

Language Controversy

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democratic the new constitution might seem to be, and even if the Maoists become an important component of the government. It is sheer illusion to think that a new Nepal can be built without smashing the existing state.

Another illusion that the agreement creates is regarding the so-called impartial or neutral role of the UN. The UN is in reality an instrument in the hands of the imperialists, particularly US imperialists, to dominate, bully and interfere in the affairs of the third world countries for the benefit of the imperialists. It is used as a guise to provide legitimacy to the brazen acts of the imperialists to oppress and suppress the people of the third world. Afghanistan and Iraq are the most recent instances of the UN's direct role in legitimising imperialist aggression and occupation of these countries. It is the duty of revolutionaries to expose, oppose and fight this imperialist role of the UN. Giving it a role in arms management, election supervision, and the peace process in Nepal would only mean inviting imperialist interference, in particular, that of US imperialism.

Another disturbing factor is the illusion harboured by the Maoists in Nepal regarding the role of the Indian expansionists. The Indian ruling classes are the biggest threat to the people of the entire subcontinent and it is the duty of the people of the various countries of south Asia to unitedly fight Indian expansionism. The Indian state, with the backing of US imperialism, has been continuously interfering in the internal affairs of Nepal; it had backed the monarchy while encouraging its stooges among the parliamentary forces in the name of two-pillar theory; trained and extended all forms of aid to the Royal Nepal Army in their military offensive against the Maoists; has secret deals with the Nepali Congress led by Koirala and with other reactionary parties; and is bent upon disarming the PLA and the masses of Nepal and isolating the Maoists. Its aim is to grab the natural

wealth of Nepal, particularly its huge hydel potential, and to make it a safe haven for the imperialists and Indian comprador capitalists. Comrade Prachanda's repeated praise for India's role in bringing about the agreement between the Maoists and the SPA in Nepal creates illusions among the masses about India rather than preparing them for fighting the Indian expansionists who are keen on Sikkimising Nepal in the future.

Even more surprising is the assertion by the CPN(Maoist) that their current "tactics" in Nepal would be an example to other Maoist parties in south Asia. Comrade Prachanda had also given a call to other Maoist parties to reconsider their revolutionary strategies and to practise multiparty democracy in the name of 21st century democracy. Our CC makes it crystal-clear to CPN(M) and the people at large that there can be no genuine democracy in any country without the capture of state power by the proletariat and that the so-called multiparty democracy cannot bring any basic change in the lives of the people. It calls upon the Maoist parties and people of south Asia to persist in the path of protracted people's war as shown by comrade Mao. We also appeal to the CPN(Maoist) once again to rethink their current tactics, which are actually changing the very strategic direction of the revolution in Nepal, and to withdraw from their agreement with the government of Nepal on depositing the arms of the PLA as this would make the people defenceless in face of attacks by the reactionaries.

AZAD
Spokesperson
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Language Controversy

India is home to extraordinary diversity – cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic. All such differences ought to be harmonised in a spirit of

mutual accommodation rather than through coercive methods of homogenisation, which may only lead to agitations and revolt. I make this comment in the context of the present language controversy in Goa regarding Marathi and Konkani languages and their scripts.

At the time of the conquest of Goa by the Portuguese in the early 16th century, Konkani and Marathi were the languages prevailing in this area. Authors differ as to whether both languages were written or Marathi alone was the literary language and Konkani, the spoken language. Noted Goan historian Panduranga Pisurlenkar observes:

If the language spoken in Goa is Konkani, the literary language of the Goan Hindus is traditionally Marathi. Cunha Rivara and Mons Sebastiao Rodolfo Dalgado believed that there was literature in [the] Konkani language and that it was destroyed by the Portuguese due to religious intolerance. We may, however, note that the Portuguese territory of Goa before 1763 consisted only of the Old Conquests, namely, Tiswadi, Salcete and Bardez; the rest of the same territory was not under the Portuguese rule. It is therefore logical that had there been any book or document written in this language it would have been found in the New Conquests. The truth is that there are no vestiges whatsoever of the existence of a Konkani literature before the conquest of Goa by the Portuguese. There was certainly literature in Goa but written in Marathi and Sanskrit.

Fr Antonio Pereira remarks "Marathi was the hieratic language of Goa though not understood by the masses for whom Konkani was more familiar and homely: 'lingua da terra vulgar', the popular language of the place." After the Portuguese conquest, foreign missionaries wrote Konkani in the Roman script. "As a rule the majority of the books of the Jesuits and Franciscans, in prose are in Konkani and those in poetry are in Marathi", says Fr Pereira.

Other writers hold a different view. According to Lourdino Rodrigues, "today we know with incontestable evidence that Goa had a Konkani version of the Ramayana and Mahabharata in the 16th century and Konkani was so highly a developed language that its vocabulary was richer than Portuguese and Marathi".

Konkani in Roman script was kept alive by Goan Catholics who migrated to Bombay and other parts of India and who had studied the script in Portuguese primary schools at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Konkani literature in Devanagari script was promoted by Vaman Varde Valaulikar (Shenoi Goenbab) in the early 20th century. It gained impetus after Goa's independence and more so after the

enactment of the Official Language Act. The Goa Official Language Act was enacted in 1987. It is intended to achieve greater unity and harmony among our people and to strengthen our common cultural heritage. If in the process of implementing the Official Language Act any section of the population feels aggrieved, such complaints should be examined sympathetically.

The language controversy has involved a debate on the medium of education as well. School education is intended mainly to provide a suitable career, economic and social status, and better prospects in life. India is today among the fastest growing economies in the world. Economic success of a nation leads to cultural assertion. In emerging India, it will be necessary to be fluent in at least two Indian

languages, including Hindi, for success in the mainstream economy and society. English is at present the main international language. In this globalised world, proficiency in English is also very important.

There is no reason for any language controversy. If differences do arise, the protagonists of different languages and scripts should together find a solution. They should approach the government whenever necessary. Institutions such as the Central Institute of Indian Languages are also available for advice. The present state government in Goa as well as the union government are responsive and sympathetic to any proposal that strengthens national unity and enhances our linguistic and cultural solidarity.

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