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Storm Troops: The Young Communist
League of Nepal**

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Between Boy Scouts and Paramilitary Storm Troops: The Young Communist League of Nepal

Harald Olav Skar

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1. Introduction

A retired colleague at NUPI, who had been a prisoner of war during the Nazi occupation of Norway, once remarked: “The problem of youth movements has always been that they take on a life of their own, and are not easily controlled by the mother party.”¹ On the other hand the mother party may use exactly this ‘unruliness’ to its favour when illegitimate targets are to be achieved. If the youth branch can be used to do political “dirty work”, while the mother party itself remains “clean” and lawful, then an additional strategic advantage may be gained. My colleague remembered the deeds of the Third Reich and the Nazi youth movement² with apprehension, hoping that the new world would not see the likes of these.

In fact, this is precisely what some observers now say is about to take place in Nepal.³ In the next strategic move towards a complete communist takeover by the Nepalese Maoist Party (CPN-M), the Young Communist League (YCL) has been given a new and expanded role. However, much depends on the viewpoint of the commentator, as other observers say that this is all a misunderstanding and that the YCL is a democratic organization that works to help the poor and clean up corruption and abuses in the political and public arena.

What people do agree, however, is that ***the YCL played a considerable role in the recent elections in Nepal.*** I have argued elsewhere⁴ that they were the reason for the election victory of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) as they spearheaded an anti-corruption campaign. Previously the elections in Nepal had been like a Christmas Eve party with gifts given from all sides. The last Constituent Assembly (CA) elections of 10 April were

¹ Informal discussion with Erik Nord, NUPI.

² The Hitler Youth (HJ) was originally established in 1922 as the **Jungsturm Adolf Hitler** Based in Munich, it served to train and recruit future members of the Sturmabteilung a uniformed Nazi paramilitary organization that originally formed Hitler's personal bodyguard and was later used as a militia, the adult paramilitary wing of the German Nazi Party. From 1936, membership in the HJ was compulsory for all young German men. By 1943, Nazi leaders began turning the Hitler Youth into a military reserve to draw manpower which had been depleted due to tremendous military losses. While the HJ was never declared a criminal organization, its adult leadership was seen as tainted for corrupting the minds of young Germans.

³ “The Young Communist League has been called both a youth service corps and a gang of neo-Nazi thugs...”
from : Nepal's Maoist Militia In Mufti: John Child in Newsblaze
<http://newsblaze.com/story/20070512091024nnnn.nb/topstory.html>.

⁴ See interview with author in *Dagsavisen* 22.04.2008 by Erik Selmer, comment to CLS, and comment to <http://samudaya.org/> 09.06.2008

different however, as the YCL restrained all extravagant behaviour. Today other communist parties of Nepal (like the Congress Party, the second largest party with 20% CA votes and the CPN-UML, the third largest party with 18%) refuse to collaborate with the Maoists unless they dismantle the YCL or rein in their activities. However, today these other political entities have less support left. The Maoist party surprised the world by winning 220 of the mandates (575 + 26 directly nominated) for the upcoming CA and thus almost 40% of the vote, making them by far the largest political party in the country. And their “youth wing”, the YCL, is accordingly important for Nepal’s future.

The present article reviews Nepal YCL organization. I then proceed with comparisons with similar movements elsewhere, before concluding with some remarks on the strategy of using paramilitary⁵ or youth recruitment for forces in post-conflict societies.

2. History and leadership of YCL Nepal

There are few sources on the origin of the Nepalese YCL, but most agree with the statements of the South Asian terrorist portal:⁶

As the CPN-Maoist came over-ground to join the mainstream political process after its agreements with the Government, it revived its militant youth wing, the YCL in November 2006. The YCL, which was formed by the CPN–Maoist at some point (there is no definite information on the year of its creation) during the ‘people’s war’ as an affiliate to provide support and energy to the ‘revolution’, is presently involved in activities including intimidation, extortion, looting, abduction attacks on members and cadres of other political parties. The YCL has reportedly received extensive training in unarmed combat and cadres openly carry knives, sticks, iron bars and other improvised weapons and have paraded themselves around the countryside and the Kathmandu region without fear or restriction since the CPA [Comprehensive Peace Agreement]. Reports indicate that the YCL “is a group of highly trained commandos of the Maoists who, instead of being sent to the cantonments, have been deliberately kept in the open by the party high command to meet exigencies.” It is also believed that the reactivation of the YCL and the appointment of top Maoist commanders as its leaders at a time when the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) is conducting the verification of arms and armies of the Maoists is evidently a part of the grand strategy to keep Maoist cadres outside the scope of UNMIN scrutiny and to use their energies to dominate the CA elections... 22 persons were killed by the Maoist youth wing, the Young Communist League (YCL) since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) came into effect in November 2006. An INSEC report disclosed that 772 people were (also) abducted by the YCL over this period.

Other informed sources⁷ on the YCL report that a predecessor of the movement was to be found in the earlier CPN Ekda Kendra early in the 1990s. It was then considered to be a fighting organization established for

⁵ **Paramilitary** designates forces whose function and organization are similar to those of a professional military force, but which are not regarded as having the same status... The term paramilitary is subjective, depending on what is considered similar to a military force, and what status a force is considered to have. The nature of paramilitary forces therefore varies greatly according to the speaker and the context”
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paramilitary>

⁶ <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/nepal/index.html> A list of activities labelled terrorist can also be found at this web site.

⁷ In conversation with members of AKP-ML (Workers Communist Party) of Norway.

deployment in clashes with the then-dominant Nepalese Congress Party. This unit was later replaced by the Ladak u Dal (fighting force) which spearheaded the Maoist uprising from 13 January 1996. It has been reported that the YCL operates in an organized fashion as a military force and that there are connections evident with the Maoist People's Liberation Army or with the militia of the same party.

The importance of the organization in present-day Nepal can be seen from the following:

- When the CPN-M celebrated the recent CA election victory, Chairman Prachanda invited the YCL leader Pun to address the crowds.
- The recent YCL central committee meeting concluded that a million more YCL members should be recruited within the year 2008, and that
- a separate ministry should be created for the youth of Nepal⁸

The YCL has been described by the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) as follows:⁹

The YCL was re-established in December 2006 by the CPN-M Central Committee as a newly affiliated organization of the CPN-M party and has a growing presence throughout the country, in all regions, districts and Village Development Committees (VDCs). Many of the 45-member YCL Central Committee appointed in early February are former People's Liberation Army (PLA) commanders and commissars who left the PLA and transferred to the YCL rather than assembling in the PLA cantonment sites subsequently set up as part of the peace agreement. In addition, YCL leaders at regional and district levels also include former PLA commanders or militia members.

Ganeshman Pun, chairman of the YCL and a senior CPN-Maoist cadre who previously served as the 'Commissar' of the Parivarthan Memorial Ninth Brigade of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), has confirmed that the League was reactivated in November 2006. After the April 2006 *Jana Andolan* (People's Movement), and the subsequent above-ground role of the insurgents, the CPN-Maoist decided to revive the YCL.

The South Asian Terrorism Portal (SATP) goes on to describe the Nepalese YCL leadership with PLA pasts in more detail:

At its first national convention in the capital Kathmandu in February 2007 which was inaugurated by the CPN-Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal a.k.a. Prachanda, the YCL formed a 45-member new Central Committee with Ganeshman Pun as its Chairman, Uma Bhujel as its Vice-chairman, Dileep Kumar Prajapati as General Secretary, R. P. Sharma as Secretary and Bhagwat Baduwal as Treasurer.

Together with Ganeshman Pun, the leader Uma Bhujel is a PLA 'section commander' famous for leading a successful jailbreak in Gorkha on March 31, 2001, along with five of

⁸ Kantipur Report, KATHMANDU, May 6 Posted on: 2008-05-06 00:14:42 (Server Time). Source: <http://www.ekantipur.com/>

⁹ OHCHR Nepal, June 2007. Report "Allegations of Human Rights Abuses by the Young Communist League (YCL).

her associates. Dileep Kumar Prajapati and Bhagwat Baduwal are top ranking commanders in the PLA. Another Central Committee member, Chandra Bahadur Thapa a.k.a. Comrade Sagar, who is in charge of YCL's Kathmandu region, is a former 'battalion commander' of the Dinesh-Ramji Samiti Brigade. Senior YCL leader, Sabitri Gurung, is a 'deputy battalion commander' of the PLA.¹⁰

The future of the YCL is one of the hottest topics in today's Nepal. All other parties have lodged legal or formal complaints against the YCL, especially as it now appears to be a functioning as a new paramilitary army. It seems that most political parties have stipulated a change in the YCL as a prerequisite for collaborating with the Maoists in a new government.

The relationship between the YCL and the PLA is of concern, especially as the YCL mandate for future action may affect people's civil rights (freedom of association, assembly and opinion):

A February 2007 press release issued by the YCL following its First National Convention described it as a "militant organization". Its role, as outlined in a speech by Chairman Prachanda at the Convention and in the resolutions passed then, includes helping to conduct elections in a free, fair and impartial manner; being vigilant against conspiracies in relation to the elections; playing an active role in fighting attempts by "regressive royalist forces" to avoid the elections; pushing for the establishment of a republic, including through organizing young people; organizing social campaigns to control "social evils", sports activities and cultural programmes "for the mental and intellectual development" of young people, as well as ideological and political training... In addition, the YCL has viewed "law enforcement" as a core part of its role since its inception... YCL representatives in different parts of the country continue to refer to "law enforcement" activities, including patrols, "arrests" and punishment as part of their role.

The High Commissioner¹¹ further notes that the mother party of CPN ended many of its unlawful activities when they joined the SPA Alliance¹² and signed the peace accord, and that simultaneously the YCL assumed many of these roles. On the other hand, parallel structures like "peoples' courts" in areas where no police functioned have largely been dismantled. As to the way ahead, one leader has recently told the comrades that there will not only be one million YCL at the end of the year, but that the majority will be housed in and around Kathmandu, the city that the CPN(M) never conquered despite having control of almost 70% of the rural area:

Maoist aligned Young Communist League (YCL) are pitching their camps in not only abandoned buildings and warehouses but now in buildings of defunct government-run corporations also.

The youth organization, which was famously termed Young Criminal League by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala some time ago and which has been denounced for their highhandedness including roughing up rival political party cadres, has been giving "political training" to new recruits at the Minbhawan located garage of Trolley Bus Corporation in the capital city, which is adjacent to BICC complex which is being spruced up in war-footing for the first sitting of the Constituent Assembly.

¹⁰ <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/nepal/terroristoutfits/YCL.html>

¹¹ OHCHR: Allegations of Human Rights Abuses by the Young Communist League (YCL), June 2007.

¹² A Seven Party Alliance (SPA) was set up during the Peace negotiations. (see xxx)

Kantipur Daily reported that on Tuesday YCL's "regional chairman" Akash Maharjan was giving political training to few youths wearing YCL costumes inside the garage of the near defunct corporation. ... one cadre who had recently joined the outfit told the daily adding, "we go to Dashrath Rangashala (national stadium) in the morning to learn Judo and Karate."

"We saw it necessary to build an outfit comprising of young volunteers so as to realize the dream of a civilized and highly cultured Nepal in a 100 years time," Maoist central member cum YCL in-charge Kul Prasad KC told Kantipur Daily.

YCL general secretary Dilip Kumar Prajapati said that if their parent party, CPN-Maoist, goes on to form the government, then YCL would actively involve itself in security including other areas. "We would determine our strategy based on the kind of government that would be formed," Prajapati told the daily adding, "for that the central working committee meeting would take place once the government is formed."

YCL claims that till now more than half a million people have already taken its membership. Among them some 450,000 are said to be ordinary and around 50,000 are active cadres. Some 6 to 7 thousand among them are whole timers.¹³

The other parties are worried when they now see the Maoist cadres flocking in to Kathmandu in the shape and forms of the YCL. The fact that the YCL now has a meeting place next to where the Constituent Assembly is to take place is also not seen as a good sign.

Possibly as a response to the CPN-M youth mobilizations, other parties are doing their best to recruit and cater to the young. The third largest party in Nepal, the CPN-UML, has now posed new youth demands, as have some of the lowland Madhesi¹⁴ based parties:

"We (the CPN-UML party's youth body Democratic National Youth Federation) have suggested for a complete restructuring of the party, including an ideological shift," Ajambar Rai Kangmang, the DNYF president, told reporters at a press conference organised here (Kathmandu), on Tuesday.

The youth body has decided to raise demands including guarantee of employment to the youths or provision of unemployment allowance, voting rights to those above 16 years of age, establishment of National Youth Council and National Youth Commission, guarantee of youth's representation in all sectors of the state and establishment of a Youth Employment Bank.¹⁵

On December 4, 2007, the breakaway faction of the Nepal Sadbhawana Party (NSP) led by Rajendra Mahato unveiled its militant youth wing called Madhesh Raksha Bahini (Madhesh Security Brigade) at Birgunj in the Parsa District. The party's district secretary, Shiva Patel, said the cadres were trained in self-defence tactics such as using lathis (batons), judo and karate and claimed that there were 23,000 such members across the country.¹⁶

Tarun Dal, the youth organization of the second largest party, the Nepali Congress (NC), is also mobilizing these days as they take on the challenges

¹³ nepalnews.com ag May 14 08.

¹⁴ The Madhesi or immigrants of Indian decent emerged as the fourth largest political entity in Nepal during the recent election (after the Maoists, the Congress Party and the UML).

¹⁵ THT Online, Kathmandu, May 7.

¹⁶ <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/nepal/index.html>

of a new Nepal. However, so far they have focused their efforts mainly on the university campuses, but this may be about to change:

Youth leaders of the Nepali Congress said today they will also be forced to take up arms if excesses of the Young Communist League (YCL) continue. A former general secretary of the Nepal Tarun Dal, Surendra Pandey, said the NC youths should be prepared to be in camps to counter YCL excesses. "Only an armed group can counter another armed group," NC youth leader Dipak Giri said at a gathering of youths associated with the NC. Giri said he felt like a raped woman during the election when the YCL "virtually captured everything". "We should hold a secret meeting soon and begin training," he said, adding, "Gatherings and speeches alone won't work." "Now I feel that an organisation without arms is of no use."¹⁷

Likewise, president of Nepal Tarun Dal – youth wing of the NC – Mahendra Yadav warned to form Tarun Sena to 'deal with the militarised wings of the Maoists.' "Blood flows not only in the veins of YCL. We have redder blood in our veins. If our party gives us the direction, we are also willing to stay in barracks and fight them out for the sake of safeguarding democracy and liberty," he said. "But our Tarun Sena will not be anarchic like theirs. We will follow the order of the party and work for the sake of people," he said.¹⁸

The strength and pervasiveness of YCL in almost all of civil society affairs has now become a national issue, as all parties are seeking to address the role of the youth of Nepal in the days ahead.

3. Youth in South Asia

The focus on youth in a developing Asian country comes as no surprise. The World Bank has described the youth situation in Asia in general as follows:

One fifth of the population in South Asia **is between** the ages of **15 and 24**. This is the **largest number of young people ever to transition into adulthood**, both in South Asia and in the world as a whole. Not addressing the issues young people face today can result in adverse economic, social and political consequences. Governments and policy makers across the region are looking at youth issues, mainly education and employment, and their impact on the countries' development... Youth unemployment is an acute problem. **Young adults** account for **half of the unemployed**. They are also six times more likely to be jobless than older workers.¹⁹

Official figures from Nepal show that almost 40% of the population is less than 16 years of age. The relative age distribution is as follows:

0-14 years:	39.7%	(male 5,424,396;	female 5,080,171)
15-64 years:	56.7%	(male 7,692,134;	female 7,320,059)
65 years and over:	3.6%	(male 468,697;	female 484,112) ²⁰

¹⁷ "NC young turks' call to arms against YCL", Himalayan News Service, Kathmandu, May 18 at: <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=aFanata0skqzpc4Sa9ua.axamal&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20080519>

¹⁸ nepalnews.com sd Jun 09 08.

¹⁹ <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/0,,contentMDK:20827027~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:223547,00.html>

²⁰ Source; http://www.cbs.gov.np/Surveys/NHCS/demographics_characterics.htm

This largely unemployed 40% of the population is also a force that is highly volatile and in need of guidance.²¹ The youth generation is a whole generation which has been raised in an environment of violence after ten years of civil war in Nepal (since 1996 when the CPN-M began the Maoist uprising). They may not have the same respect and distance to violent behavior as youth that have grown up in calmer surroundings. Youth all around the world have been the recruits for all sorts of armies, and they have tended to be utilized when conflict arises or intensifies. Let us look at the use of the youth for political motives in other YCL movements in the communist world.

4. Other large YCL groups in major communist countries

Most communist parties have YCL groups, whether Marxist-Leninist or Maoist. Their *modus operandi* seems to vary from country to country. Analyst John Child has stated that he can find no other countries with such level of YCL violence as in Nepal, and the reason for this is according to him is that what we observe are the same communist entities as before but with new names (Before they were PLA²²; now they are YCL):

In January 1921 the second convention of the Communist International passed a resolution forming the Young Communist League as an integral part of the worldwide Communist struggle, because, the resolution stated, "youth are a part - an essential party - of the revolutionary movement."

The Nepal YCL, formed in January 2007, just days before Maoists joined the interim parliament, share a few things in common with their counterparts in other countries: They have protested and issued statements, and they have put forward a public-service face, nabbing smugglers and the leakers of a national school exam paper, cleaning up garbage, clearing out the touts that plague Kathmandu airport, and directing traffic.

From there, Nepal's young Communists part company with their international comrades. In Kathmandu, company owners and managers have been beaten and abducted over "donations" and labor disputes. According to complaints from the business community, extortion has risen to new heights. From rural Nepal, new reports surface almost daily of YCL bullying reporters, trashing government offices, fighting with police and break-away Maoist factions, abducting people, and seizing land.

The pattern is familiar to Nepalis: This Maoist militia has a new name and wears civvies, but their job is the same.²³

Although I agree with Child that what we see may be the same militia with a new name, I disagree that this is significantly different from elsewhere in the world of communist youth groups. Let us review some of the parallel organizations belonging to the Communist International.

²¹ Some estimates indicate that unemployment in this group is six times higher than in older age groups.

²² Peoples Liberation Army of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN(M)).

²³ John Child in Kathmandu in nepalnews.com April 20, 2008.

5. History of international YCLs

Most YCL groups were formed just after 1920, following the philosophies of Marx, Engels and Lenin rather than Mao. The English/UK YCL was formed in 1921, when the youth wing of the Communist Party merged with the Young Workers League.²⁴ The Russian YCL was formed in 1917, but gained greater force when Stalin, in 1922, proclaimed them to be the “next step in the world revolution.”²⁵ In China the YCL was founded in August 1920, in fact before the Party was officially established in 1921.²⁶ In Korea it was established in 1927, symbolically beneath the Yaowang Shrine in Beishan Park.

Most YCLs are also members of the World Federation of Democratic Youth, which represents millions of young people in more than 100 countries.

While the Korean YCL originally saw as its primary task as helping in the 15-year-long struggle with Japan, the YCL in Russia was seen as one alternative to the outlawed Boy Scouts:

Russia is one of the few nations where the scouting movement has never been allowed to establish a branch, having been banished in the early 1900s. During the Soviet era, the equivalent of the Boy and Girl Scouts was the Komsomol. Komsomol was the acronym for the Vsesoyuzny Leninskiy Kommunisticheskiy Soyuz Molodyozhi or VLKSM, which was known in the west as the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League, or "YCL" for short.²⁷

In Russia the YCL or Komsomol, was the “boot camp on the path to success for those wanting to climb to the top of the political pyramid” (Ibid). This was also the main purpose of the Chinese YCL until the Tiananmen Square incident, when the YCL sided with the student uprising. Accordingly;

Leaders were moved out of positions in Youth League...The main reason for these demotions was that during the 1989 democracy movement, the Youth League published a **declaration of sympathy with the students** and called for their patriotism to be recognised and protected.²⁸

When it comes to the important question of evidence for YCL groups or similar groups in communist states which incorporate violent political behaviour, Nepal is not the only new case. In present-day Russia a new youth movement has begun: As the traditional Komsomol groups faded into obscurity with the end of the USSR, a new youth movement called Nashi (full

²⁴ <http://www.ycl.org.uk/index.php?file=WhatWeStandFor>

²⁵ To The Fifth Congress Of The Young Communist League Of Russia, October 11, 1922.

²⁶ Founded in August 1920, it was originally named as the **Socialist Youth League of China** (中国社会主义青年团). Whilst the Party was officially established in July 1921, the Chinese Socialist Youth League was organized with the Party being set up throughout the country. After the war resisting against Japan, in order to adapt to the new social and political situation, it was officially renamed as the **Chinese New Democracy Youth League** (中国新民主主义青年团) in April 1949. Later in May 1957, its name as the Chinese Communist Youth League was resumed, historically combining the conferences of all three leagues (the Chinese Socialist Youth League, the Chinese Communist Youth League as well as the Chinese New Democracy Youth League). During the 10 years of the Cultural Revolution, the functioning of the League was blocked. From 1978 to 2003, 5 conferences were held. The current central committee members of the League had been elected since the 15th National Representative Conference in July 2003. Source: (RADIO FREE EUROPE 27 February 1973. <http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/300/8/3/text/12-5-198.shtml>).

²⁷ http://www.weeklystandard.com/weblogs/TWSFP/2007/07/the_putin_jugend.asp

²⁸ http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/democracy_power/china_inside/youth_league

name: *Molodezhnoye Dvizheniye*, which translates as Youth Movement "Ours!") was started by Vladislav Surkov, the head of Putin's presidential administration.

Surkov has been accused of creating Nashi not as a movement for young people, but as a group of shock troops – brownshirts without the shirts and the arm bands – that can be called upon to break up anti-Putin demonstrations. Some critics of Kremlin policy have even referred to the Nashi movement as the "Putin Jugend," a pejorative reference to the Hitler Jugend movement of the Third Reich. Others call them "nashisty," which rhymes with the Russian word for fascist, "fashisty"²⁹

The Putin administration's support for the Nashi was clearly seen in the incident where "a flight of six Sukhoi Su-27 fighters – part of the VVS's (the Russian Air Force) demonstration team – performed for thousands of members of the youth group Nashi. The occasion was the group's annual summer outdoor camp at Lake Seliger, a site some 350 kilometers from Moscow."³⁰ The cost of the demonstration has been estimated at tens of thousands of dollars, and the linkage with the military was unmistakable.

In China, the official YCL has been somewhat less prone to political violence, but the reason may be that there already existed another youth movement: the Red Guards.³¹

During the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards traveled throughout China, going to schools, universities, and institutions, spreading the teachings of Mao. Some were criticized for using violence against people who were believed to be taking things back to capitalism.

The role of Red Guard was mainly to attack the "Four Olds" of society that is what is believed to be old ideas, cultures, manners, and customs of China at the time. Red Guards in Beijing and elsewhere in China had taken to the streets from their schools. They made posters, speeches, criticized Party leaders, and some committed violent acts in the name of the Cultural Revolution.

Mao met a million Red Guards formally in Tiananmen Square on August 18, 1966. Many people in realms of education, academic, media, literature and punishment were attacked and labeled by the Red Guards as "capitalist roaders" or "anti-revolutionaries". The Red Guards ransacked museums and destroyed old books and works of art throughout China. Many famous temples, shrines, and other heritage sites were destroyed. In total, 4,922 out of 6,843 were destroyed.³²

There seem to be several similarities between the activities of the Nepalese Maoist YCL, the Red Guards of China, and the Nashi of Russia, as they all appear prone to violence in their efforts to defend the revolution against capitalist or traditionalist feudal affiliations. Such actions of political violence have in Nepal firstly been directed at the two parties dominant prior to the

²⁹ (**The Putin Jugend** *The Kremlin's teenage shock troops*. by Reuben F. Johnson , from: <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/013/938alwas.asp; 07/31/2007 12:00:00 AM>)

³⁰ (Op. Cit note 25.)

³¹ The first fleet of people to call themselves "red guards" in China were a group of students at the high school attached to Tsinghua University (May 1966)... as a constructive criticism towards the university administration, which was accused of harboring "intellectual elitism" and "bourgeois".

³² (from: 30/4-0813.13.00; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Youth_League.)

Constituent Assembly elections in April 2008 (NC and UML). In the UNMIN review³³ of the YCL a list of such actions shows that any alternative party target is acceptable in the course towards the next stage in the revolution. Even after the election, YCL attacks continued, as with the thrashing of Nepal's Economy Minister Mahat and the murder of businessman Ram Hari Shresta.³⁴ Such actions were seen as evidence of punitive and revengeful behavior otherwise unacceptable in a modern democratic world.

Finally, let us have a look at Cuba and Latin America. Here the trend oriented more towards rhetoric than towards physical action. This is in line with Castro's advice to the Cuban YCL to promote *ideas*, which he considered weapons just as important as military aids:

Not weapons but ideas will decide this universal battle, and not because of some intrinsic value, but because of how closely they relate to the objective reality of today's world. These ideas stem from the conviction that, mathematically speaking, the world has no other way out, that imperialism is unsustainable, that the system that has been imposed on the world leads to disaster, to an insurmountable crisis, and, I dare say, sooner rather than later.³⁵

In Nepal, the YCL in May 2008 was asked to embrace such a strategy as they are sent out for a month-long indoctrination and education exercise. The election time seems to have been a time for fights, and now the fight for ideas were to begin.

Addressing a press conference YCL chairman Ganesh Man Pun³⁶ said they would come up with a plan of 'Youth Mission for building new Nepal' within a month and would soon complete at least one exemplary work in each of the states carved out. The CPN-Maoist has divided the country into 14 federal states mostly along ethnic lines.

However, in Nepal the battle for minds is taking place simultaneously with the battle for resources/work and the battle against capitalist and feudal institutions, like the monarchy and the B-C-N (Bahun/Brahmin, Chhettri and Newar) high caste elites.

6. The role of youth organizations in policing

The debate about what a youth organization actually may do and what they should not do became heated in the days leading up to the Nepalese Constituent Assembly period. The other political parties and observers strongly object to the YCL attacks on political opponents and their beating up of the young and future leaders of other parties. However, their role in policing is somewhat more controversial. It is hard to criticize the YCL for

³³ http://www.unmin.org.np/?d=activities&p=activity_detail&aid=22

³⁴ "Family of slain businessman accuses Maoists of protecting killers". Kantipur Report. KATHMANDU, May 19; <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=147457>. Posted: 2008-05-19 00:44:53 (Server Time).

³⁵ Speech given by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, at the closing session of the Young Communists League 8th Congress, held in the Havana Convention Center, Havana, 5 December 2004 Source: <http://www.cubasocialista.cu/texto/csifidel041205.htm>

³⁶ http://www.gorkhapatra.org.np/detail.php?article_id=862&cat_id=8

helping the poor to achieve justice in a caste-dominated society where most lawyers, police officers and judges are from the upper castes. The YCL have indeed been very successful in curbing crimes of looting, corruption and fraud and have thus gained rural popularity.

This is especially of concern as the YCL has become almost an extension of the police and other government enforcement agencies:

- In a bid to enhance state management and control (and) ill practices rampant in various sectors of the country ...The YCL informed that the campaign will prioritise traffic management, drinking water distribution, crime control, frauds in foreign employment and corruption control among other issues. The YCL will be assisting the police and the government identifying the problems in those sectors, YCL General Secretary Bishnu Prajapati informed.³⁷

The UNMIN report on the YCL clearly mentions the role of policing and finds the YCL's actions problematic:

OHCHR has been informed that the YCL considers that it has both a legal and moral right to act on behalf of the people if the police fail to take what YCL considers to be necessary actions. The YCL further told OHCHR that it is the right of the people to take the law into their own hands if the police do not act. Police frequently say they release individuals handed over to them by the YCL for lack of evidence, but do not appear for the most part to proactively seek to investigate themselves.

Nevertheless, as previously stated police inaction cannot be used to justify abuses and acting outside the law. OHCHR considers the methods used by the YCL and other CPN-M entities which have also been responsible for abductions, to be arbitrary and without legal basis.

The State Cases Act allows a person who witnesses a crime being committed by another person to "hold" such person, and thereafter hand him/her over to the nearest Police Office. Non-law enforcement personnel may thus intervene in order to prevent a person who is committing a crime from absconding but may not otherwise deprive the liberty of any person. The State Cases Act also states that a person who knows that a crime has been committed, is being committed or is going to be committed must, as soon as possible, supply such information to the nearest Police Office by lodging a written complaint or verbal information mentioning relevant evidence to the extent available or seen or known by him/her.³⁸

Such "civilian arrests" are legal in most part of the world, but they become problematic if individuals or groups systematically take upon themselves the roles of a non-functional state apparatus. In doing so they may undermine the very system they try to remedy. The support of the impoverished masses is not hard to envision if the poor low caste and ethnic minorities can go to the YCL (or threaten to do so) and obtain policing and legal aid which for generations have been refused them. In the long run, however, such organizations cannot but undermine the regular law enforcement institutions and may thus become a threat to the state apparatus.

³⁷ Kantipur Report, KATHMANDU, May 14, <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=146925>

³⁸ 'Allegations of Human Rights Abuses by the Young Communist League', June 2007, UNMIN/ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal.

Lastly, it should be noted that by using potential violence as a tool to reach its goals, the YCL has created, or at least heightened, the level of overall violence in Nepal, as did the Maoist insurgency in general. Thus responses to their activities have sometimes also been violent in retaliation. This was clearly the case when young YCL cadres were murdered by MPRF-affiliated groups in Gaur. The Gaur incident received considerable attention, not only because of the violence and death of 27 young people (one female only 17 years old), but also because it clarified beyond any doubt that the previously Maoist-allied Madheshi forces had now become definitely anti-Maoist. This will have serious repercussions when the Maoists try to form their first government.

The Gaur incident also showed very clearly the inability of the Nepalese Police (NP) and the Armed Police Force (APF) to protect civilian lives. Despite having known about the possibility of the riot for many days (as the MPRF and the CPN-M's Madhesi Rastrya Mukti Morcha and the YCL planned to organize demonstrations at the same venue), they failed to take appropriate preventive measures. During the clash between the two youth groups, one person was beaten to death outside the APF building – even though 198 APF members were present in Gaur Municipality as well as 775 NP on duty in Rautahat District in the southern Terai region. Such inability to act clearly shows that the law and order dimension in Nepal is in turmoil. This in turn makes it easier for groups like the YCL to claim that they have now taken over the role of policing for the poor and downtrodden.

Simultaneously with organizing the youth in attempts to politicize and police the masses, the Maoist leaders of Nepal also seem ready to use the YCL to gain a wider role for the legitimate political wing of the CPN-M. Evidence of this can be seen in the movement of young YCL cadres to Kathmandu, where they have been arranging for offices and cadre residences directly outside the Constituent Assembly buildings. One may now wonder whether those elected to the Constituent Assembly from the CPN-M will abide by the peace accord and not use the force outside the premises as unspoken and direct intimidation and threats.

The use of non-legal paramilitary in supporting a legal party is nothing new in politics. Cases from Ireland and Colombia are among the best known. Let us now take a look at how other legal political parties with a violent past have been using paramilitary youth groups to back their positions in post-conflict situations.

7. Other country cases with paramilitary post-conflict political groups

The establishment or prolongation of paramilitary forces has been a recurrent phenomenon in the aftermath of civil war. As regular army demobilization

takes place, the army commanders about to become civilians/politicians often try to use paramilitary groups to maintain control.

In Colombia, close to 4000 fighters, from six different paramilitary groups, demobilized between 2003 and 2004. Giovanni Marin was once known as Comandante R, political chief of the 800-member urban paramilitary force known as the Cacique Nutibara Bloc (BCN). But while Mr. Marin shed his paramilitary title as part of a government-sponsored peace process that led to the demobilization of the BCN and other paramilitaries, he did not seem ready to relinquish the support base that his group had built over many years. Former members of the BCN formed a political-social organization known as the Democratic Corporation, when Marin himself ran for Congress in 2006.

Many drug related groups in Colombia, not only the BCN, have been trying to clean up their acts after a window opened up for peace:

scores of other demobilized paramilitaries are weighing their political options in a move that could legitimize former bandits and alleged narco-traffickers that the US and Colombian governments have been fighting for years.³⁹

The question in today's Colombia is whether such groups have a double standing, with an illegal powerbase and a legal political front. If this is so then the illegal base may potentially be seriously influencing or even running parts of the state apparatus.

The United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (an umbrella group of paramilitaries known as AUC, from the initials of its Spanish name) has long claimed powerful, but indirect, political influence. Salvatore Mancuso, the now-demobilized former military head of the group, once claimed that AUC controlled 30 per cent of Colombia's Congress.⁴⁰

The links between the legal branch of a party and an illegal underground tactical/terrorist group also came to be seen as difficult in conflict-ridden Ireland.

In Ireland, the relationship between the IRA/PIRA⁴¹ and Sinn Fein, the legal political party, remained highly problematic up until 4 October 2006, when full disarmament was achieved. This process had, however, taken 8 years from the 1998 Belfast Good Friday Agreement (aimed at disarming all paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland). According to then Prime Minister Tony Blair, the British saw the relationship between the two entities as awkward, with the problematic potential of the one group (legal) using the other (illegal) as its official power base:

³⁹ The first two groups were the AUC and the BCN, Arneson 2005, Alto Comisionado para la pace 2004 http://www.altocomisionadoparalapaz.gov.co/bl_nutibara/dic_10_03_in.htm

⁴⁰ PARAMILITARIES TRADE GUNS FOR POLITICS Colombia's peace process has turned many former bandits and narco-traffickers into political candidates. By Rachel Van Dongen, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 7 September 2005. Source: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0907/p07s02-woam.html>

⁴¹ The Provisional Irish Republican Army (Irish: *Óglaigh na hÉireann*) (IRA; also referred to as the PIRA, the Provos, or by some of its supporters as the Army or the 'RA') is an Irish Republican, left wing paramilitary organization that, until the Belfast Agreement, sought to end Northern Ireland's status within the United Kingdom. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provisional_Irish_Republican_Army

...the time had now come for the IRA, the republican movement and Sein Fein to make a simple choice. That choice was either you continued with the paramilitary activity and criminality of the past or you chose the politics of the future. What you could not do was have it both ways; you could not continue to ride two horses. With the exception of Sein Fein, Ireland was now united in this view, and the moment had come for Sein Fein and the IRA to make a choice.⁴²

The Provisional IRA (PRA) did eventually disarm totally by 2006, but these (former) members of armed groups were by some placed in the same category as common criminals, and many of them had indeed turned to criminal activities like racketeering and drug trafficking. This is reminiscent of an incident in Nepal June 2007, when Prime Minister and political Grand Old Man Koirala referred to the YCL as Young Criminal League⁴³ instead of the Young Communist League. And just as with the YCL, Ireland's former paramilitary also did much good work at the same time as they kept the other image alive:

The media attention that these (criminal) activities attract nevertheless overshadows the considerable investment they make in other sectors so as to make the best of their integration into the political, economic, and social fabric. Many of them work in peace-building programmes funded by the UK or the European Union, while others are especially active in political, voluntary or cultural fields.⁴⁴

The dual role of youth groups and paramilitary is of course what politicians exploit in today's Nepal. As all parties, including the CPN-M, have a right to have a youth wing, calling for the abolition of such groups seems a waste of time and effort. More important is to define the role such groups should play in the future, within democratic norms. For one thing, they should not be politically violent, as this will encourage other youth groups to do the same.

8. Conclusion:

The Maoists are categorically against abolishing the YCL. However, the use and future of this organization may affect not only the internal but also the external relations of Nepal. Maoist second in command, Dr. Bhattarai ruled out any possibility of dissolution of Young Communist League as demanded by the NC and the CPN-UML:

"YCL is our sister wing, just like the Nepal Tarun Dal of the NC and the Democratic National Youth Association of the UML. If they dissolve their youth wings, only then the YCL can also be dissolved.

⁴² Tony Blair PM Press Briefing: 3.45pm Monday 21 February 2005, <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page7148.asp>

⁴³ Chairman Prachanda commented that the Prime Minister Koirala's referring to the YCL as the "young criminal league" only signalled that Koirala himself was giving protection to criminals. Since then, the YCL has issued a statement and raised a serious objection against PM Koirala's remarks. He was burnt in effigy across the country, and the YCL has demanded that the Prime Minister must make a public apology for his lunatic remarks
From: <http://cpnm.org/new/unfbulletin/editorialeng.htm>

⁴⁴ From E. Feron: (2006) Paths to reconversion taken by Northern Irish paramilitaries. *International Social Science Journal* 58 (189), 447-456.

"Only those who are mentally not right are demanding dissolution of the YCL," Badal said, adding that the YCL would instead be expanded.⁴⁵

Many observers of political developments in Nepal have argued that now is the time for Washington to take the Maoists off the terrorist list. Former president Jimmy Carter recently stated:

A counterproductive Washington policy in recent years has been to boycott and punish political factions or governments that refuse to accept United States mandates. This policy makes difficult the possibility that such leaders might moderate their policies.

Two notable examples are in Nepal and the Middle East. About 12 years ago, Maoist guerrillas took up arms in an effort to overthrow the monarchy and change the nation's political and social life. Although the United States declared the revolutionaries to be terrorists, the Carter Center agreed to help mediate among the three major factions: the royal family, the old-line political parties and the Maoists...

Through more official consultations with these outlawed leaders, it may yet be possible to revive and expedite the stalemated peace talks between Israel and its neighbors. In the Middle East, as in Nepal, the path to peace lies in negotiation, not in isolation.⁴⁶

Although I agree with the Carter mission that talks are their way to proceed, one may now wonder if talks with the central party leaders in Nepal also include the renewed YCL... or are we to consider them as separate from the legal party, as with the outlawed IRA and its political wing Sinn Fein?

Both Prachanda, the Maoist supreme commander, and Dr Batterai, of the CPN-M, have continuously stressed that the YCL are an integral part of the CPN(M), and that they are under central party control.

However, as my older NUPI colleague remembered the Hitler Jugend and how the struggle for in-line actions had been central during the war, we may also consider such streamlining unlikely. By being "not quite under control", fear of more political violence can be maintained, and thus the Maoists have another important support movement to fall back on and to use as a potential threat. The fact that some of the PLA fighters now lead the YCL, and that the new recruits are allegedly also provided with judo and fighting training, both give reason to expect the time ahead to be rather difficult.

If the Maoists are successful in maintaining a revolutionary government, they seem to want the YCL to become a sort of "auxiliary police". If, however, they lose out in the formation of government, then the YCL may become the next step in an urban revolution. Here we must remember that the targets are 10 times as many for an urban guerrilla in relationship to the rural setting, so that far fewer troops would be needed to make chaos in Kathmandu and the capital region. The Irish and the Colombian cases demonstrate that it may be an advantage for a "democratic party" to have a non-democratic dimension

⁴⁵ THT Online. The Himalayan Times Itahari, May 15.

⁴⁶ Jimmy Carter is the founder of The Carter Center and the winner of the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize. The article was published in the 28 April 2008 edition of *The New York Times*.

which they can claim is sporadically out of control. As such, a youth movement is ideal.

The new Prachanda path seems full of surprises. One of the most interesting aspects is the ability of Nepal's Maoist movement to assume new shapes and forms. For the Sendero Luminoso, the Maoists of Peru, the problem that led to their downfall was that they had frightened so many people away from the rural areas and into the towns⁴⁷ that, when they finally arrived in the city, they had no support left. For the Maoists of Nepal, this problem does not exist. The support of one million new YCL cadres may thus contribute to changing Nepal even before the other political parties wake up to what is happening. At an after-election dinner with the author, former UML leader Madav Kumar Nepal⁴⁸ continuously repeated that it is difficult to trust a chameleon (by which he meant the Maoists). Let us see what colour this creature will now turn in the months ahead, as the Constituent Assembly works to change Nepal forever.

If the youth – 40 % of the Nepalese population – are not given proper direction, perhaps the army will again intervene, but even they are changing in line with their new tasks. This was clearly evident in the speech of the Chief of the Army Staff when he spoke to the young student officers on democratic transition:

Young men you must understand today and in the foreseeable future you will not be fighting from the trenches, tanks and guns, you will be fighting with the people, amongst the people, in the people and for the people. You will be in a complex nature of situations surrounding you. There will be multiple challenges and you will have to accept those challenges only then you will have opportunities... So you will have to be a good mediator, a good negotiator, media friendly, community friendly ...so that everybody accepts you as a central leader.⁴⁹

The fight for the mind and hearts of the youth of Nepal is on. So far, the Maoist and the Nepalese Army may be the only real contenders.

⁴⁷ The idea was that the peasants were "penny-capitalist" not a real proletariat. Accordingly they had to be driven to an urban setting to become real proletarians. In this drive, the SL succeeded but subsequently lost due to their terrorist methods (terrorizing whole village to run to the urban centers).

⁴⁸ M.K Nepal was the main architect in arranging the meeting in Delhi which ended with a peace accord. After the election he resigned as leader of the CPN-UML because the Maoists had won the election with 40% of the vote.

⁴⁹ Chief of the Army Staff General Rookmangud Katwal at the Opening Ceremony of the Seminar on "Democratic Transition and Nepalese Army Reforms", Organized by the Army Command and Staff College at Army HQ on 24 August 2007. Available at: <http://www.nepalarmy.mil.np/speech.php>