

Interview with PLA Division Commander, Comrade Jeevan

October 1, 2009

[Posted on [WPRM Britain](#), December 1, 2009]

In late August 2009, activists from WPRM (Britain) and WPRM (Ireland) visited the main cantonment holding the 7th division of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The cantonment is in Kailali district in the far south-west of Nepal, in one of the most oppressively hot districts of the Terai. Although here the land is mostly flat, the cantonment occupies an area formerly used by the PLA for military operations, on the slopes of the southern-most range of mountains, covered in thick jungle, and overlooking the plains as far as the border with India.

We aimed to look at various crucial questions involving the PLA, in particular the danger of losing links with the masses, the issue of army integration, the role it can play in the future New Democratic Revolution, and how the revolutionary army can ensure its continual revolutionisation even during the construction of socialism, without turning into its opposite, a reactionary army, as happened in the USSR and China. Below is the transcript of an interview with the acting commander, Comrade Jeevan.



WPRM: It's a great pleasure to have the chance to talk with you. Can you please introduce yourself?

Comrade Jeevan: My name is Jeevan and I am from a remote district of Nepal, Kalikot. I have been involved in the revolution since 2053, using the Nepali calendar [*1996]. I have been involved since I was 16 years old and now I am just continuing my job. I am acting division commander of the 7th division of the PLA.

WPRM: How and why did you join the PLA and can you describe to us your conception of the People's War (PW)?

Comrade Jeevan: For thirteen years I have been part of this organisation which aims to build New Democratic Revolution, oppose feudalism and imperialism in our country and eradicate all social dogmas in our society. To live real life, humans need a life of freedom and according to our ideology we strive for this. When we first waged struggle we saw how the reality of society is different from this, not in the favour of the people. Although it looked as though there was just one monarchy, there were actually many small parts of the monarchy, and we arrived here by defeating them. All the feudal forces exploited the people, the proletarian class, especially in the remote village areas. All of these feudal forces were supported by the central feudal power: the monarchy.

Our strategy was not to fight with the central feudal power at first, but to start from the remote areas. We decided to start from the countryside and encircle the urban areas. At that time we were totally absent from the centre, we started from the villages. It was especially important to carry out our theories in the countryside, but they actually have a world-wide significance. Now there are no feudal forces in village areas, but still new leadership has not been fully established. We have demolished the feudal forces from the villages but we can't claim that we have established the new system in these areas. In these areas there is still no social or cultural administration, no legally established regional administration. So we have to do two things: we have to establish people's rule in the countryside and we have to demolish the central state.

During the PW the people and the PLA won power in the villages, but in the centre of the state we have not won power. We do not believe that what we have won since the beginning of the PW and through the ongoing peace accord is the completion of the process. We don't think there will be another war, we don't need war, we need peace. But permanent peace is only possible after our victory. After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the parliamentary parties three years ago, many analysts have described this as the peace process, but we don't think of this as a peace process or a great victory. This is the continuation of the revolutionary phase. We believe that until the whole population of this nation has won freedom, there cannot be peace.

Now there are many political movements going on and much propaganda and we, the PLA, are just watching these things. We see that there is no seriousness in the political leaders of other parties. They are totally indifferent to the problems of the people and to the establishment of peace. It seems that it has been only the change of family members since the monarchy has been dethroned. The family system still remains. But we are not going to allow them to establish a new monarchy. Not even the people who have a lot of consciousness on this issue, but also the others are ready for a big struggle if needed. The people are clear about this, without fighting they cannot get their freedom. If we do not give leadership to the struggle, then it will not be enough. Such a type of monarchy will not be reestablished, and the PLA will certainly not allow it.

Before we win the war, we are proud of our success up to this point. According to our strategy the PW is at the same height as before, and the people still think we are at the same height, of strategic offensive. Actually, until now we have understood the military and political conspiracies, and we are still at our own level. Theoretically we have won different fronts, but we have not won state power totally. That is why the people of this country know that according to the theory of the party the complete establishment of a new state power has not been completed. Now the people of Nepal want a liberty which is progressive with social freedom and democracy. We want to put this in the future constitution as the prominent point. And if any of the reactionary forces are not willing to establish this, they will be a criminal force in our view and we will launch a national movement.

WPRM: Chairman Mao said that “without a people's army, the people have nothing.” Now that the PLA is in the cantonments what political role does it play in the current situation in Nepal?

Comrade Jeevan: We believe that if the people have no armed forces then they cannot establish their own state power. We stress this theory inside the army and within the cantonments. At the moment the PLA has no particular special role as a political force within society, but in the future, if there are political changes, then there will be big challenges, and organisationally we are ready to face this. We are storing

power for this. For three years we have stayed in the cantonments but we do not think we no longer have a political role.

This cantonment is a political university for us. After making the constitution if we don't get the chance of ruling the state, or establishing New Democracy, then we will be ready to establish what we are studying in the cantonments in any sector of the society. Whether the constitution will be established or not, we think this will be the main chance for the PLA to implement our theories on the people's society, which is compulsory for us. If there is no peaceful way to implement these theories, then there is another way: through struggle. Most of the political parties are full of non-political views, they are playing dirty games. So if it is not possible to implement our ideas through peaceful means, we are ready to implement them through struggle. This is not through suspicion or misunderstanding, but through the reality of the country. This is our political role today.

WPRM: The relationship of the PLA with the masses should be like a fish within water. In the cantonments how does the PLA retain its links with the masses?

Comrade Jeevan: We are following the CPA between the political parties and the Maoists, and physically it is so hard for us to make good links with the masses while we are in the cantonments because we can't go outside. However, to maintain our relations with the masses it is not necessary to simply go through political views, we are willing to go through human feelings and we intend to keep close relations as human beings. We can deal with the people's grievances. In those days we ruled in the villages and we ruled according to our political beliefs. Nowadays we want to deal with the people's problems according to the same beliefs. If we are physically near to them, that nearness will keep this relation forever.

Furthermore, it is only one part of the PLA and the Maoists that is in the cantonment. Along with all the units and groups of the Maoist party, we are all well trained with the relations and understandings, and many of our total forces are still outside the cantonments. These forces are totally linked to the people. We believe that the shape of the war is the army and the shape of the struggle is war. Each member is qualified for that. The people know that some of the troops are inside the cantonment, but the people don't think that all the PLA forces are in the cantonments. When the people cease to believe in the PLA, on that same day the relationship between the PLA and the people will be destroyed.

Also the commanders who were involved in the war before are now working as representatives in the Constituent Assembly to make a new constitution.

In this division there are more than 4000 members of the PLA. They are not all in Kathmandu as a member of parliament, but those who are, are there as members of the PLA. We don't believe in the military theory that the army should be isolated from the people. On the future national security policy, we think that the entire population should be armed, only a limited number of troops should be specialised with training, though they will of course be among the masses. And now in this transitional period, this is just a time of rest for the PLA, like a rest during a war, we rest for some time.

WPRM: According to the principles of the CPA, army integration will professionalise the PLA and democratise the Nepali Army, how do you view this process?

Comrade Jeevan: This agreement is suitable in only one context, namely if this new integrated army will be a single unit for the protection of the country and the security of the nation. In this context army

integration is necessary. One thing is that we have to give freedom to the people, we have to form a new security policy for the protection of society, in this we are clear.

However, if the integration will only focus on ending the war and on establishing a new overall system of oppression, we will not accept this situation. If the rulers want this we will not integrate on that basis. We are clear that the current security strategy and the defence structure is neither clear nor suitable. We want to change this system. We want an army which will be fully responsible to the representatives elected by the people. We want soldiers to be controlled by the people. A lot of people have taken this integration process as a complete integration, but it cannot be complete without a new security strategy.

Without leading the people to freedom, we cannot proceed with the integration process. The people need to be totally free first. On this point the people are very clear. The political parties will lose nothing if they accept these aspects. We are only against the bad ruling system and not against any individual. We have fought with the people who are not intending to leave this ruling system and we will continue this struggle, to fight against people who rule with traditional thinking. But without a new structure, if they want to integrate the armies we will not be ready. The PLA is clear on the meaning of this integration.

WPRM: Immediately after Comrade Prachanda resigned from the government in May, a video was released in which he was seen talking in a cantonment to the PLA saying that the revolutionary army was actually much larger than that which had been registered with the UN. What are your opinions about this? What is the real size of the PLA?

Comrade Jeevan: Firstly this video that was released only showed one part of the talk, it is incomplete. In the peace process now, we have different organisations in the five regions of this country. During the PW we had three different divisions, but now there are seven different cantonments with different structures in each cantonment. At the time of the PW, we mobilised one central force, one regional force and one local force. The issue relating to the size of the PLA is only related to the central and regional forces. We now have statistics for the regional force also, while the local forces are not certified, because there are millions of them in the villages. In the verification under the UN only the central and regional forces were included. In this protracted people's war, a soldier is both a fighter and a political activist. This is not the issue of size. If you want to verify all the PLA forces there will be more than a million. All those in political roles in the village areas have not been certified.

Until now, in our organisation and in our struggle we have never deceived anyone. There is the illusion that the PLA is only those certified by the UN, but there are a lot more that are not certified. The imperialist forces always attempt to make a cow by washing an ass, a donkey. But a donkey can never be a cow. The imperialists try to do this, but whatever we have said is true. The central and regional forces certified by the UN are clear, that is true. That is why all through the time of this election we have said that if it is needed we can verify all local forces of the PLA, all militia. If anyone creates such distrust about the PLA then we will demand re-verification, because a large number of local level PLA have not been verified. But if we verify these local levels, they can maybe number many millions.

This video is only the illusion against us, but we always tell the truth. During the PW these political leaders propagated that when we captured a district level barracks or office that more than 10,000 Maoists were involved in the action. But they were lying, over-reporting the numbers in our organisation at that time. Now they are propagating that the PLA is a small size, that we used verification as an excuse to enlarge our army. At that time they said it was very big, but now they say it is small.

In fact, this is their main religion, they lie to the people, they don't tell the truth. It is like a religion for them. If they don't get a chance to propagate illusions to the people then they don't sleep well at night. The old politicians, with their old political culture, are just mad, there is a frenzy inside them. In giving propaganda, in telling lies, they are no less expert than Hitler and Goebbels. All the pro-imperialists and pro-feudals, Nepali Congress in particular, all of these people are included. We think all the main political parties except us are representatives and agents of expansionism and imperialism.

WPRM: Outside Nepal there has been great interest in the impressive role of women in the PLA during the PW, how has the role of women changed now the PLA is in the cantonments?

Comrade Jeevan: The responsibilities of women have not changed from before, they are the same now even though we are all in the cantonments. They still have to mobilise their units and get organised. In our great Nepalese People's War, they form one complete side of this war. Politically, organisationally and culturally they face up to the same challenges as men do, dealing with the same problems as men. We are very happy when we see the bravery of our female comrades. Before there were a lot of illusions and suspicions that woman cadres were not suitable to war, but now our PLA is a big challenge to those people who think women are weaker. In the organisation they have never been defeated in the struggle, and they don't get tired or afraid. They are ready to face all the challenges which may appear in the coming future.

First of all it was very hard to make people understand that the participation of women in the PW can make a change. But now the involvement of so many women in the PLA has justified this. They play such a role that no-one can suspect that they are weak. They are both courageous as well as creative. And now their role is the same as it was in the past. Now it is time for them to develop their role all over the world, participating in the regular military, not only in the time of war and struggle. This is their challenge. Although it is not very challenging for the women under the philosophy of this class struggle, of our party. They can easily achieve their goals. Nowadays women have power, in the villages they used to be ruled, but now they can be rulers.

WPRM: At the moment in Britain the issue of Nepalese soldiers fighting in Gurkha regiments in the British Army is drawing lots of interest. What is the Maoist policy on this?

Comrade Jeevan: We feel proud of the Nepalese Gurkhas' bravery and courage. But we are not happy because this bravery and courage is being used for the purpose of imperialism. If it is being used for the oppressed people of Britain, then that would be admirable. But on the contrary, the Gurkhas are in the service of the rulers, the ruling class of Britain. So we want a situation where every Nepalese person should fight for the Nepalese poor, weak and backward classes. Every Nepalese must have a role against this backward society. Britain is a country where there is dictatorship, so in such a country, fighting for them is not bearable for us. Whatever bravery they have shown, which we want to praise and express our pride in, the aim of the wars they have participated in is not in our favour, so we do not support it.

WPRM: The party has talked about fighting a total war which is not just military, but also economic, political and cultural. How does the PLA conceive of this?

Comrade Jeevan: Our theory of war is total war, it includes every sector of society. It emphasises total transformation and change. This total war involves gender, religion, ethnicity and class. There is such a

method in this total war that every section of society will be involved. PW in this society and country can guarantee social protection and rights and equality of the people, and we have started such a war. The people who have participated in this war do not have the intention just to fight for others, they are fighting for their own liberty too. We want to change the national life as well as the life of the individual in Nepal through this struggle.

At the time when our victory is complete, there will be no classes in society who are victimised. Every class in society will be given equal rights and justice. We don't want to fight such a war which is incomplete. It is not necessary to create or fight another war for others because we have already involved all the sections of society, we have fought for the liberty of the people and the nation, so it is not necessary to fight another war. We have not fought only for the things needed for daily life, but the things which are needed forever and ever.

The struggle which we are carrying out will not be needed frequently, it is needed only once in our history. For us, it is much more significant not only to bring the rule of the poor but to make that rule permanent and long-lasting. And while the PW now is not a military struggle but a political struggle, we believe that for us this is a time of waiting.

WPRM: In China and the USSR, the PLA and the Red Army were amongst the most revolutionary forces in society, but in China after Mao died the PLA did not prevent capitalist restoration in China, did not prevent the revisionists from taking over. So the PLA became a reactionary army. In the future New Nepal, how will the PLA avoid becoming a reactionary army?

Comrade Jeevan: In the past there was revolution in China and the USSR, but now there is no revolution. There was no permanency or sustainability of the revolutionary success. They made revolution in those countries, but they could not create the force which was needed to make the rule long-lasting. That was a weakness of the ruling system of the communists. We feel very sad thinking about the reactionary action in the USSR and China. It is very easy to capture the state, but it is difficult to sustain the rule and protect it from our own weaknesses. It is not sufficient just to establish the rule in social forms. We have to change the habits, the rules that people are accustomed to.

In the Chinese PLA, they had encouraged them to fight against feudalism and imperialism. But they were unable to establish such a rule in the minds of the people, because they were unable to change their habits. They fought for their rights but they could not change their habits. When there was counter-revolution and the people's lives were in crisis, the struggle of the PLA did not turn towards the people but towards the rulers.

Their main weakness was that they had abandoned the people. There was no PLA in the heart of the people, and no people in the heart of the PLA, that's why the revolution was not sustained. The force which they had used to struggle was very admirable, but most of the original soldiers and commanders were not alive at the time of the counter-revolution. The newcomers did not fully understand the difficulties which the dead ones had faced in their struggle.

Also, while the soldiers were new, some of the commanders were old. But the consciousness of those leaders was not turned towards the people but only to the ruling system. They were unable to abandon the

government bureaucracy. So in comparison to that we are its opposite. We are with the people and not turned towards the ruling system.

It is not the main challenge for the Nepali PLA just to win state power. The new challenge is to prevent counter-revolution. It is better to be defeated if we are unable to prevent the counter-revolution. Our main challenge is to be ready for this counter-revolution. But counter-revolution is a thing which the people can prevent. The people are always in favour of revolution, not of counter-revolution. If there are mutual relations and cooperation between the PLA and the people, in Nepal we can prevent this counter-revolution. The true facts of dialectical materialism originate from the people, and they are the main factor necessary to prevent the counter-revolution. Preventing counter-revolution means establishing dialectic materialism. The development of dialectical materialism can only be carried out by the relation of the people with the PLA. If we are separated from the people then we cannot develop dialectical materialism. And if that relation will be not with the proletarian class it will not be dialectical but will be one-sided.

The people who believe that once rules are made by the government or the leaders they are permanent, those people especially will be defeated in the world, those people who are not up to date. The development of social liberty and dialectical materialism must happen in each individual. If this does not happen then our goals will not be achieved. If we don't insist on this thing then counter-revolution will remain inside the individual, not anywhere outside. But for the PLA the main aim is not winning state power, but preventing counter-revolution.