchy was secondary to this. The matter of Constituent Assembly too is secondary for them. It is useful to them to the extent it can be used to carry out some reforms in the state structure, widening its social base and thus making it more capable of ensuring domination and exploitation. But if counter-revolution so demands, they will not hesitate to shut it down, democracy be damned!

So what exactly was the SLG tactic addressing? Avoiding the concrete specificity of the situation, the contest of revolution and counter-revolution, it was restricting the revolutionary forces to a secondary issue, the matter of the Constituent Assembly. Instead of addressing and promoting the objective split in interests between the revolutionary and reactionary sections and making this the basis for new polarisation and mobilisation, it was papering over the split. What was needed was tactics to translate the division into a formal split from the ruling classes. Instead SLG offered the illusion of struggle, strictly within the boundaries set by the outmoded alliance. In

essence it was a guideline for manoeuvres in power play, not struggle. Hence the big mobilisations and mass protests could not but end tamely in new compromises and deals. Whether conscious or not, a strategic shift from revolution to reform was underway. The Constituent Assembly (CA) elections and completion of the constitution-making process through the CA came to be seen as an unavoidably necessary step, an aim in its own right.

The shifting of the tactical issue of CA into a strategic aim is evidently linked quite closely with an absolutising of the abolition of the monarchy. The monarchy, as an institution of the state and as a hegemonic ideological apparatus, was indeed the main lynchpin of feudalism in Nepal, one which has a centuries old suffocating grip on Nepali society. But once Nepal came under British imperialist domination and became a semi-colony, it no longer represented feudalism alone. It became the lynchpin of all reaction. The class character of the king and court nobles itself changed. They were increasingly tied up directly with the growing bureaucrat capitalism. Distinguishing between feudal forces and the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie and targeting the monarchy in order to tactically utilise the contradiction among these two parts of the ruling classes was correct. But viewing and presenting the monarchy solely in relation to feudal forces was wrong. The monarchy was only a *form* of the existing Nepali state, a state which serves *all* the ruling classes. Lack of clarity on this promoted the danger of absolutising the struggle to end the monarchy. The form of a republic with parliamentary democracy resulting from an abolishment of the monarchy could thus be presented as a means of realising 'bourgeois democracy'. It could be offered as a 'realistic' target; for some as a substitute for the strenuous task of destroying the existing state and completing the NDR, for others as a transitional, but inevitable, goal.

Given the centuries old existence of the Nepalese monarchy, its abolishment was no doubt a significant achievement of the revolutionary process led by the Maoists. It considerably weakened the institutions of the reactionary state and deepened divisions within the ruling classes. But the ending of the monarchy did not mean the abolishment of the state. Moreover, the ending of the monarchy was something that could be utilised by the enemies also. And that is what they did. They claimed that the tasks set forth by the 2006 mass movement had been mainly accomplished and that there was no further justification for the Maoists' separate agenda. This possibility was already seen during the 2007 political crisis when the Nepal Congress hastily declared in favour of a republic.

Nepal needs a new, revolutionary constitution that will ensure inclusive democracy for the people. But this can never be realised under the Interim setup. So long as dual power existed within it, de facto if not de jure, this setup could at best serve as a launchpad for revolution. As part of an immediate plan for organising the revolutionary seizure of power, constitution making could have been a tool for exposing the enemies and mobilising a broad mass movement. In the absence of such a concrete plan (not vague calls for insurrection) the Constituent Assembly is a trap that

ties down the revolutionary party. That the UCPN(Maoist) does not have the required majority to push through its constitutional proposals is well known. But there is an even more basic issue. The principles of any constitution are only as weighty as the force that can be employed to ensure their implementation. This much is clear from the basic teachings of Marxism on the matter of the state, constitutions and government. In the situation of Nepal, the old state is yet to be destroyed. Dual power no longer exists. Therefore, no matter how progressive a constitution may be presented in the Constituent Assembly by the UCPN(Maoist), it will be a dead letter. One didn't have to wait for the results of the CA elections to come to this conclusion.

Our examination of tactics thus takes us to the realm of strategy. Revolution versus reform, this is the strategic issue at stake. Since reform, in the present world and geo-political context, will inevitably end up as service to Indian expansionism, this should be posed more precisely as revolution versus capitulation. It is self-explanatory that these opposing strategies cannot be served by the same set of tactics. There is a further problem. Rightism dressed up as realism, or for that matter centrism masquerading as cool-headed perseverance, invariably insist on sharing verbiage with revolution. The tactics of revolution must therefore shoulder the additional task of separating itself, even in words, from them. How is this being handled by the left in the two line struggle? The left has been crucial in keeping the prospects of revolution alive. If not for the determined fight it is putting up, (and the fortuitous dismissal of the Maoist led government!), things would have been in a very bad shape, revolution-wise. But has it really broken away from the premises of rightism and centrism?

The left has persistently argued the need for new tactics. But this is premised on the 'new situation' that emerged *after* the completion of the CA elections and abolishment of the monarchy. The separation from those who claim that the Chungwang process is not yet exhausted is evident. Yet doesn't this argument, with its premises, still remain within the perceptual frame of those it wants to oppose? It locates the need for new tactics in the post-monarchy, post-CA election situation. Thus these events are made the indices of the completion of the Chungwang process. But in doing so isn't it missing out the fact that the victory of Jan Andolan-2 had already inaugurated the completion of the Chungwang process by objectively causing a split in the immediate interests of the two sides in the anti-monarchy alliance? By taking the ending of monarchy and completion of the CA elections as indices it too acknowledges that they were essential. As a result, the shifting of tactical issues such as the CA and abolishment of monarchy into strategic aims, the role this has played in strengthening the grounds of 'sub-stage' views and promoting the deviation from the revolutionary road is missed.

New tactics had to be formulated, but premised on the reality that the Chungwang process was exhausted by mid-2007 itself. New tactics were needed; not because the CA elections are over and monarchy abolished, but because the party had made sufficient headway by 2007 in the

tactical aims set by it in 2005, as part of preparing for the final assault for political power. After all, *this* was the declared aim of the Chungwang tactics. *If this revolutionary frame of reference is not retaken, the left will not be able to break out of the frame set by rightism and centrism.*

This apparently is the context of the continued support given by the left for going back to government and the SLG tactic as seen in the recent CC document. Inevitably, the distinction between the right and the left is blurred. The ranks of the party and the masses are left disarmed. Within the left, there is a strong tendency to see the abandoning of the 'street' part of SLG as the main error. It urges a 'full' application of the three pronged tactics. This begs the question, struggle for what? Rightists take to the streets when out of government. They need it ... to get back into government and enjoy the crumbs of power. We in India are quite familiar with such revisionist 'street-government' tactics. Can anything different be expected in Nepal? A series of mass struggles were launched by UCPN (Maoist) in the period following its dismissal from government. But they have not led to any decisive, qualitative change. All that energy was finally pooled into pushing the ruling class parties towards a new compromise (yet to be actualised) that will allow the UCPN (Maoist) into government.

The argument for continuing the SLG tactics is bound up with thinking, still influential even within the left that the CA process must be taken to its logical end. The crucial need today is to regain the revolutionary road. The SLG tactic will block this. What are needed are tactics and plan to break out of the existing Interim setup and advance towards completing the NDR. These tactics must help expose the hard reality that the CA and Interim setup have become tools in the hands of reactionaries. The masses must be educated to see how reaction is trying to dissipate and destroy the revolution by prolonging the CA/Interim process. Today, posing as the true defenders of the CA is self-defeating. To argue that the CA is fine but the NC-UML combine, tutored by India, is blocking its functioning is nothing but disarming the people. The truth must be told to the people that the existing CA has been made into a mockery, a trap of reaction, that it can never deliver what the people aspire. Nothing less will do. Insurrections are not known to drop out of clear blue skies, all primed and set to go. You need the brooding clouds, some thunder and lightning. Insurrections must be prepared.

The Maoists in Nepal have to advance in a very complex and challenging situation. In fact it is almost similar to a new initiation. But one that is more complex and challenging. At the time of the initiation of the people's war the party did not have to deal with diplomatic or other similar relations. Everything was a new beginning. But now it must handle a lot many more aspects and pay attention to properly handling their relations, so that the maximum gain can be retained while making the new leap. *But what is decisive is the leap and gearing up the party to take it.* Because, no matter how good a job is done in handling such complex relations and tasks, a restructuring of the present support base, the falling away of a substantial section particularly from among the middle classes, is inevitable. In fact this partial destruction is a necessary corollary to the leap. All this crucially hinges on the deepening of the line struggle and decisive rupture from rightism.

The Maoist movement in Nepal has a rich history of struggle against rightism. It has a powerful Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideological tradition. Political power enjoyed by vast sections of masses for the first time in the country, oppressed sections and regions of society living a life of

dignity, backward Nepal being transformed into a beacon for the whole world, daring thinking and initial steps towards building up a self-reliant Nepal - these glorious achievements of the people's war, realised through the sacrifice of innumerable martyrs, has added even more might to this heritage. The Nepali Maoists will surely succeed in drawing on it and regaining the revolutionary road.

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