

Britain's control over Nepal strengthens

by Ramtanu Maitra

Amnesty International, the British intelligence-linked human rights organization, is in Nepal in a big way defending the Maoists. In a report published in March 1997, it accused the Nepali government of using "lethal force in situations where such force was clearly unjustified." The report has already brought down the Sher Bahadur Deuba government, and, from information available at this point, the Maoists have stepped up their attacks and recently shot to death at least half a dozen people whom they alleged were police informers.

Meanwhile, Amnesty workers, along with a slew of non-governmental organizations, of which, one, ICIMOD, stands out, are crawling all over rural Nepal, ostensibly keeping watch on "police atrocities" against the Maoists.

The Amnesty championing of the Nepali terrorists, however, did not occur in a vacuum. The Nepali Congress, the dominant political party which took power in 1991 by weakening the monarchy in a long-drawn-out political campaign that led to many incidents of violence, failed miserably to unify the country behind one political leader. Intra-party conflict led to electoral erosion of the party and gave rise to a consolidated Nepali Communist Party (CPN), which wielded political power for nine months following its electoral victory in 1995. This year the CPN split, creating an avowed group of terrorists under the banner of CPN (Marxist-Leninist). It is this group that British intelligence controls.

British interest in Nepal is as old as the hills. The Nepali monarchy, which looks up to Buckingham Palace, is linked to the British monarchy in many ways, including through the World Wildlife Fund. Prince Gyanendra, elder son of King Birendra, is a member of the 1001 Club, run by Prince Philip of Britain and Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands.

There are, in fact, a number of geopolitical reasons why Britain wants its paws on Nepal. To begin with, Nepal is very much part of the old drugs-and-guns trade route. Recent reports indicate that Nepal has become an important link in the scheme of things of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence—a search of whose family tree may lead one to the British MI6, Israeli Mossad, and Saudi intelligence. The ISI has furthered the drugs-and-guns trade to fund a number of terrorist groups operating in northeast India, including the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka.

In time, perhaps, this link could also supply arms to the Tibetan "refugees," anti-monarch Nepalis in southern Bhutan, and even the Uighurs in China's Xinjiang. The British

geopoliticians need the entire northern belt along the Himalayas, stretching from Kashmir to Myanmar, to remain a no-man's land where drug-traffickers, gun-runners, and spies are allowed to roam free, bringing in money and information to the oligarchs. It is for this reason that the porous boundaries of Kashmir have become a major transit route for guns and drugs, and it is also perhaps why Britain, and Israel, will do their best not to let the Kashmir issue be resolved. Strategically located huge game reserves all along the belt, ostensibly set up to protect endangered species such as the Tibetan antelope and snow leopard, fit into this scheme of things nicely.

If China had not taken control, Tibet would have long been the kind of drug- and gun-running thoroughfare Nepal has become today. Failure of the democratic forces in Nepal to respond adequately to the basic requirements of the poor Nepalis, and a cynical monarchy's plan to turn Nepal's capital, Kathmandu, into a tourist-oriented center for hot money, flesh, and drug traders, has created a highly volatile situation in Nepal, which borders India, China, and Bhutan.

Development sabotaged

It would be wrong, however, to assume that British intelligence is keen to set up the Maoists as the powers to be in Nepal. In fact, support to the Maoists is lent primarily to weaken the Nepali Communist Party and the democratic forces. It is widely acknowledged in Nepal that any element that violently opposes the democratic forces is in fact working on behalf of the monarchy, which is, in effect, aligned with the British monarchy. The objective is to keep Nepal undeveloped, and unstable.

Attempts made earlier by the leaders of both India and Nepal to harness Nepal's huge hydroelectric potential have been systematically uprooted by the violent communists, who now wear the label of Maoist. The World Bank, which at one point had committed funds for a feasibility study for one of the hydroelectric projects, danced to the British tune and left. Last year, the U.S.-based Enron Corp. left Nepal abruptly, after making a foray to develop Nepal's hydro-potential. The reason cited by Enron was Nepal's political instability. New Delhi, which played a crucial role in setting the stage for the Nepali Congress's rise to power in 1991, has since been outmaneuvered by the British geopoliticians, partly due to the failures of the Nepali Congress leadership.

As a result, the future portends breeding of new armed insurgents. Indian security forces, who are battling insurgents in the northeast states—the United Liberation Front of Asom, Bodo secessionist forces, and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland—will likely find things getting hotter.

Bhutan and China should also take note. The Tibetans, linked to the Dalai Lama, are involved in the trade which gets them deep into China. There have already been reports that the Tibetans and Uighurs, both controlled top down by British intelligence, have joined hands to fight for Xinjiang's and Tibet's independence from China.