Articles from workers power newspaper

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IRAN: workers must make the revolution permanent

IRAN: WORKERS MUST MAKE THE REVOLUTION PERMANENT

A pamphlet from the WORKERS POWER GROUP

INTRODUCTION

The following articles appeared in the monthly newspaper WORKERS POWER, between October 1978 and June 1980. They represent an analysis of the unfolding Iranian revolution based on the Trotskyist understanding of this revolution as one which either the Iranian proletariat makes "permanent", or it will succumb to a counter - revolution, the end result of which will be a tyranny as bad as the Shah's.

WORKERS POWER explained from the outset the contradictory nature of the Anti-Shah revolution. It was a genuine *anti-imperialist* revolt against the US's prime agent in the Gulf region. His fall transformed this area into what Brezhinski calls "The arc of crisis". The overthrow of the most heavily armed and effectively policed of semi-colonies gave an enormous encouragement to struggles against imperialism and its stooges throughout the world.

The Anti-Shah revolution passed through several stages. The initial campus-based demonstrations led by intellectuals in 1977/78, and the brutal SAVAK/army repression they provoked, spurred the urban petty-bourgeoisie, the bazaar merchants and the mullahs to mobilise increasingly massive demonstrations. Yet it was the Iranian working class (especially the Oil Workers) who seized the Pahlavi regime by the throat. It was the guerrilla fighters and left-wing activists (Fedaii, Mujaheddin, Tudeh) who led the mass insurrection that aborted Khomeini and Bazargan's deal with the Shah's generals.

WORKERS POWER argued that, whilst it was correct for the working class and revolutionary Marxists to fight alongside the mullah-led forces against the Shah's army, that Khomeini, the clerical cast and its political hangers - on did not represent even a *democratic* leadership for the Iranian people. Whilst the masses had profound if ill-formed democratic expectations and illusions (greater national freedom, more land, freedom of organisation, assembly and speech), Khomeini and the clerics would move against these freedoms which the masses conquered for themselves, arms in hand.

Events over the last 18 months have amply born out these warnings. Important and heroic as the struggles of the Iranian left-wing students have been, *the working class* remains the only force capable of halting the spiral, through economic chaos and religious barbarism, back to a new military coup - a new "Shah" in all but name. The working class will not and cannot merely act as a driving force for a bourgeois revolution, and here Trotsky's prognosis, framed as early as 1905, has been confirmed time and time again in the last 75 years. All the Stalinist/Maoist chopped logic about "national-democratic" or "peoples democratic" revolutions cannot but lead to the working class ceding power to, or actually supporting, its *class enemies*. No section of the bourgeoisie ("national", "patriotic" etc) can or will establish or endure for long a democratic regime of any sort. Certainly the mullahs will not. The only "democratic" regime there will be in Iran (that is, a regime that will grant the oppressed peoples self-determination, women their liberation and peasants their land) will be *workers democracy* : a state based on the workers shoras and an armed workers militia. The working class will of course have to win to its side the great mass of the peasantry - it can only rule in Iran in alliance with the peasants. It must therefore defend and carry out the peasants demands, and the demands of the oppressed nationalities. But the central measures to solve Iran's crisis are necessarily *socialist* ones. Nationalisation of all large scale enterprises, foreign and Iranian; the creation of a plan for the economy; a massive campaign of social construction to absorb Iran's millions of unemployed, etc.

Trotskyists do not ignore or underestimate the importance of the anti-Imperialist and democratic tasks facing Iran's masses. They do deny that there is any other road to the fulfilment of these tasks than the class rule (dictatorship) of the proletariat, depending on the support of the peasantry and other oppressed sections. All genuine Trotskyists (and the "Iranian Trotskyists" of the HKE, who disgrace Trotskyism by their Menshevik pro-regime position) must stand for the overthrow by the masses not merely of Bani - Sadr or any professional politician who might replace him, but of Khomeini and Beheshti's "Islamic Republic" itself.

September 1980

Shah's rule shaken

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No. 1 October 1978

The massacre in Teheran on the 8th. of September, which resulted in the death of hundreds of unarmed demonstrators, has given a temporary breathing space to the Shah.

The corrupt despot's regime rests solely on brutal forces of repression. He is armed, and backed to the hilt, by those bastions of 'human rights' Jimmy Carter, James Callaghan and David Owen.

America is reported to be training 100,00 troops for intervention, should their guarantor of stability in the Gulf lose control of his own forces. The Iranian army is stiffened by many thousands of American advisers. The reports of soldiers shooting themselves and their officers, show how badly this stiffening is needed.

The deepening revolutionary upheaval in Iran has passed through several phases. A campaign against repression was launched by dissident writers last spring. Meetings attracted ever larger crowds, particularly of students.

In November of last year, while the Shah was in Washington, police fired on students at Aryamehr University.

The demonstrations that followed gained the support of the urban masses in several cities. The leadership of this movement fell to the Shiite Moslem religious leaders. The more radical sections have as their goal the overthrow of the Shah and the re-introduction of the 1906 constitution. That constitution had certain liberal elements while its clerical provisions would hold serious implications for the workers and other oppressed strata of Iran.

The forces mobilised in demonstrations, strikes etc. have widely differing class interests. The liberal bourgeoisie wants a constitutional monarchy. They want to preserve Iran's alliance with Imperialism. Many of the small traders of the bazaars, the impoverished small landowners and the unemployed, identify their ills correctly with the Shah's regime. But, under the influence of the religious leaders, they see the answer in a return to a patriarchal Islamic utopia.

The Iranian working class holds the key to the only stable alternative to the Shah's regime. One that can meet the needs of the oppressed nationalities of the Iranian Empire, the rural poor, the unemployed and women. Already major strikes have erupted in the car and textile industries. Over 7 million strong, the Iranian workers have the social weight to take the lead in the struggle to overthrow the monarchy.

The repression of the last 23 years has hit working class militants hard. As a result the Iranian working class has only the most localised industrial leadership. Stalinism, in its Soviet or Maoist forms, can only be a source confusion and defeat.

Whilst in no way underestimating the struggle around 'democratic demands' only the perspective of working class power can guide the Iranian revolutionaries to the correct tactics and strategy in the coming period.

Iran: workers tip the scales

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No. 3 January 1979

The total cessation of oil exports from Iran is undeniable testimony to the tremendous weight Iran's workers have thrown into the scales in the struggle against the blood soaked Shah. The strikes by bank workers, state employees, newspaper workers, car workers, are inexorably strangling the functioning of the Iranian economy. Unprecedented wage increases have been won (25% to 100%) over the last 3 months which partly recoup the effects of inflation but the strikes continue and are now overtly political, centring on calls for democratic rights, the kicking out of foreign exploiters and the overthrow of the Shah and his machinery of mass murder.

The Ayatollah Khomeini, a fierce anti-communist is forced by the obvious centrality of the working class's strength to overthrowing the Shah, to praise the strikers and call on all oppositionists to give them financial and other support.

The military regime despite unexampled savagery has been unable to restore order in the streets or break the workers resolve. The court camarilla, the generals and police chiefs and their CIA advisers have only two choices, more repression taken to genocidal proportions or concessions.

The latter course, to have any chance of producing a stable transitional government would necessitate the Shah's flight along with the most notorious generals, SAVAK chiefs etc.

The crucial question facing the Iranian revolution is the role of the working class. Already its social weight is proving the single most decisive factor. But more than this is needed if more than the figurehead, the trappings of Pahlavi monarchy, are to be altered. A SAVAK-military dictatorship swathed in Islamic demagogy would be no step forward for Iran's oppressed masses. A coalition of mullah nominees and bourgeois politicians swathed in anti-Imperialist rhetoric would be, at best, a concealed foe of the working class and democratic rights—one which the exigencies of the class struggle would soon drive sharply to the right. Whilst the proletariat can and should fight alongside the mullah led forces it will be fatal for it to support a Khomeini-style government. Therefore the objective strength of the working class in the anti-Shah movement must be transformed into conscious leadership. This requires the focussing of existing strike committees into effective workers councils. These must be organs not only of mass strikes against the Shah, or his military successors, but of armed insurrection. They must become organs which can lead the democratic and anti-Imperialist struggles to their fulfilment in an Iranian Socialist revolution.

To achieve this goal means the creation of an Iranian Trotskyist party capable of breaking the workers from the influence of the mullahs, the Tudeh and the Maoist guerilla organisations. The stagist conceptions of the Stalinists yield the leadership of the masses to anti-proletarian 'progressive forces'. The full democratic demands of the Iranian revolution can only be won under conscious proletarian leadership. They can only be safeguarded by proletarian power.

No arms, no intervention

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No. 3 January 1979

There is no limit to the hardware Imperialism will provide to prop up its bloody puppet state in Iran.

The stoppage of oil supplies threatens severe disruption to the economies of Imperialism's most faithful henchmen—Israel and South Africa—as well as to the economies of the Imperialist heartlands.

That is why the Carter administration has committed its security apparatus and its fleet to the massacre of the Iranian workers and peasants.

Not to be outdone the British Labour Government—on the very day the Shah's British tanks mangled the bodies of demonstrators on the streets of Ghazvin and Tehran—announced its committment to the butchery in Iran. 100 Shir One Chieftan Tanks, worth over £500 million, will be delivered to Iran by the spring. Callaghan and Holy Owen have promised the fulfilment of £1 billion worth of arms orders with no cancellation.

British workers cannot remain silent as the Imperialists step up the butchery of the Irani masses. If the British labour movement allows the transportation of arms to the forces of repression and murder in Iran then it too will be complicit in the deaths of thousands of Irani workers and peasants.

A campaign of solidarity with the workers and peasants of Iran must be built in the British labour movement. There is not time to wait for fine speeches and petitions. Action must be taken now to black all arms supplies to the butchers of Iran. This means fighting for action by munitions workers, by transport workers, by dockers and airport workers to stop the flow of arms now.

In every town labour movement committees of solidarity must be built—committed to action, to blacking, to demonstrations to force the Labour Government to break with Imperialism and its allies in Iran.

IRAN: workers must make the revolution 'permanent'

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No. 3 January 1979

The prolongued revolutionary situation in Iran holds enormous potential for destabilising Western imperialism economically and politically. Carter and Owen, those sermonisers on 'human' rights and christian values, know that there are serious interests at stake in Iran. Serious enough for them to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Shah as he sheds rivers of blood to preserve the most savage tyranny on the planet. For this reason the Shah's 400 strong army has 1,200 military and 7,500 civilian American 'advisors'. The notorious Savak, set up in 1957 and reconstructed after the 1963 upheavals, has between thirty and sixty thousand men. It was 'advised' at all stages by the FBI and the CIA who have 50 top agents in Savak.

This enormous apparatus of repression was built up by the US and Britain to serve their economic and strategic interests. Iran yields massive super-profits. One British businessman is reported as saying that he 'makes 40% more profit here than in Britain'. At the heart of these interests is the oil industry. It supplies 13% of American and 17% of UK imports. Although formally nationalised, the consortium which controls it is 40% British and 40% UK in composition. These are the 'British and Western interests' that Dr David Owen talks about defending.

Even more important than the oil wealth and investments of Iran is its strategic position. Groomed by the United States and Britain to play the role of policeman of the Gulf area in the 'indirect' or 'neo-colonial' system which replaced the direct British military presence after 1968, the Shah's forces have seen service against the liberation forces in Oman.

The overthrow of this regime holds incalculable consequences for imperialism—hence the flood of telegrams of support for the Shah from the White House and Whitehall.

Much of the Iranian Left refer to the Shah's regime as 'fascist'. This is incorrect. The restoration of the Shah in 1953, by a military coup assisted by the CIA, initiated a *military bonapartist tyranny* of unusual severity. This regime represented the political expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the feudal landowning class in the interests of preserving capitalism in the interests of imperialism and against the working class. The Shah's regime rests upon imperialism externally, and internally upon an artificially induced impasse in the class struggle.

The Shah has given, in a deformed way, certain social concessions to the various classes—land reform to the peasants, industrial development to the bourgeoisie. Political rights and expressions were, however, totally forbidden. The massive apparatus of repression is a testimony to the lack of a solid social base for the Shah's regime. It is this social basis which real fascism possesses in the enraged reactionary petit-bourgeoisie and lumpen proletariat. Both these classes are, however, in the forefront of the opposition movement. They figure amongst those most bitterly opposed to the present regime.

Since the sixties there has been a considerable growth of industry, petrochemicals, steel, car, truck and bus production and assembly, electronics and machine tools. As a result the Iranian industrial proletariat has grown in size (2.5 million in 1977).

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Yet despite all this the Iranian economy found itself in deep crisis by 1977. Partly this was the effect of the world capitalist crisis, partly the accululation of contradictions engendered in Iran's mode of industrialisation.

Firstly the Agrarian Reform the Shah had imposed after 1962 was typical of a 'revolution from above'—of Bonapartist land reforms which whilst it weakens the old landowning class and opens agriculture to capitalism, in fact swindles the vast majority of the peasantry leaving them landless (50%) or with tiny plots (30%). The reform was designed to strengthen those peasants who already owned land and implements and draught animals.

The net result has been the creation of two 'new' classes in the countryside, capitalist landonwers and landless labourers. However the result has not been a rapid capitalisation and modernisation of agriculture. Land has been abandoned, villages deserted and the result has been rocketing imports of foodstuffs plus a flooding into the cities of the rural unemployed.

Secondly, there has been a tendency for the effects of the political regime to syphon off an increasing proportion of the oil revenue—arms and military spending and corruption. The failure to develop a skilled labour force also places severe limits on Iran's development.

The crisis of 1977-8 took the form of escalating inflation, food prices and rents in particular soaring. This affected the whole urban population.

The Bazaar

The bazaar was, until the 1950s and 60s, the centre of urban economic life. Dominated by very wealthy merchants but consisting of its overwhelming bulk of one and a half million shopkeepers, money lenders, traders, craftsmen and artisans, it had in the past funded trade and been the centre of much production and nearly all exchange.

The foreign banks, the industrial production of consumer goods, the large stores have all undermined and threatened the tradiational way of life and culture of the bazaar. This traditional culture is deeply Moslem. Its ideologists and leaders are the mullahs, its cultural and political centre the mosque. Shiia Islam represents a unifying ideology, one that in 1963 and 1978 has spearheaded mass resistance to the Shah's regime.

Shiia Islam has its origins in resistance to the constituted state authority, founded as it is on allegience to the deposed and martyred son-in-law of the Prophet, Ali. Its most sacred figure after the prophet is the Iman Hossein murdered by the tryannical Caliph Yazid—an event commorated by the 'days of mourning' of early December (Moharram). It also has a pronounced millenarian aspect. Believers expect the 'return' of the twelfth Imman who will institute a pure Islamic order. Shiia is much less attuned to the state than Sunni Islam—indeed it is headed by a powerful and independent caste of mullahs (180,000 of them) with a hierarchy of Ayatollahs the leader of whom Khomeini was elected in 1962.

The reality of the Religious Opposition leaders is at variance with the Carter/Owen picture of them as reactionary fanatics who want to take Iran back to the seventh century. Khomeini insists that "I have always called strongly for economic and social development in my country" and expouses what he calls 'the principles of democracy and freedom'. By this he appears to mean a republic based on universal suffrage and with freedom for political parties. ". . . the Marxist will be free to express themselves because we are convinced that Islam contains the answer to the peoples needs. Our faith is capable of standing up against their ideology." (*Le Monde*, Paris, May 6th 1978). Khomeini can sum up his aim thus "As soon as the Shah goes we want the creation of an Islamic republic based on the popular yote." (*Le Monde*, November 8th, 1978). It is precisely the 'Islamic' nature of this state that holds the greatest dangers.

Shi'ite veto

Whilst Khomeini has made it clear that he is not thinking of a regime like Saudi-Arabia or Pakistan he obviously intends to install in a future constitution provisions which give the Shiia heirarchy a veto on legislation similar to that embodied in the 1906 Constitution. The non-Persian nationalities, the non-Shiia religious minorities and women could expect little that is 'liberal' or 'democratic' in such a regime.

What Khomeini does loudly and vociferously attack is American Imperialism. He declares his support for the Palestinians. All these factors suggest that a Khomeini influenced regime would be of a populist Islamic nationalist type. To draw parallels with Pakistan or Indonesia is a mistake. Both these dictatorships were established in the *defeat* of a popular upsurge where the working class were unable to seize power.

Islamic ideology is Janus-Faced. It can justify anti-imperialism, resistance to the foreign powers seeking to exploit or dismember the states of the Middle East. It can also justify black reaction—the suppression of the working class and poor peasantry. The inner connection is that like all religions it defends private property. As long as the possessing classes of the imperialised nation feel the major threat to their property to lie with imperialism then they can play a vigorous role in the struggle against it. Islamic ideology will then have a 'progressive' populist colouration and orientation. When the working class or small peasants become a serious threat not only to imperialism but to the native larger property owners it can become a cloak for Bonapartist military dictatorship or even fascist reaction (as in Turkey).

Khomeini's movement can therefore not be defined by adding up progressive democratic points as against reactionary points. The USFI and the International Spartacist Tendency both use this method but get different answers to the sum. The USFI gets the answer that Khomeini is a 'progressive force', a democrat. The Sparticists find that he is a 'black reactionary'. One plays into the hands of the mullahs, the other into the hands of the Carter and Owen propaganda for the Shah. Neither is of use to Iranian revolutionary communists who have to win the masses now under religious leadership or influence, to the perspective of proletarian revolution.

For those who see all evil as lying in the *religious* ideology of the opposition the secular 'Union of National Front Forces' led by Karim Sanjabi might seem to be a 'democratic' force of the sort Marxists could fight alongside of. This party of the large bazaar merchants, some industrialists and the professional middle class cloak itself in the bourgeoisi-nationalist mantle of Mossadeq, the prime minister overthrown by the CIA in 1953. But it is the most compromised and half-hearted force in the opposition. It remains irresolute and torn between Khomeini and the Shah. Its leaders names figure largely on the 'list of 80 names' the Shah has been pondering over as candidates to a government of 'national reconciliation'. Sanjabi is one of the three politicians most frequently clossetted

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with the Shah. The religious oppositionists know their measure. The Ayatollal of Abadan commented "Sanjabi and Bazargan at heart want to negotiate with the Shah. These men are bourgeois. We only have confidence in Khomeini for only he really wants the Shah to go." (*Le Monde*, November 6th, 1978)

The aspirations and mentality of the Iranian bourgeoisie is well expressed in the statement of a business man to the *Le Monde* correspondent, "But where is the intransigence of the Ayotollah Khomeini going to lead? The Shah is on his knees. The Ayatollah should take advantage of it to impose on him respect for, and consolidation of, the constitution we obtained from Sharif Emani's government and which General Azhari's cabinet is in the process of taking back." It is obvious that the 'democratic rights' these businessmen gentlemen desperately want are the posts of imperial ministers for themselves.

However as with the religious leaders it is not merely their class or caste interest or personal inclination which has determined their actions. The mass mobilisations have kept Sanjabi out of office just as they have radicalised the mullahs.

If the first wave of the Iranian revolution was spearheaded by the intellectuals—writers and students and centred on the universities. If the second wave, starting with the demonstrations and massacre in Qom on January 9th 1978, marked the passage of the movement to the phase of 'religious leadership', then October and November of 1978 showed the emergence of the Iranian proletariat, as the key force capable of toppling the Shah.

The proletariat

The Iranian proletariat has a history of militant trade union and socialist organisation. The first unions in Iran were set up by workers returning from the Baku oilfields in Russia after the defeat of the 1905 revolution. The young labour movement participated in the 1907-1909 revolution in Iran. After the war a communist party was formed and some of the trade unions affiliated to the Red International of Labour Unions in 1921. The Pahlavi dictatorship crushed all independent workers organisations in 1928.

In 1944 an Iranian TUC was formed under communist influence. By 1946 it had a membership of 400,000; Fifty thousand workers celebrated May Day in Teheran in 1946. But the slavishly pro-Soviet politics of the Communist Party (Tudeh), which had 25,000 members, ruined this movement. They held back the strike wave while the Soviet Union was haggling with the British and Americans over the Kurdistan and Azerbaijan republics which had been set up in the North. Stalin traded these republics for oil and gas concessions in Iran.

The Tudeh was initially hostile to Mossadeq (from the *right*, because his policies threatened to upset the Soviet-Imperialist status quo), but it moved to a full popular frontist tailing of his bourgeois nationalism. It missed the crucial opportunity of mounting resistance to the coup of August 1953 and witnessed the immediate smashing of the trade unions and in 1955 the uncovering of its illegal and military organisations. The Tudeh was almost completely obliterated by Savak.

Only in September of 1978 did a section of the party decide to reconstitute a 'party of the interior'. According to *Le Monde* (December 6th 1978), "they admit that the reconstruction of the apparatus and the setting up of a serious organisation will take several years." Though this statement speaks volumes for Stalinist bureaucratism and inertia it also bears witness to the decay into which Tudeh has fallen. An added reason for such modest perspectives is that Moscow has by no means given the go-ahead for full-blooded participation in the overthrow of the Shah. Brezhnev's non-agression pact with the Shah and his imperialist backers cripples the Tudeh as a party of the insurgent proletariat.

Yet despite the bankruptcy and destruction of the historic leaders, the Iranian proletariat has started to play an ever more decisive role. The atrocity of the cinema fire in Abadan revealed the depths of savagery of the Shah's regime to the oil workers and started their self-organisation.

The strike movement in the oilfields bears all the marks of the spontaneous revolutionising of the workers. On October 23rd the 12,000 workers at the Oil Refinery in Abadan came out on strike for economic demands. These were conceded in 3 days. After the return to work mass meetings ensued, students being present at the discussion of political questions. On the 29th, mass meetings formulated political demands:

> "Abolition of Martial law, freeing of political prisoners, the disbandment of SAVAK, the departure of American advisors, a fight against corruption, the conviction of all those who have committed crimes against the people."

The strike has ebbed and flowed since then with thousands of troops driving workers at gun point into the refineries. Those inside have slowed production to a snail's pace. BBC correspondents in late December report the formation of factory or plant committees.

In Teheran the bank workers have not only struck but begun to exercise elements of inspection. They have revealed for example a list of 180 named persons prominent in the regime who had transferred 4.2 billion dollars out of Iran. The newspaper workers have fought bitter battles for the freedom to report the events of the Autumn.

Mutinies

The working class is participating wholeheartedly in the struggle to bring down the Shah. Indeed, it alone has the economic strength and social cohesion to do this. The mass strike wave has put the noose around the Shah's neck and is tightening it. Strike committees are springing up in the struggle. They must, at the earliest opportunity, be generalised into city-wide workers' councils. The morale of the army is already weakened. In Tabriz on 18th December, a unit downed arms and joined demonstrators with their armoured cars. The formation, and arming of workers' militia as army discipline breaks down is crucial, as is the creation of barrack committees and soldiers' councils.

Iranian revolutionary communists must develop the strategy and tactics which the working class must employ to overthrow the Shah and smash the monstrous machinery of repression. This means marching alongside the 'religious opposition'. Its central and most deeply felt immediate demands, the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty, the smashing of SAVAK, the release of all political prisoners, free elections and freedom of political parties, the nationalisation of British and American monopolies are national-revolutionary and bourgeois-democratic demands that the proletariat must support. To this extent an anti-imperialist united front is possible. However, the religious leaders are, and will prove themselves to be, uncertain and treacherous allies. Khomeini has declared himself against any co-operation with communists. *'even to bring down the Shah.'* His 'democratic' programme would enshrine a religious obscurantism in a new constitution. Should the working class appear to threaten Iranian, moslem, private property(including the massive riches of the mosques) but prove unable to

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draw the non-proletarian masses behind it and seize power, then Khomeini or another religious leader could use the petty-bourgeoisie and lumpenproletariat as fas ·t terror squads against the workers. Alternatively the *Ulema* could sanctify a new military dictatorship. At the moment, however, these masses, with all their religious prejudices, have democratic aspirations, that is they believe that democratic rights will alleviate their social needs. If Khomeini reconciled himself to an 'Islamic' military dictatorship immediately the Shah fell, he would undoubtedly lose his mass following rapidly.

It is illusions in the anti-imperialist and democratic credentials of Khomeini and the mullahs that revolutionaries must challenge. To do this means participation by Iranian Trotskyists in the struggles launched by those leaders, under clear, independent slogans with full warnings about the religious leaders. Democratic demands have enormous importance. Correctly and fully posed they can win first the proletariat and then other oppressed strata away from the religious and bourgeois leadership. The working class is, and can be, the only consistently democratic force. The demands that they fight for must include, freedom of speech, assembly and the press, legality for trade unions and political parties and the right to strike. The question of Iran's national minorities must not be forgotten, the Shah's empire is a, 'prison-house of nationalities'. Only 50% of Iran's population speak Farsi (Persian) though another two related languages make up another 11%. The rest belong to distinct national ethnic groups, Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Baluchis and Arabs. The right to self-determination, up to and including separation, must be defended by the Iranian proletariat. They must support any national uprising of these peoples.

Likewise Iranian revolutionaries must fight for the full democratic rights of women and their emancipation from the age-old restrictions imposed by religion as well as the State. The right to own and dispose of property, entry to all occupations, equal rights in the family, in sum full legal equality in all spheres. Women have been active participants in the move ment against the Shah. The religious leaders have tried to limit them to propagating the idea of a full return to the veil and the full rigours of Islamic law. Women must be won to the side of the only class capable of gaining not only their equal rights but, via the destruction of capitalism, achieving their full social emancipation.

A clear majority of Iran's poplation is rural, consisting of landless or small-land owning peasants. The proletariat must raise the slogan 'the land to those who till it'. Part of the reason for the stability of the Pahlavi dynasty and for the effectiveness of the army as an instrument of repression, is the quiescence of the peasantry. In early December, the Shah is reported to have anxiously asked a visitor, '*But are the peasants also against me ?' (Le Monde 6.12.78)* The workers must encourage peasant seizure of large estates belonging to the old aristocracy, the Imperial family, the court clique and the foreign foreign agricultural enterprises. Whether an individual or a collective form of land ownership prevails will depend on the time scale of the proletarian seizure of power.

There are numerous religious minorities in Iran, Sunni Moslems, Armenians, Jews, Bahais etc. A Shi'ite republic would be oppressive to them as well as to women and the working class. Therefore, the demand for complete secularisation, the separation of Mosque and State is vital. The proletariat does not seek to trample on the religious scruples of any grouping where these affect only believers and do not violate the democratic rights of others.

All these democratic demands culminate in the demand for a constituent assembly, elected by full suffrage and with full powers, that is with no committee of *ulemas* to vet its actions. These demands, consistently and vigourously fought for, would enable the vanguard of the proletariat to rally behind it the social forces to ensure that the revolutionary process which has opened up in Iran, is not aborted in the form of an Islamic military Bonapartism, or of an inherently unstable bourgeois democracy with enormous concessions to Shi'ite theocracy. The Iranian revolution, if it is to accomplish even its anti-imperialist and democratic tasks, must become proletarian. However, the 'revolution in permanence' of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky is not an unconscious or automatic process. It necessitates a bolshevik vanguard party which has won the leadership of an armed working class organised in Soviets. To this task Iranian revolutionaries must devote themselves. British communists must render them every possible assistance.

Rights and wrongs of the Spartacists

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The Spartacists central slogan "Down with the Shah, Down with the Mullahs" is in our view seriously mistaken. Firstly the Shah is at the moment the central agentof Anglo-American imperialism. The Mullahs on the other hand are leading mass opposition to the Shah and his foreign advisors. To equate them outrages the anti-imperialist feelings of the Iranian masses. The Spartacists throw together in a hopeless jumble every aspect of the mass movement and label it reactionary. For example they see attacks on the cultural gifts of Western civilisation, pornographic films, luxury hotels, coca-cola stores merely as signs of obscurantism and backwardness. They present the mass demonstrations as "suicidal advances on the Shah troops" and talk about the "chilling spectacle of protesters clad in ceremonial white robes" being mown down as "equally grotesque" as the Shah's claims that few have been killed.

They draw attention to 'ritual self-flagellation' on the demonstrations despite the fact that Khomeini has explicitly called for this practice to be abandoned. It is one thing to warn against the anti-working class nature of the Shi'ite leaders. It is quite another to fall into using the same phrases as the White House and Downing Street apostles of civilisation and present the religious leaders and their movement as reactionary bigots no better, or possible worse than, the Shah (after all the Shah does not want to return to the Sevent century, condemn women to the veil etc).

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This [illegible] would in practice rule out an anti-imperialist united front against the Shah in Iran. It would be a 's[illegible]dal' and sectarian position for an Iranian Trotskyist party. In the imperialist heartland it defocusses from the central tasks of exposing the alibis of the Carter's and Owens and mobilising the working class to block arms and supplies to their direct agents in Iran.

On three recent demonstrations in solidarity with the struggle in Iran the Spartacists have been excluded from the march by the organisers.

At the CARI demonstration of December 17th in London the Spartacist contingent was excluded by the CARI organisers with the full complicity of the IMG. Leading IMG members participated in a cordon to separate the Spartacists from the march. That cordon allowed the police to force their way into the demonstration and so harrass the Spartacists until they left the demonstration.

This action by the CARI organisers and the IMG must be condemned. We hold no brief for the principle slogans of the Spartacists. But the CARI/IMG action (supported by the SWP) establishes a precedent of allowing the police to intervene in labour movement and solidarity demonstrations and actions. It means the establishment of bans and proscriptions in the labour movement—a tactic most naturally the property of the Stalinists and labour bureaucrats.

Workers Power—along with the I-CL and the WSL—declared in advance our opposition to the ban on the Spartacists. We will continue to do so on all future demonstrations. In any united front slogans may be raised which other sections of the United Front find objectionable or even reactionary. Differences within the labour movement must be settled by argument, not by the use of goon squads or the capitalist police.

Key task to break the Army

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No 4 February 1979

The continued savage repression since the Shah's flight has written in the blood of hundreds of courageous Iranians the truth that the military bonapartist tyranny still exists, it merely has a new and pathetic 'bonaparte'. The Bakhtiar regime [illegible] precariously on the temporary impasse between the rabid reactionaries of the High Command and the mass movement on the streets, the bazaar merchants, the students and the striking workers, who have made Iran 'ungovernable'. Bakhtiar may well be, as the American Magazine Newsweek puts it 'philosophically—a Swedish style Social Democrat' but he is tied, not to a mass reformist workers organisation in a stable metropolitan capitalism, but to the Iranian High Command, in the middle of a revolution. The Paris daily 'Le Monde' is nearer the mark when it points out that Bakhtiar is a great admirer of General de Gaulle, and regards himself as à 'man of decision'. Clearly he would like to play the role of a 'democratic' bonaparte.

The slogans of the demonstrators however go to the heart of the matter 'Bakhtiar—lackay without power'. Bakhtiar is in the last instance a pawn of the generals. He issues orders for the soliders to guard Teheran airport and they close it. He issues orders for 'no shooting' and 30 are gunned down as the Imperial Guard runs amok. The Generals would like to smash the whole opposition, to slaughter all its leaders and [illegible]. They would, in such an event, no doubt happily add the Shah and his uneasy American masters urge caution. They fear that in any attempted solution the military machine might disintegrate. Nevertheless they will let them off the leash if Bakhtiar fails to blunt the masses' offensive. Bakhtiar's role is to pacify the generals on the one hand and come to an understanding with the religious leaders on the other—hence his attempted flight to Paris to talk to Khomeini.

Khomeini, as leader of the Opposition is subject to massive pressure from the varied forces making up the anti-Shah coalition. Over the past month his refuge in Paris has been the scene of many deputations urging compromise. The National Front sent Danus Farouhar to Paris in mid January. At the same time Khomeini received a five man delegation from the Teheran Chamber of Commerce and Industry which complained of the industrial and commercial ruin facing them if the strike continues. Khomeini never-the-less refused all compromise before his return to Teheran, though there was vacillation amongst his advisors over Bakhtiar's projected visit. Khomeini has throughout the struggle called on the army to desert the regime. Initially he appealed to the generals to 'rally to the cause of the nation' (Le Monde 31.10.76). In the few days since his return, Khomeini has made it clear that he is not committed to breaking up the army and the power of the Generals. In fact there are serious signs of an attempted

The mobilisation of all the oppressed classes and strata in Iran, though directed against the Shah and mystified in religious ideology presents an enormous threat to private property whether sacred or profane. For the masses most immediate vital needs will not be met by a regime however 'Islamic', which is based on its preservation. On the other hand it is in the direct interest of the masses that the discipline and cohesion of the army disintegrates completely from the ranks upwards. Not one stone of the fortress of repression must be left standing upon another. But why has this fortress remained fundamentally intact despite all the massacres?

The Iranian army is massive—between three and four hundred thousand men. The military command pursues the policy of keeping the army constantly on the move by means of massive helicopter fleets. Soldiers are thus protected from 'contamination' by being stationed for long among civilians. In addition Turkish-speaking soldiers from Azerbayan will be used for repression in Teharan—Shirazi soldiers in Mashad etc. In addition there are elite sections—highly privileged and indoctrinated like the 10,000 strong Imperial Guard whose Haridan Brigade was paraded for journalists at the Lairzan Barracks in late January. But even this hardened corps is not immune to the effects of what they are doing. In December three enlisted men burst into the

officers mess and sprayed them with machine gun fire.

The Iranian army remains the sole solid 'social base' of the imperialist Regime. Its strength —between three and four hundred thousand represents 3% of the employed population. The average soldier is paid considerably more than the masses of urban and rural poor, though less than a skilled worker. As far as possible they are isolated from society, serving hundreds of miles from their area of recruitment. They are themselves riddled with agents and informers of Military Intelligence. The disaffection of the troops used to slaughter demonstrators has reached fever pitch at various points. Units have joined demonstrators or refused to fire but the prevalence of incidents where soldiers have shot themselves or the events at the Lavizan Barracks outside Teheran in December where three enlisted men burst into the officers' mess and sprayed its inmates with machine gun fire, indicate the still isolated nature of these outbursts. Army morale is uncertain but not broken.

The Officer Corps is an elite even more divorced from society. Some military schools take pupils at 7 years of age. There has been little contact between the Officer Corps and the Opposition either civil or religious. The high command consists of ferocious loyalists to the bonapartist regime. Although two of the most blood-thirsty reactionaries General Gholam Ali Oveissi, ex-administrator of martial law in Teheran and General Khosrodad, chief of the 'air cavalry' have been removed or posted to distant garrisons, the outlook of the High Command is well summed up by a spokesman for the pro-Shah politicos, "At the moment the commanders don't know whether to chop (Khomeini) up for dog meat or to use him for target practice." (Guardian 22.1.1979).

Most of the Generals and the Officer Corps know that they have little to expect except popular vengeance once the weapons of repression slip from their grasp. They have no perspective expect to attempt to drown the movement in seas of blood. The masses of rank and file soldiers, on the other hand, can be won over; the isolated mutinies reveal this. But to produce a massive breakdown of morale such that the soldiers break ranks and join the masses, pass arms to the workers, peasants, students, arrest their officers etc requires decisive organised action on the part of the masses.

There can be no doubt of the heroism and willingness to sacrifice of the masses in the streets. The crucial question is leadership, strategic goals and specific tactics. The bourgeois oppositionists in the National Front fear the collapse of the Army more than they fear a military dictatorship. The highly socially conservative goals of the religious opposition offer little to the sons of peasants and workers in the army. Neither does Khomeini wish to launch an insurrection. He hopes that mass demonstrations plus the creation of a shadow provisional government will be enough to win over a key section of either the high command or the Islamic nationalist colonels. Nor is Maoist guerrillaism appropriate to these tasks. Strategically it rejects the goal of proletarian revolution and thus subjects the working class to an alliance with the 'national bourgeoisie' and the 'progressive alliance'. It elevates guerilla struggle itself to a strategy and thus has not built its base in the factories and workplaces and does not base itself on the self-organisation and self-activity of the working class. Workers' councils, a workers' militia the turning of the general strike into an insurrection, require a party with a completely different perspective.

Beware of the Religious leaders

No to an Islamic republic

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No. 4 February 1979

The Ayatollah Ruahollah Khomeini has said that he regards the mass demonstrations in December and January as a referendum in his favour and as a mandate to name the members of a provisional council made up of 'Moslem believers', a new premier and a provisional government. This government would prepare elections. Khomeini, in an interview with a Beirut newspaper, has indicated that he does not accept the idea of a one party system (Economist 13.1.1979). Further he proclaims that *"an Islamic government is not backward looking. We approve of civilisation but not that which goes against the interests and dignity of our people."* Does this make Khomeini a democrat? Far from it.

The Shia hierarchy, of whom he is the spokemsan, have as their ideal a Moslem theorcracy. Over the last fifty years the Mullahs have lost control over education and the law which have been secularised. They have lost the 'waqf' lands which financed the mosques, and they have lost all influence over government policy—most notably the power to enforce Islamic precepts with regard to women and family law. Empty of progressive content as most of the Shah's 'reforms' were, the restoration of the hierarchy's power in all these areas would clearly be a reactionary act. The complete separation of Mosque and State is a measure in the direct interest of workers, poor peasants, students and intellectuals, women and the national and religious minorities.

At the level of state power Khomeini wants to build in a veto, or the power to nominate candidates, for the Shia clergy at all levels. In an interview with Le Monde (10.1.1979) he makes this clear, *"We will charge a committee to proceed with consultations to form an Assembly. The people have already pronounced their will to have an Islamic government. But if a referendum is necessary on the legal basis for it, we will not refuse this. The Committee would consist of believers. It could include ulemas either with full or with observer status. We will propose a candidate for the presidency of the Republic. He would have to be elected by the people. Once elected we would support him. The laws of an Islamic government would be the*

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laws of Islam." Asked what the attitude of such a government would be to non-believers, Khomeini replied, *"We would try to show the way to salvation to these people. If they do not want this they will be free in their daily life providing they do not foment plots harmful to the people and the country."*

Khomeini's closest political ally in secular politics is the politician Mehdi Bazargan head of the Iran Liberation Movement which stands outside the National Front and is opposed to the inclusion of social-democrats in any future government. Bazargan's party is avowedly Islamic. Thus the goals and political allies of the religious opposition are far from consistent democracy. Indeed an Islamic Republic designed according to their wishes would be a plebiscite bonapartism, albeit with a populist and anti-imperialist colouration.

The structure of the Mullah-led opposition is powerful and dangerous. Its main social base, the bazaar merchants of Teheran, dispose of an efficient organisation headed by five leaders each of which has a network of sub-leaders. These can mobilise gangs of 'luti'—unemployed youth, bazaar porters and labourers. Each major leader is reported as being able to mobilize 5,000 'luti' within half an hour. This 'Militia' can be a serious threat to the working class.

The religious opposition itself is also increasingly well organised. Teheran is subdivied into nine districts each headed by a ulema, controlling the base organisations officered by Mullahs. The nine ulemas form a council in daily touch with Khomeini. According to the ulema Moussadeh, the Shi'ite hierarchy aims to form such councils in every town. Moreover, *"These will be permanent councils which will occup themselves as much with political life as with religious, since in Islam the two are tied up together."* (Nouvel-Observateur 15-21.1.1979).

Despite Khomeini's declared support for the oil strikers and despite the undoubted fact that most Iranian workers have massive illusions in the Ayataollah, the forces he heads—the Bazaar and the Shi'ite clergy are and can be only temporary—military allies of the Iranian working class in the fight against the Shah and the Generals. The hostility of the religious activists to the class interests of the workers is already manifest in the Mullah provoked attacks on demonstrators who carry red flags and in their strident anti-communism. Le Nouvel Observateur (No.740) reports the following, *"The left milieu is beginning to get alarmed. A few days ago, at the Behechestre Zahra cemetery near Teheran in the middle of a crowd listening attentively to the mullahs a worker stood up to speak on the problems facing the proletariat. He was shouted down with cries of 'Death to the Shah! Death to Communism!'."*

The task of revolutionaries, of Trotskyists, in Iran is to raise the alarm in the working class, difficult as this task will be. To warn worker-militants, to win them away from the Ayatollah and the Mullahs and to resolute opposition to an obscurantist Islamic 'Republic'. The masses, including the workers, follow the Mullahs because they have illusions in the democracy and national freedom that they believe this republic could bring and because Khomeini appears to want to smash the Shah's SAVAK tyranny. The religious leaders and their National Front hangers on must be exposed by mobilising workers around real democratic demands centring on the call for a constituent assembly unfettered by vetos and elected by universal suffrage. To fight for this, class organisations of the proletariat free from Mullah tutelage must be formed, factor committees, workers councils, trade unions and the militia necessary to protect these. Above all a revolutionary political party is the central need, one which can spearhead these organs of struggle and workers' democracy. A party pledged to fight for democratic rights: against an Islamic Republic and for a Workers and Peasant State in Iran.

Opportunists and sectarians on Iran

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No. 4 February 1979

THE INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USEC), and their record of opportunism with regard to the Iranian revolution, will prove a fatal guide to its followers in Iran.

The position they have argued is identical to that of the Menshveviks in pre-revolutionary Russia who argued, against Lenin and the Bolsheviks, that the workers movement should focus on the struggle for bourgeois democratic demands aiming later to utilise the freedoms afforded by bourgeois democracy to build a workers party in preparation for the next stage of the historical process—the struggle for socialism.

In September Tariq Ali outlined the 'key tasks' of the fight to overthrow the Shah as —*"the establishment of a republic, restoration of trade unions and political parties, free elections on the basis of universal adult franchise to elect a Constituent Assembly in order to draft a constitution, total nationalisation of all the oil and multinational companies."*

Ali calls for a bourgeois, not a workers republic. All the measures cited are bourgeois-democratic and the Constituent Assembly is to finalise the bourgeois revolution, to give it constitutional form.

The excuses advanced for the Muslim clergy by Socialist Challenge were introduced with an analogy from a bourgeois revolution—*"Charles the first too was overthrown by a movement which spoke with a religious voice."* The most Socialist Challenge can muster is a sly wink in the direction of *"something more"* than a bourgeois revolution taking

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place [illegible] which a dynamic will pave the way for more lasting & fundamental changes."

Is this just a quirk of the editorial offices of Socialist Challenge? Not at all. In an interview with Iranian Trotskyists on 12th October 1978 we find as the sole statement of aims. *"Iranian revolutionaries must call for the overthrow of the Pahlavi monarchy; its replacement by a republic, and the establishment of a constituent assembly freely elected through universal suffrage."* In an editorial statement on Iran' (Socialist Challenge 9.11.1978) which was made after the eruption of the massive anti-Shah strike wave the IMG dropped a few gentle hints that a bourgeois revolution was not all that was at stake *"Even the most far-reaching bourgeois democracy is unlikely to satisfy the needs of the masses. . . there is the possibility of the masses developing their own organizations of workers power—not simply to get rid of their present ruler, but to seize their own destiny once and for all."*.

But, these wiscacres continue *"The only thing we can predict with scientific accuracy is that 'everything is possible' "*. Such 'scientific accuracy' bears as much resemblance to "scientific socialism" as Old Moore's Almanac does to Trotsky's 'Permanent Revolution'.

The Iranian workers took our 'scientists' by such surprise as to force them in the direction of calling for soviets and workers power. But one week later Socialist Challenge was equivocating again. While soviets may be *"the most favourable development"* the *"vital part of our armoury"* for the IMG remained the *"overthrow of the monarchy, immediate elections, convocation of a Constituent Assembly, freedom to form political parties and trade unions."* (SC 16.11.'78)

Socialism, proletarian revolution soviets are for the IMG a possible 'favourable development'. Revolutionaries should no doubt produce propaganda about them. But the centre-piece of the IMG/USFI's agitation is *"a number of interrelated democratic slogans"* centering on the Constituent Assembly. (SC 14.12.1978)

What these 'Trotskyists' fail to understand is that soviets and the proletarian revolution are not gifts of the historical process in the absence of which revolutionaries make do with bourgeois democracy. They are the strategic goal to which revolutionaries gear all their tactics.

Nowhere in the IMG/USFI's material do we even find a clear statement that to be successful in its bourgeois-democratic and anti-imperialist tasks the Iranian Revolution *must* become a proletarian revolution. All the experience of the major revolutionary upheavals from the first world war underlines the fact that 'democracy' is not a consolation prize for a failed revolution. The outcome is almost certainly bloody repression and military dictatorship. A situation like Weimar Germany or Portugal at present is the most 'favourable' alternative to such repression and, without a renewed and successful proletarian struggle for power, it will prove but a preparation for it.

With a rosy assurance that 'at least' the Iranian revolution will guarantee democracy the IMG/USFI has started to count its electoral chickens before they have even hatched. They can ignore, or reduce to asides, the tasks of centralising the workers strike committees into soviets, of calling for an armed workers militia, for the preparation of an insurrection to smash the Generals control of the army, for *absolute* working class independence from the Mullahs and opposition to their plans for an Islamic Republic. Trusting to the Constituent Assembly to institutionalise democratic rights they see the key task as *"to take full advantage of them in terms of developing a socialist press, trade unions and preparing a powerful electoral intervention"* in the manner of FOCEP in Peru: (Socialist Challenge 18.11979).

As the Mensheviks before them the Socialist Challenge editors have their eyes fixed on an electoral intervention after the successful bourgeois revolution not on a programme for the struggle for workers power.

THE INTERNATIONAL SPARTACIST TENDENCY

The International Spartacist Tendency's position on Iran is living proof that a sectarian response to opportunism leads to errors as bad if not worse than those of the USFI. Starting from a need to contradict the SWP(US) and the Iranian Student milieu the Spartacists raised the slogans "Down with the Shah! Down with the Mullahs!" Positively delighted by the outrage of Iranians—moslem and 'socialist' a fact witnessed by their insulting epithet 'Mullah lovers', and the chortles of delight about Iranians 'driven to absolute frenzy by our slogans' the Spartacists started on the slippery slope to complete abstention from the struggle against the Shah, worse to an endorsement of their own ruling class's propaganda.

The Spartacists make a series of charges against the Mullah led opposition as a result of which they characterise the movement as one of 'clerical reaction'. A number of these charges amount to uncritical retalling of the chauvinist rubbish which filled the American press throughout the Autumn. The Mullahs they claim wish to restore Iran to the 7th century AD, to the period of "the expansion of Islam by fire and the sword." They wish to introduce savage Islamic law punishments; stoning, public hanging and whipping etc. They wish to enforce the wearing of the veil and the removal of the rights given to women by the Shah. To this list they add Khomeini's appetite to slaughter the working class militants on the pattern of the Indonesian mullahs in 1965. they cite his 'hatred of western civilization' quoting as a fact that the 'Islamic Republic' will be simply a brutal military dictatorship.

The Spartacists do not restrict their venom to the mullahs. They see the masses participating in this movement as total dupes, with an appetite for genocide *"But you have to look at the slogans of the movement, restore the clerical lands, restore the veil, ban everything that sort of represents Western Progress, expel the foreign workers. In terms of the indigenous national minorities it could only be intensely genocidal in appetite."* (Workers Vanguard 5.1.'79). Khomeini may well harbour some or all of these desires. Certainly some mullahs undoubtedly do. Reservations do have to be made however even here. Shi'ia Islam explicitly allows re-interpretation by the ulemas of the canonical teachings of Islam. Khomeini—although he opposed the Shah's reforms on muslim divorce in 1967 has recently told a visiting delegation of women that he would not bring back polygamy; "One wife is enough" he remarked. (Time 5.2.79). Also among his disciples in Paris were a number of unveiled women, and despite the recrudescence of veil-wearing

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[illegible] an act of defiance against [illegible] Shah's regulation outlawing it) it is plainly untrue that the movement is explicitly for the return of women to the seclusion of the home and their submission to barbaric punishments. Such a movement could hardly draw into street protests and confrontation with the troops vast numbers of women veiled and unveiled.

As for the national and religious minorities as we have warned an Islamic Republic is likely to prove a severe threat to their rights and liberties but it is wrong to say the movement at present is consciously aimed at them. Large contingents of jews and Azerbayanis took part in the demonstrations in January and were loudly cheered by the crowd. Afghan workers homes have been guarded against pogromists whipped up by Bakhtiar's campaign against 'communist immigrants' and the call for foreign workers to get out was raised by **Arab** speaking workers in the oil fields against the highly paid English and American overseers and 'experts'. Other charges are similarly gross distortions worthy of the capitalist yellow press. Khomeini the Spartacists tell us *"wishes to restore feudal privileges, to restore the church lands to this parasitical caste."* (WV 5.1.'79). Khomeini has uttered no statement about undoing the land reform and his peasant supporters would be more than surprised to hear it.

Why do the Spartacists have to retail this collection of half-truths and unsubstantiated claims? The answer is simple, they wish to abstain from support from the mass struggle against the Shah. When they say 'Down with the Shah!' they in fact include a proviso—only if it is the workers led by communists who do it. They oppose absolutely any military co-operation with the non-proletarian oppositionists. This position would mean abstention from the demonstrations, from the confrontations with the troops (called 'suicidal' in WV 15.12.'78). In the event of an uprising and barricade fighting between the army and the people it would again mean abstention. To justify this absurd and reactionary position the Spartacists have gone all the way to whitewashing the Shah himself.

"What we need is a party that can transcend this kind of national chauvinism and counterpose a proletarian class axis to the current instability. In the absence of that one could more easily justify giving support to the Shah, as the Soviet Union clearly is doing, than to these Mulim clerical reactionaries, because if they are able to consolidate power all the evidence is it could only be worse than Indonesia for the working class, for the peasants for the national minorities and the women."
(Workers Vanguard 5.1.'79) (our emphasis WP).

Let us assume that the Spartacists do not wish to become 'State Department Socialists', Then how do they end up with these absurd and shameful positions? Bascially they leave Imperialism out of account. For them a direct military intervention is the sole condition under which the opposition could be given military support. The Shah, installed by a CIA engineered coup and supported by thousands of CIA, and military advisors is an agent of American and British Imperialism. The American 'advisors' enjoy extra-territorial status in Iran. American capital exploits Iran drawing super profits from its oil, from its industry and from agriculture. Iran is in Lenin's terms a **semi-colony**. The masses, despite all their illusions, are struggling against this Imperialism. If the USFI draw from this the conclusion that working class can simply tail the mullahs. If they refuse to pose the central need for working class independence and **leadership** then the Spartacists turn this on its head. The mullahs are simply reactionary—identical to reactionary petit bourgeois movements in Imperialist countries like the Poijjadists in France.

Whilst we in no way hide that the positive goals of the mullahs are not and cannot be those of the working class we do argue that Trotskyists must participate in the actions against the Shah and the Generals. Whilst arguing for proletarian independence in strategic goals (workers and peasants republic) for consistent democratic demands (including secularisation), for proletarian tactics (mass strike, workers militia, winning over the rank and file of the army, for the armed insurrection, the workers must be willing to 'strike together' with the mullahs, bazaaris, students, peasants etc, ie to form a de facto anti-imperialist military united front. In Trotsky's words

"We do not solidarize ourselves for a moment with the illusions of the masses; but we must utilise whatever is progressive about these illusions to the utmost, otherwise we are not revolutionists but contemptible pedants."
(Trotsky on Spain)

Khomeini prepares attack on Left

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No. 5 March 1979

The insurrection in Teheran was not a blow to the Shah's generals, alone eight of whom have now paid for their crimes before firing squads. It was also a serious blow to the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, to the mullahs and to their bourgeois allies. Khomeini and Bazargan had been involved in intensive negotiations with the generals for a peaceful transfer of power to themselves. Whilst the assault on Doshan Tappeh was going on, mullahs in loudspeaker vans touring the area pleaded with the attackers to go home on the orders of the Shi'ite leader. They were ignored. The worst fears of both the Ayatollah and his allies have materialised. The army has disintegrated and the masses are armed.

The calls of the Ayatollah for guns to be handed in to the mosques mosques have been largely ignored. Workers on strike have only returned to work slowly and grudgingly and there have been protests from workers' representatives about the high handed and undemocratic hijacking of the revolution by the mullah-dominated revolutionary committees. Yet, despite the crucial role played by the workers and the armed masses in the overthrow of the Shah, State power has not passed into their

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hands but into those of the shadowy 'Islamic Revolutionary Committee' of the Khomeini entourage. Bazargan's cabinet is a poor second, existing mainly to provide international respectability. This governmental apparatus is in no sense a gain for the Iranian masses. Indeed, it is seeking to cheat them of the fruits of their suffering and sacrifice during the last fifteen months.

Stampede

Khomeini, faced with this situation, has a three-pronged strategy. Firstly, to reconstitute the professional army as quickly as possible and to disarm the guerillas. Secondly, to stampede the masses into endorsing the 'Islamic Republic' through a 'referendum' and to establish a conservative bourgeois regime in office. Thirdly, to isolate, disarm, and then crush the Left forces – the Fedayeen, the Tudeh and the factory and strike committes and to force the workers back under the old conditions.

With his first objective, re-establishing the army, he has real problems. Rank and file soldiers and airmen have vetoed the choice of Bazargan and the Revolutionary Council for top command positions. Bazargan was forced to withdraw his nominee for Air Force chief. The soldiers of the 16th Armoured Division arrested the Brigadier-General appointed by Khomeini's Council – he has subsequently been executed. In most barracks continuous soldiers' meetings are taking place and demands for the removal of *all* the generals, and for the soldiers' right to veto all appointments, have been raised. Bazargan knows that he cannot *yet* order the troops to disarm, or use them against the left wing guerillas. He is using a time-worn scheme, a 'National Guard'. Constituted from soldiers, mullah-dominated militia-men and guerillas such a force, Bazargan hopes, can perform a holding operation until the army is rebuilt. It could play the same counter-revolutionary role as the French 'National Guard' did in June 1848 when it smashed the Parisian workers, similarly, the Freikorps were used in Germany in 1919. Revolutionaries must counterpose to a Bazargan - Khomeini national guard the call for the universal arming of the workers and peasants, the creation of soldiers' committees and the election of all officers. Only a well-armed and disciplined workers' militia can protect the working class, the national and religious minorities and extend the revolutionary demands of the masses.

With Khomeini's second task, establishing his conservative clerical-bourgeois republic, time is of the essence. The longer it is delayed the more will his reactionary bourgeois politics be exposed To reach this 'stability' a referendum is to take place as soon as possible – in a matter of weeks according to the Revolutionary Committee, two months according to Bazargan. The masses would be stampeded into declaring for an Islamic Republic and then a rubber-stamp 'Constituent Assembly' would approve an already drafted constitution.

Revolutionaries have the task of winning the working class to block this reactionary design. Such a referendum would be aimed at obstructing any advances that the working class could make in the present situation. To participate in it,would, therefore, be to accept the validity of this obstruction.

Already the Tehran press is being subjected to a heavy, 'Islamic censorship'. 'Worse than Bakhtiar's' according to journalists. Bazargan has announced that he will vigorously enforce the 'illegality' of the Tudeh Party.

Revolutionaries must argue for immediate strike action to win an end to all censorship and the legalisation of all workers' parties and their press. They must argue against a referendum on the Islamic Republic and organise the working class to boycott it. Instead they must call for the convocation of a Constituent Assembly elected by universal suffrage and with no restrictions on its powers either from the Provisional Government, the mullahs or the army.

Khomeini' third task is to crush those organisations based on and voicing the demands of the working class. He denounces Marxists as traitors to the Islamic revolution and threatens to 'crush' them. All that stops him is that the workers and the armed guerrillas are too strong and his own muslim forces not yet prepared to turn against the workers.
Khomeini has persuaded the workers to return to the factories, to the the offices, the oil refineries. But what is taking place there is a ceaseless round of mass meetings. At them workers are engaged in the formulation of demands; for nationalization, for the ousting of pro-Shah managements, for improved work conditions, hours of work and pay, for the presentation and extension of all the elements of supervision and control won in the mass strikes.

It is this economic and political awakening of the working class that Khomeini wishes to smother in Islamic obscurantism. To do this he must root out the workers leaders the activists, the strike organisers. Many of these are Fedayeen or Tudeh sympathisers or are gravitating towards these parties.

Defeat

First he must disarm and defeat them on the streets. Unfortunately despite the heroism of these militants , the qrotesquely istorted 'Marxism ' they have imbibed from Stalin's Russia and Mao's China will make it much easier for the Ayatollah to do this.

This 'Marxism' leads to a view of the revolution as involving rigidly separated stages. The goal at the moment is the completion of of a national democratic or peoples revolution. To this the working class must restrict itself. Its socialist goals – nationalisation of all industry and banking, a planned economy etc must be postponed indefinitely, subordinated to an alliance with the 'national bourgeoisie' or the anti-imperialist mullahs.

This strategic alliance with the proletariats class enemies reduces the workers to a critical pressure group. To call this dangerous and self defeating role the leadership of the working class in the peoples democratic revolution does not alter the reality of the situation one iota. In practice it is seizing a tiger by the tail, twisting it occasionally and defending youself against the incensed beast with appeals for it to recognise your leading role.

Stalinist–Maoist dialectics justify this suicidal course by asserting that the principle contradiction (Imperialism versus the People) is dominant over the fundamental contradiction (proletariat versus bourgeoisie) at this stage.

This algebra of opportunism has caused disaster after disaster in the past two decades alone as 'progressive generals' and 'national bourgeois' suddenly ignored the 'principle contradiction' and launched bloody offensives on the workers. If Iran is not to be added to Indonesia and Chile, the Tudeh and Fedayeen militants must be broken from these politics of destruction. The Tudeh carry out these policies in the most servile and grovellingmanner. A spokesman quoted in the Morning Star (Feb 24th) "We have shown our good will to Ayatollah Khomeini by instructing all our members in the factories and the oil industry to return to work"

Their goal for the workers struggle is a government of 'national independence' made up of the

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National Front bourgeois parties, religious leaders and themselves. They offer to hold back the workers to placate these allies. Allies who moreover up hold the law banning the Tudeh.

The Fedayeen are much more abrasive, calling a large demonstration (150000) in Teheran University on February 22ndin partial defiance of Khomeini's warnings. Their demands include the call to dissolve the army, forming a real 'peoples army'. They call for 'peoples councils' to run factories, businesses and local affairs. They call for land to the poor peasants and full rights for women and the opressed nationalities.

But in the last analysis they too call for a 'share' in the power at the moment exercised by the mullahssand the bazzar bourgeois. The Fedayeen's 'militancy' amounts to a more radical list of bourgeois democratic demands plus the hybrid 'peoples councils'. They add to this a committment to guerilla struggle "as a strategy as well as a tactic". This approach is likely to prove an obstacle to the formation of democratically controlled mass workers militias.

Groups founded on this basis – whether in Portugal (PRP) or in Latin America show an tendency to desert the working class at key moment. Either by putchist adventurec or by volutary dissappearance into the underground when ruling class repression looms.

To stand any chance of influencing militants or sympathisers of the Stalinist organisations Iranian Trotskyists will have to stress a number of key positions. In the face of Khomeini's offensive these should be

AN appeal for united front of workers parties centred on

Legality for all workers parties, trade unions etc.

An armed workers defence militia.

For a sovreign Constituent Assembly. Boycott the Islamic Republic Refer endum

The centralisation of factory and strike committees into city wide workers councils.

These limited demands should be accompanied by calls on the Tudeh and Fedayeen to break with the bourgeoisie and the mullahs and join the struggle for a Workers and Peasants Government. In no case should Trotskyists obscure their strategic goal of working class power based on soviets or their total opposition to the Khomeini - Bazargan government. It is to the task of overthrowing this Government that Trotskyists must win the organised workers, peasants, soldiers and opressed nationalities.

Break with the Mullahs!
Break with the bourgeoisie!

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No. 6 May 1979

The alliance of forces that overthrew the Shah in Iran is in disarray. Khomeini and the Mullahs are set on firmly establishing a repressive and reactionary rule from the mosques. The Mullah supervised referendum - where the names of those who voted against an Islamic republic were noted down by the scrutineers - has strengthened his hand.

The bourgeoisie are anxious to save and consolidate their property and wealth. Their most able representatives are to be found in the forces of the National Front, in the feeble Premiership of Bazargan.

Arraigned against the Mullahs and the bourgeoisie are those forces who took the overthrow of the Shah as a signal to extend and develop their democratic rights, to organise to improve their living conditions.

The polarisation in Iran's society grows more acute daily. Ahmad Ali Izadi, Minister of agriculture, has committed his government to taking back land seized by the peasants from the old regime. There are already reports of armed peasants organising to defend their hard fought gains.

The minority nationalities of Iran have organised to extend their democratic rights. After prolonged fighting with the regime's troops the Kurds have secured limited promises of provision for self rule. The Turkoman minority have waged a 2 day armed battle with Khomeini's militiamen in Gonbad-e-Kavus.

Despite armed intimidation and harrassment women in Tehran have foiled plans by Khomeini to immediatedly enforce the wearing of the chador in public offices.

Most vitally however the past weeks have seen increased evidence of working class organisation in conflict with the regime. 3.5 millions Iranians are jobless at present. Factories deserted by their pro-Shah owners now lie idle. Serious shortages are reported and inflation is running at between 40 and 60%. In the factories workers are establishing new trade union organisations. There have been major demonstrations of the unemployed - the Bekaran - in Iran's cities. The unemployed have occupied the Ministry of Justice vestibule in Tehran. Construction workers have demonstrated throughout Iran.

The organisation of the unemployed has met with repression by the regime. In Isfahan at least one person was killed when Khomeini's 'revolutionary guards' fired on a demonstration of the Bakaran. But the demonstrations have also forced certain concessions out of a reluctant regime. Bazargan's government is now giving £60 a month loans to those unemployed that are over 21 - insisting that repayments commence 3 months after employment is resumed. The new Minister of Labour - Darioush Farouhar - has already made it clear that he fears a wave of migration into the towns to receive the loans.

With no prospect of solving the mounting problem of the jobless the Iranian bourgeoisie is not prepared to dole out loans indefinitely with no prospect of repayment. Like the French bourgeoisie in 1848, who abolished the National Workshops forced out of them by the French workers, so the Iranian bourgeoisie are looking for the chance to renege on this inadequate provision.

In the face of this new resistance - expressed well by a worker representative who walked out of negotiations in the Tehran Ministry of Labour saying, "Only the pictures on the walls have changed." Khomeini is moving to strengthen his hand. The 'Leftist' Fedayeen have been denounced

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as, "traitors to Islam and the Revolution." The radicalised Muslim guerillas. the Mojahaddin-e-Khalq, have been replaced by the Mojahaddin-Englabi-Islami. These new armed squads, pioneered by Khomeini's economic adviser Banisadr, and more directly controlled by the Mosque, are now firmly established. They will be used against the workers and against those struggling to defend and extend democratic rights.

The divisions opening up are visible to all. Even the Iranian Communist Party (Tudeh) - previously infatuated with Khomeini - realises it. But the solution they put forward is a dangerous snare for the Iranian working class. Speaking in the French CP paper 'L'Humanite' The general secretary of Tudeh - Kianouri - has called for a popular front of all those forces to the left of Khomeini,

"....now it's a question of choosing a new direction, rifts are emerging."

That call, albeit in a different form will be taken up by the Maoist Fedayeen with their programme of an alliance of progressive forces against Imperialism and and reaction.

The bourgeois of Iran do have their own fears of a strengehening of the grip of Khomeini and the Mullahs. There is a very real danger that the workers' organisations under the leadership of the Fedayeen and Tudeh will be incorporated by the bourgeoisie into their struggle to strengthen the hand of the Bazargan government against Khomeini

In the battles ahead Iranian Trotskyists will have to press a number of key positions. In the face of Khomeini's offensive and inevitable attacks on workers' living standards and organisations by the Iranian bourgeoisie these should be :

*for the complete independence of the organisations of the working class - BREAK WITH THE BOURGEOISIE, BREAK WITH THE MULLAHS.

*for a UNITED FRONT OF WORKERS' PARTIES centred on : legality for all workers' parties, trade unions etc.

An armed workers defence militia.

*For a sovereign Constituent assembly.

Defend the democratic right of women and the national and religious minorities.

The centralisation of factory and strike committees, the organisations of the unemployed into city-wide workers' councils.

These limited demands should be accompanied by calls on the Tudeh and Fedayeen to break with the bourgeoisie and the Mullahs and join the struggle for a Workers and Peasants Government. In no case should Trotskyists obscure their strategic goal of working class power based on soviets or their total oposition to the Khomeini-Bazargan government. It is to the task of overthrowing this Government that Trotskyists must win the organised workers, peasants, soldiers and oppressed nationalities.

Executions protect Khomeini's allies

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No. 7 June 1979

The Iranian bourgeoisie and the Khomeini led Islamic establishment are continuing their offensive against the independent organisations of the working class in Iran. They are intensifying their attacks on the Left and the movements for democratic rights that gathered considerable strength in the struggle to bring down the Shah.

Prime-Minister Bazargan, spokesman for Iran's bourgeois has openly blamed Iran's economic chaos and crisis on "excessive" pay rises won by workers in the last months of the Shah. He has attacked strikes and called for vigilance against the left declaring Ayatollah Motahari—the assassinated head of Iran's Secret Council—as a fallen victim of the struggle against Marxism.

Khomeini and the Islamic leaders also recognise the threat that the Iranian working class poses to the creation of an Islamic Republic in the hands of the bourgeoisie and the mosque hierarchy. This was shown clearly by the actions taken by the mosque dominated Komitehs to prevent the independent mobilisations of workers to celebrate May Day.

In Tehran Khomeini's supporters organised their own demonstration in opposition to that called by organisations of the left. In Isfahan, where a student was shot on a demonstration of the unemployed in April, the local Komiteh surrounded the Workers House before the May Day demonstration was due to leave. The Isfahan Komiteh challenged employed workers with instant dismissal if they were to join the planned demonstration.

The mosque hierarchy has moved decisively against the critics of the growing authority of the Islam Komitehs. Khomeini has called on Moslems to fight more fiercely against secular opponents of the new regime than they did against the Shah.

In May Islamic workers on the paper Kayhan locked out journalists midly critical of the regime. Khomeini backed the sacking of these journalists, **"the press writes in support of traitors and criminals, it is not our press."** The Islamic authorities have closed down the paper Ayandegan and the Islamic militia have seized anti-clerical works from Tehran's bookstores. In the western city of Khorramabad bookshops have been ransacked for left-wing books which were publicly burnt to cries of **"Islam is victorious, Communism is destroyed."**

The new regime continues to face mounting demands for autonomy from the national minorities of Iran. Kurdish leader Sheikh Ezzredin Hosseini has called for the solidarity of the Arabs, Baluchis and Turks in the battle for automony. An unofficial militia in the Khuzestan Arab region has attacked, and briefly held, the town of Masjedzez Soleiman.

While moving to destroy the independent organisations of the workers, and democratic rights for journalists and nationalities, the Islamic council has still had to claim to be waging a struggle to destroy the forces of the hated old regime and to commit the regime to the struggle against Imperialism.

The much publicised secret trials and executions, the death penalty pronounced on the Shah and the planned show trial of 13 ex-deputies, two senators and the head of the Shah's National Resurgence Party (Rastakhiz) are a vital part of the tactics of the Khomeini-led Islamic Council.

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They serve to satisfy the masses demands for retribution and the dismantling of the old apparatus of repression. At the same time their secrecy prevents the masses from openly witnessing the true extent of corruption and torture and the real record of many of their new masters now parading their credentials as fighters against the Shah.

With many of the local Komitehs openly using ex-Savak forces for their work, the role of the show trials in deceiving the masses is doubly important.

The Iranian bourgeoisie are clearly unhappy about the possible dynamic of the trials and purges. They know too well what would be revealed if the masses were free to unlock the secrets of the Shah's state apparatus. That is why Bazargan, in their name, has already raised the call for an amnesty. That is why he is clearly intent on limiting the authority of the local Komitehs.

Similarily Khomeini and his henchmen have found it necessary to put themselves to the fore in organising multi-millioned demonstrations against the US. The indignation of the Iranian masses at US Senatorial denunciations of the trials and executions enabled the 'leftist' Fedayeen and the radicalised Moslem Mujaheddin, to organise a 200 000-strong demonstration against US Imperialism. Khomeini supporters were able to organise a larger demonstration and send crowds against the Fedayeen chanting "These are the enemies of Islam" . . . . . "The People's Fedayeen must be hanged".

It is vital to understand that a stable alliance of the bourgeoisie and the Mosque has yet to prevent the mobilisations of the Iranian masses for the final destruction of the old regime, for democratic rights, against unemployment and for a decisive break with Imperial Imperialism.

Only the independent organisation of the working class, prepared to finally break with the bourgeoisie and the Mullahs can prevent the destruction of the workers' organisations, of the democratic struggles and of the leaders of the workers and peasants who have taken up those struggles.

Counter Khomeini's coup

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No. 8 September 1979

KHOMEINI has delivered his long threatened blow against the Left and democratic forces in an attempt to decisively halt the radical element of the Iranian revolution. The yearning for democratic rights, for national freedom and the desire of workers and peasants to enjoy the fruits of their labour and their country's natural wealth was the mainspring of the struggle to overthrow the Shah.

It now threatens Khomeini's reactionary utopia of an Islamic Republic based on the mullah hierarchy

The nationalities had to be terrorised into submission and the independant organisations of the working class had to be crushed. Firstly, the press had to be completely muzzled. Thus Ayandegan, the leading liberal democratic paper on opposition to the mullahs was closed down on August 7th.

The massive demonstration of 60 000, called in protest against this, was set upon by organised gangs well supplied with stones and staves and bicycle chains. The same bands of blackhundreds ransacked the Fedayeen HQ in Tehran and other cities.

Khomeini used the pretext of disorder to declare illegal, suppress the newspapers, and order the arrest of the leaders of the radical liberals of the National Democratic Party, the Fedayeen, the Tudeh and force the disbandment/disarming of the radical Islamic Mujahaddeen.

This coup d'etat was the prelude to a fanatical all-out assault on the Kurds. Though they are demanding only regional autonomy, their armed militias and organisations are not subject to the central mullah theocracy of Quom or Bazargan's feeble 'Government in Tehran.

Khomeini's assumption of Supreme Command of the Army symbolises his coup which marks the end of the political 'dual power' with the liberal and democratic forces which the Bazargan Government straddled uneasily.

Executive power now resides firmly with the 20 man revolutionary council, consisting of Khomeini and other leading figures of the Shia Hierarchy and lay strongmen of the theocratic project, most notably Ibrahim Yazdi (Foreign Minister) and Sadegh Ghotbzadeh (Head of the media). Ayatollah Sadegh Khalkhali, the bloody Inquisitor Gereral of the (counter) revolutionary tribunals' black terror sums up this leaderships' project: "The mullahs staged the revolution and have come to power, and they will stay in power whether the United States or the Soviet Union likes it or not".

The network of Komitehs plus the heavily armed gangs of ill-disciplined by fanatical pasderan — recuited from the massive, illiterate lumpen proletariat of the cities and officered by Moslem students and sons of the clergy — are Khomeini's chosen instrument for crushing the Left.

His by now famous statement that the mullahs 'made a mistake' and should have " set up gallows in the main squares, cut down all these corrupt people and plotters, declared only one party, that of Allah" is an anachronism with red gard to the period February to July. He could not have done this given the still fresh democratic aspiration of the masses, the dissolution of the army, the dissarray of the mullahs' own followers.

But Khomeini's statement is the programme for the counter-revolutionary coup d'etat. The profound economic crisis, the mounting discontent provoked among the masses must be turned against the left, against the minority nationalities, against unveiled ('westernised') women and against the liberals.

Hence the Komitehs demogogically claim to speak for the have-nots, the barefoot people — the moustazefin. Their aim is to mobilise mobs of these largely illiterate masses against the privileged, 'westernised' intellectuals, journalists, writers and use them to grind the Left to atoms.

They aim to install a powerful bonapartist regime before the rage of the masses turns on them. Having installed their dictatorial machinery amoungst the Turko-

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mans in the North and the Arabs in the southern oilfields, Khomeini has declared a holy war against the Kurds. None of these peoples is fighting for separation. All claim merely autonomy ie democratic rights within the Iranian state. But for the mullahs, balancing uneasily atop the masses and unable for much longer to satify their most elementary needs, all democratic rights must be crushed.

The Kurds are the best-armed and homogeneous of the Iranian oppressed peoples. It will take more than armed gangs of the enraged lumpen-proletariat of Tehran and Qom to suppress them. For this task the full apparatus of the Shah's army is necessary. To use this effectively discipline must be restored.

The councils that have sprung up up in the barracks must be crushed. An operative officer corps and high command is vital to the Iranian ruling class. There has been considerable resistance by troops to being used 'against the people' and refusals to go to Kurdistan. US imperialism must be placated and induced to resume full military and technical co-operation.

The latter is moredthan willing to do this providing the stability of the regime is assured. State Department spokesman, Thomas Reston stressed the need for the "authority and effectiveness" of the central government and though they would obviously prefer to deal with Bazargan, Carter is reported to be persuing a cautious policy of "stronger support for the theologically driven Khomeini regime" (Newsweek)

Khomeini's Black Hundred rule can obviously be only a transitional one. But its nestimable use is to behead the popular, democratic and anti-imperialist content of the Iranian mass movement against the Shah. When this process is completed a military dictatorship — undoubtedly with an Islamic colouring will be installed. The only force capable of reversing this bloody process is the Iranian proletariat.

Khomeini has not yet dared to openly confront it. The mounting unemployment (some 35% of the active population according to the US Department of Commerce) and economic chaos has seriously weakened its politicisation. Workers Committees still exist in many of the larger factories but they have been penetrated by Islamic agents and threatened by Khomeini with mass sackings if strikes and distrubances go on.

The Iranian Left's position is weakened by its previous compromise with Khomeini. The Tudeh — the Iranian CP — backed the Ayatollah uncritically right up to the closure of their newspaper and offices.

The Fedayeen's critical support of Khomeini's anti-imperialist rhetoric despite their courgageous support of democratic struggles, also leaves the working masses politically disarmed..

Driven underground, deprived of their press, hunted down by the 'revolutionaby guards', the cadres of the Iranian Left must re-assess their parties and groupings crippling political weaknesses if they are to survive to take advantage of the inevitable crisis of the theocracy.

Firstly they must strike deep roots in the proletariat, the factories and oil fields. They must fight for mass action of the workers including the general strike and for a workers militia to defend the organisations of the working class against the attacks of the Komitehs.

Secondly they must break the political umbillical cord with Khomeini. Their strategic goal must be the armed overthrow of the mullah dictatorship and the installation of a workers government based on workers councils and a workers militia. They must defend the Kurds and pledge to convene a revolutionary constituent assembly which would, onee elected by universal suffrage and the the secret ballot, meet the democratic demands of the nationalities, the peasantry, women, etc.

Difficult and dangerous as this task is, it will be aided by the economic impasse of the Qom Theocracy, the rebellious state of the army, the nationalities resistance and the restiveness of the Bazzaar big bourgeoisie lined up behind Ayatollah Taleghani.

If Khomeini is to placate his bourgeois backers, effect a limited deal with the White House/Pentagon and the deeply resentful Iranian officer caste, he will be increasingly forced to drop his mask of father to the moustazefin (the disinherited).

When the 'loans' to the unemployed have to stop, when the workers committees come under attack, a mighty wave of disillusionment will sweep Iran. For this to find effective leadership an organisation of Iranian revolutionaries will have had to be built even under the terror of the coming months. If it is the "isolated cries" of "Down with Khomeini" reported by Le Monde in the demonstrations of early August, can become a mighty roar — one that can sweep away the Imam and his committees as it swept away the Shah and his American advisors.

No tailing either mullah

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No. 11 December 1979

Jimmy Carter's Christmas present to the Iranian people is a fleet of nineteen warships, including two aircraft carriers. The American and British press have been full of helpfull suggestions as to what could be done with them — bomb the oilfields, bomb the 'holy city' of Qom, seize the Tumbs Islands as 'hostages, etc.

Miss Lillian, the born -again Christians mother, has said to wild applause that if she had a million dollars she would hire a hit man to murder Khomeini. Whilst a direct punitive strike is unlikely unless the hostages are put on trial, the Imperialists are busy confiscating Iranian assets held in American banks at home and abroad and mobilising an economic blockade that will squeeze the life out of the already staggering Iranian economy.

There is no boubt that should the anti-US ferment threaten the vital Gulf oilfields, the US Government will send in troops to seize them.

In Iran, Khomeini's regime is in deep crisis. The new constitution that gives dictatorial powers to the Imam has met fierce resistance in Kurdistan, in Tabriz, capital of Azerbayan, and in Baluchistan. The opposition to Khomeini comes

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from varying sources. The Ayatollah Shariatmadari – a political conservative who favours a constitutional monarchy with the Shiite hierarchy distanced to some extent from the regime, has become a focus for the resistance of the nationalities, and the bourgeoisie.

The major forces claiming to be socialist, the Tudeh (CP) and the Fedayeen have aligned themselves behind Khomeini's 'anti-imperialist' stance, the Tudeh uncritically, the Fedayeen with considerable reservations. Even the HKS (Iranian section of the Usec) has issued a statement which accepts as good coin the anti-imperialist struggle being waged by the government.

Whilst it is the clear duty of revolutionary communists in Iran to give military support to any armed resistance to a US attack, and to defend the right to self-determination of the Kurds, Turko-Turkomans, Azerbayanis, Baluchis and Arabs, to line up either with Khomeini or Shariatmadari will be suicidal. The limited legality gained because of the divisions in the mullahs' ranks must be exploited to win support in the workers and peasants committees for a consistant democratic, socialist and anti-imperialist programme. There must be no class truce in the name of spurious 'anti-imperialist' stances.

The plebeian followers of Shariatmadari are motivated by a democratism that must be saved from becoming the servant of the conservative Iranian bourgeoisie. The anti-imperialist aspirations of Khomeini's following must be diverted from powering the machinery of a vicious theocratic dictatorship. Both lead to chaos and defeat for the Iranian masses and the eventual return of direct American hegemony.

***US hands off Iran. Break the Economic and Military Blockade.**
***Down with Khomeinis' dictatorship – full democratic rights for all the peoples of Iran.**
***Power to a workers and peasants government based on the armed 'shoras' (councils) to expropriate the domestic and foreign capitalists.**

Khomeini's dictatorship rocked by anti-imperialist storm

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No. 11 December 1979

As the anniversary of the great mobilisations which drove out the Shah and cracked his blood soaked dictatorship approaches, the mullah-dominated clericalist regime faces its most profound crisis yet. Khomeini's project of an Islamic Republic, despite his overwhelming personal influence is still far from any form of stability. Iran faces economic collapse, massive unemployment. The problem of the non-Persian nationalities and the [illegible] question are both far from any solution. The total wave of anti-imperialist feeling generated by the occupation of the U.S. Embassy and the holding of fifty hostages whilst, in the short term, acting as a rallying point behind Khomeini, is already allowing the forces opposed to a theocratic dictatorship to mobilise for the first time since the repressive coup of July/August 1979.

The repressive measures, which included the closing down of the liberal and working class press, the arrest of scores of left wing militants and the banning and harrasment of their meetings and demonstrations culminated in the proclamation of a holy war (jihad) against the Kurdish people. Khomeini, appointing himself commander in chief of the army sent squads of revolutionary Islamic guards (pasdars) to subject the region to a vicious dictatorship. Ayatollah Khalkhali, the Imam's prosecutor, sent dozens of Kurds a day to the firing squad.

The Kurdish resistance fighters (peshmerga) were forced to withdraw from the cities including the 'capital' Mahabad. But they easily regrouped, gaining massive support from the population including the peasantry, who clearly saw the pasdars and the pro-Khomeini committees not only as a rabid Persian chauvinist army of occupation but as the backers of the land owners, feudalists and semi-bandit elements who exploited and battened on the meagre resources the land yielded them. On the 12th October the police chief in Mahabad was shot. On 16th the prime Minister's special envoy was kidnapped. By October 21st the peshmerga were reported as controlling Mahabad once again.

The result of the expulsion of the pasdars, the surrounding of a number of towns and garrisons and the rupture of government communication lines, was that the inflexible and infallible Imam changed his mind. The 'worst of the sons of Satan' suddenly became legitimate negotiators on behalf of the Kurdish people. Khomeini promised the progressive withdrawal of the pasdars and the cessation of the murderous activities of the revolutionary tribunals. At the end of October the Minister of the Interior announced the end of hostilities and the suspension of military operations. The jihad was over, for the time being, and Islam was far from victorious.

Eruption

October also saw the eruption of social tensions within other parts of Iran. In Teheran itself two large demonstrations of the unemployed took place in successive weeks and spread to other cities. Revolutionary guards had to fire into the air to disperse them.

In the Caspian Sea ports of Bandar and Euzeli, in mid October, demonstrators burned the police headquarters after pasdars had shot at crowds of fishermen protesting at a government monopoly of fishing rights. Khomeini was forced to rescind the government ruling.

In Tabriz, capital of Azerbaijan, open conflicts erupted between the populace and the revolutionary guards. The Imam's personal envoy, Ayatollah Quzi Tabatabai, sent to investigate the nefarious doings of the revolutionary committee and the pasdards, criticsed them bitterly as "conducting themselves like Savaki." (He was shot leaving the mosque in Tabriz) (Le Monde 3.11.1979).

In Teheran leftist demonstrations began to be held again at the University. On 29th October

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25,000 students demonstrated demanding the authorisation of political activities in educational institutions and the reinstatement of all those purged from July to September. Tudeh (the Iranian CP) and the Fedayeen e Khalq have held rallies of up to 40,000.

Even more ominous for the Ayatollahs the peasantry, hitherto relatively quiescent since the seizure of Pahlavi lands in February and March, have begun to organise peasant committees in southern Kurdistan and in Azerbayan.

The burgeoning social and political conflict resulted in a major political crisis among the leading cadres of the Islamic Revolution. In mid-October Khomeini's son, Ahmed, exclaimed that **"The Imam is totally alone today . . .just as he was in Qom in 1963. The Imam sees that he is surrounded by enemies, coming from all tendencies, parties and 'types' ".**

Khomeini, as the lynchpin of the conflicting factions and cliques within the clergy and their professional politicians was obviously feeling the strain of the tug of war between them.

The first victim of the faction fight was the largely pensioned off Bazargan Government. On November 4th the 'Moslem Students Faithful to the Imam Khomeini', occupied the United States Embassy and took 63 hostages. On the 6th the Bazargan Government resigned and Khomeini handed power directly to the Revolutionary Council. The 'students' were and are in fact, a tightly organised grouping led by Asghar Moussari-Khoeni, holding the rank of hojatolleslam the first step on the ladder to becoming an Ayatollah. Khoeni, closely allied to the powerful general secretary of the Revolutionary Council Ayatollah Mohammed Beheshti, has controlled and directed the occupation. The slogans prominent on the walls of the embassy, besides the demand for the Shah's return and the threats to try the American spies, included the calls, 'No' to negotiations' and, ' a second revolution greater than the first has begun.'

Symbiosis

The Imam and the Revolutionary Council have been forced to make a series of concessions to the masses whose confidence, expectations and demands have been encouraged by the huge mobilisations and the mullahs' demagogy. The unemployed have continued their demonstrations. The oil workers have formed a national union and forced Islamic officials and management to re-instate sacked workers. 'Shoras' (councils) have been set up in many factories. In Teheran, in a clothing factory, the workers' committee has won a reduction in hours (half-day working) with no loss of pay. Peasant committees continue to be formed. The demands and expectations even of the peasants who have gained land continue to grow in scope and confidence. The Times (1.12.79) reports a village headman as saying, **'We want industrial agriculture. We want a doctor in the village. We want health insurance and another school.'**

The Imam swung to the side of these 'radicals' and began to voice their slogans and programme. What does this amount to ? Firstly, vigorous anti-Imparialist, anti-American rhetoric, centring on the return of the Shah. Much as this butcher deserves his fate, totally justified as this demand is, as a political demand it is merely symbolic,a pulling of the American vulture's tail feathers.

It is a diversion from the real fight against Imperialism, away from the chronic problems that face the peasants, workers and the oppressed nationalities of Iran.

Using the grief and rage felt by millions of Iranians who lost their children, relatives, friends and comrades in the Anti-Shah struggle, the mullahs hope to divert the masses from the agents of oppression and exploitation who constitute the Iranian government and ruling classes. Sayed Hussein, Khomeini's grandson, explained this role in an interview with 'Le Monde'. This paper summed up his position thus, **'The blows of American Imperialism have pulled together all the internal tensions which were undermining the Islamic Republic, regrouped the whole population in all its component parts and political tendencies under the Imam's banner. The occupation of the embassy was the most popular event which has occurred since the overthrow of the monarchy.'**

Khomeini himself has added to his support for the hostage taking certain of the Islamic radicals' demands. He charged the incoming government with three priority tasks, to purge the administration, to assure the welfare of the mustaziffin (the disinherited — Iran's 5million unemployed, the poor, the peasants etc.) and to proceed to, **'a new and profound agrarian reform.'**

The expectations of the mustaziffin of the Teheran slums have, likewise, been raised. Journalists of the 'Herald Tribune' (30.12.79) report the outspoken comment, **'They (the Islamic Council) had better look after us better or we will make a second revolution !'**

Even with regard to democratic rights certain concessions have been made. Papers banned in August have been legalised. The organs of the Tudeh, the Mujahaddeen e Khalq (the Islamic guerillas of a leftist orientation) the Fedayeen e Khalq and the HKS (Iranian Socialist Workers Party) have resumed publication. The state newspapers like Ettela'at have carried reports of protests against repression. On November 17th. Khomeini acknowledged on television that the Kurdish people had been wronged and that negotiations with their leaders were progressing well.

Rivalries

The Revolutionary Council is still riven with rivalries and contradictions. Abolhassan Bani Sadr who initially held both the Foreign Affairs and Economic Ministries, advocates a policy of economic nationalism. This involves repudiation of foreign debts, attempts to break free of the dollar as the means of payment for Iran's oil and reduction of oil production to raise prices via OPEC. Yet, Bani Sadr was hardly discovered by the Western media as the 'new strong man' before he lost decisively on the Revolutionary Council over his diplomatic concessions on the question of the hostages. He felt obliged to resign the Foreign Ministry to his long-time rival Sadegh Ghotbzadah.

Bani Sadr recognises the dangerous game the grouping around Beheshti and Khoeni are playing. He noted the fragmentation of the Iranian state, **'the multiplicity of the decision-making centres and the government's impotence to control even a single avenue of the capital'.** Moreover, **'the absence of a strong central government, the expansion of anarchy will not end until it has challenged the authority if the Imam Khomeini himself, One can't govern a country by means of permanent popular spontaneity.'** (Le Monde, 7.11.79)

Sweep

Of course Ayatollah Beheshti and the Islamic "radicals" don't intend to do that. They hope that the Imams' prestige, anti-imperialist demagogy having helped them to carry the profoundly undemocratic constitution, on December 2nd, will enable their Islamic Republican Party to sweep the board in the elections to the parliament, and win the Presidency. The constitution itself is a violent affront to all democratic rights.

In the notorious section five, drafted by Ayatollah Beheshti himself, the religious guardian (Fahgih) can dismiss

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...cted President, appoint ...efs of the judiciary, the ...rmy and the revolutionary ...uard, and the members of ...Constitution Protection Coun...il (a minority of whom can veto ...y law proposed by parliament). ...hus not only will Khomeini's ...ersonal dictatorship be assured ...ut it will be handed down to a ...uccessor in the Shiite hierarchy.

Opposition to the constitution ...as increased substantially the ...orces prepared to challenge Khomeini. In Kurdistan the boy...ott was almost total with few ...olling booths being open. In the Turkoman and Baluchi regions ...he turnout was low. In Tabriz, ...apital of Azerbayan, where the Muslim Peoples Party limked to ...he senior Ayatollah Kazem Shan...tmadan, condemned the con...titution as "ushering in a dic...atorship as bad as the Shah's" ...demonstration of 30,000 ...protested the ballot and called for ...boycott. The Mujaheddin and the Fedayeen organisations issued a ...imilar call.

The advocates of an Islamic ...onapartism, based on mosque-...dominated plebiscites and dema...gogic "anti-imperialism", what...ever their short-term successes, ...re caught on the horns of a dilemma. Iran faces an economic crisis of catastrophic proportions. An economic blockade by US imperialism will aggravate this to an unbearable degree. The aspirations of the working class, the "disinherited" urban sub-proletariat, the peasants and the na nationalities as well as the students ('islamic' or otherwise) will clash ever more sharply with the chaos presided over by the Revolutionary Council.

The Shia hierarchy and the mullah caste cannot establish a stable or homogenous block.A theocracy in the last quarter of the twentieth century is a utopia - and a black reactionary one at that.

One option is a 'left' course. This was voiced most clearly by Khomeini's grandson Sayed Hossein. Referring to the anti-imperialist "turn" he said: **"It allows us to open a way to a strategic alliance between the Islamic movement, the lay organisations and the Left as well as a tactical alliance with the Soviet bloc."** (Le Monde 30.11.79).

The influential Ayatollah Montazeri - the head of the so-called Libyan faction advocates an orientation to the 'radical' Arab states. The Tudeh party, shameless in their toeing the Khomeini line could act as a 'go-between' should Iran need covert Soviet assistance faced with an American blockade or punitive military action.

Whichever faction within and outside the Revolutionary Council wins out, temporarily, before being ousted in its turn, the working class and oppressed masses have nothing whatsoever to gain from them or their fake 'anti-imperialism'. The working class above all must be won to an independent class programme and party which certainly must relate to the deep anti-imperialist aspirations of the whole Iranian people, to the democratic aspirations of the nationalities, women women, the students and intellectuals, to the desperate need for land and agricultural machinery that the peasants express. But none of these goals can be met without the central leading role of the working class, organised in workers councils and led by a party that can make Iran's "second revolution" a proletarian one.

Mullah's new offensive

Reprinted from WORKERS POWER No. 15 June 1980

The vicious attacks on the ...ft and the Kurds in Iran still ...lo not denote a finished character to the Iranian revolution. In ...act the major social forces in ...ran have still as yet failed to ...orge society and politics in ...heir own image. Such a situat...on poses ever more acutely the ...eed for a revolutionary work...rs party to lead the workers, ...peasants, minority nation...lities and the intelligentsia out ...f the bloody trap into which ...he Khomeini regime is dragg...ng the country.

The leading forces of the Iranian ...tate are still in disarray. President ...ani Sadr, despite his massive elect...oral victory has failed to block the ...lericals in the Islamic Republican ...arty—who, as a result of the second ...ound of elections to the parliament with attendant ballot-rigging and ...oercion) have at least 130 out of ...he 170 seats. The 'Bani-Sadrists' ...ave only 41. With Admiral Madani, the butcher of Khuzestan refusing to take up a premiership which he claimed was "shrouded in ambiguities", Bani Sadr has to wait the further moves of Khomeini and Beheshti.

The reasons for the curious relationship of forces since the overthrow of the Shah lies in the manner of that very overthrow. The working class played the decisive role with a general strike which shut off the oil flow, paralyzed the administrative machine and immobilised transport and communications. The left Islamic and quasi marxist guerilla organisations, and to some extent the members of the Tudeh, precipitated and led the armed insurrection that cracked the morale of the Shah's army and led to the arming of the masses. But the leadership of the movement remained in the hands of the mullahs around Khomeini—a leadership that neither the bourgeoisie nor the proletariat has since been able to dislodge.

Both the liberal and conservative clerical wings of the bourgeoisie have been unable to establish a firm grip on political power. The National Front of Sayjabi and Farouhar has been unable to reconstitute the state machine, restore labour discipline and control over the economy and re-establish stable ties with the Imperialist powers. The army remains disorganised and 'demoralised'. The officer corps has been partially purged (30% of its numbers removed). Unemployment stands at nearly 30% of the active wage earning population. Industrial production is running at only 30% of capacity. Oil output is only one third that of the Shah's period.

Workers have in some sectors forced the concession of the 40 hour week and attempts by the oil minister Ali Akbar Moinfar and Bani Sadr to break the Shoras (workers councils) in the oil fields and elsewhere have failed miserably. In the countryside the seizure of lands belonging to the court circle, the large pro-Shah landlords and the agribusinesses has partly alleviated rural distress—a process aided by food price rises on the internal market due to the interruption of food imports and the abandonment of price controls. This

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has fueled the roaring inflation rate, increased the misery of the urban poor but temporarily raised the income of the peasantry.

The bourgeoisie and the big bazaar merchants looked first to Bazargan and then to Bani Sadr to provide 'strong government'. They have both failed. Why? Basically because they have been forced to share political power with the petit bourgeois bloc dominated by Khomeini and the Ayatollahs Beheshti, Khalkhali and Co. The mullahs are armed with a reactionary utopian ideology based on Shiite Islam and a demagogy aimed at the small bazaaris, merchants artisans and the massive sub-proletariat the moustazzifin. They have been able to dominate the masses and block bourgeois normalisation and economic reconstruction and prevent the proletariat and the popular democratic forces (the nationalities in particular) from seizing power and expropriating the bourgeoisie. But even the immensely influential Imam and the sinister Ayatollah Sayyed Mohammed Beheshti have not had things all their own way. They cannot dispense with the expertise and political economic know-how of the bourgeoisie because they cannot create an 'Islamic economy'. Much as these leaders would like to create a society, dominated politically by the clergy, based on traditional rural society and small merchants. Such a society is an impossibility in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Neither have they been able to decisively crush the left or the nationalities. This has not been for lack of trying. In July and August of '79 they attempted to crush the Fedayeen and the Mujahideen groups, banning their papers and meetings and turning the pasdaran (revolutionary guards) and the lumpen gangs (the hezbollahis) loose to murder and intimidate them. This offensive was checked and driven back by the elemental resistance of those it was aimed at. The Kurdish peshmerga routed the army and pasdars. The revolts in the Caspian ports, in Tabriz and the mass demonstrations in Teheran opened up rifts among the Ayatollahs and forced a demagogic 'left turn' to anti imperialist rhetoric and the re-legalisation of the left groups and papers.

This disarray was evidenced in massive abstentions in the referendum on the constitution and in the collapse of the Islamic Republican Party's candidacy for the President. Yet the mullahs have been able to return to the offensive. By late April they felt confident enough to launch a massive attack on the Kurds and to drive the left from the universities.

On 20th and 21st April Islamic radicals launched an offensive to 'reform' the universities. Perhaps some of the so called Islamic student groups were sincere in believing that the campus could be put 'at the service of the people'. Their utopian populist-Islamic ideology can, however, be nomore than a stalking horse for the reactionary anti-democratic, anti communist moves of Khomeini and Beheshti. On the pretext that 'marxist' students had prevented the right wing cleric Rafsanjani speaking on the Teheran campus Khomeini denounced the universities as 'colonized and westernised from the beginning and useless', as 'nests of spies and American agents' and encouraged the hezbollahis to clear them out. After two days of fighting—which spread to other cities and which left 27 dead and hundreds wounded the Fedayeen, the most intransigent of the left groups, were finally forced to withdraw when Bani Sadr ordered the pasdaran to intervene to 'restore order'. Khomeini's 'Islamicisation' means the destruction of the universities as well as the crushing of the left groups rights to hold meetings and conduct propaganda.

Simultaneously a murderous offensive against the Kurds was launched. 'Kurdistan must be cowed and purged of all the anti-regime elements' thundered Khomeini. This time it meant mass slaugher directed against the unarmed civilian population. In the third week of May, fighting around Sananday left 1,500 Kurds and 500 government troops dead. Indiscriminate strafing by helicopter gunships and phantom jetstrikes turned Saqqez, a city of 40,000 people into a ghost town as the population fled to the mountains. Le Monde (16th May) reports the appeal of a Kurdish fighter in a hospital in Boukan, suffering from hortible napalm burns, "For the love of God, because you are a foreign journalist you must tell the whole world what you have seen and what we are suffering—How can Khomeini, that fascist that dares to speak about God, let such things as these be done. The truth must be known in Iran and outside Iran—everywhere!"

The May Day demonstrations of the left were brutally harassed by the bezbollahis using knives and throwing stones. What can turn the tide against this brutal offensive? Only the mobilisation of the working class—their winning away from the mesmerising effects of the mullahs.

Here the role of a Trotskyist revolutionary party would be crucial. The semi-guevarist, semi Stalinist politics of the Fedayeen—despite the marvellous heroism of their fighters—is of no use. Whilst the Fedayeen have protested against the anti democratic attacks of the clericals, whilst they have stood arms in hand in the front ranks of those defending the Kurds, whilst they have defended the universities against the 'Islamic' thugs they concentrate their political fire on the bourgeoisie and Bani Sadr, passing over Khomeini's role in silence. This is to disarm the working class against its real enemies. Anti-imperialist rhetoric is cheap and indeed confusing when "the main enemy is at home".

However the so-called 'Islamic Trotskyists" of the HKE (Iranian Revolutionary Workers Party), sponsored by the US Socialist Workers Party, have adopted a position far to the right of the Fedayeen. They fail to raise the slightest criticism of Khomeini. This rank opportunism has borne bitter fruit in the recent struggles around the universities, showing that the HKE cannot even defend democratic rights. Supporting the Islamic Student Organisations criminal muddleheaded project that "the campuses should be closed down and the students sent out to work on revolutionary projects", the HKE played into the hands of the reactionaries. Too late they pleaded that "This action (the hezbollahi and government attacks - WP) which was against freedom and against freedom of speech was not what the ISOs wanted". Indeed - the way to hell is paved with good intentions.

But what follows - from so-called Trotskyists - is a terrible confession of bankruptcy. Turning on the courageous Fedayeen, who defended the Universities, they are reported (by Intercontinental Press May 5th) thus: "The HKE also pointed out that by opposing the ISOs occupations, the leaderships of the Tudeh Party, Fedayeen and Mujahedeen not only "showed their bankruptcy" but also played into the hands "of the 500 capitalist families and their underground hit squads". "

The wretched 'Intercontinental' continues: "Contrary to press accounts, the HKE says, there is no escalating anti-communist campaign or witch-hunt against the Mujahedeen or Fedayeen in Iran today". On the contrary we are faced with 'a deepening of the revolutionary process". The HKE and its SWP (US) mentors cannot tell the difference between revolution and counter-revolution. Tell that to the Kurds, tell that to the families and friends of the 27 killed, tell that to the 17 students expelled from a teacher training college in Avak for being 'Marxists'. The 'Islamic cultural revolution' is the real toll of reaction.

The measuring rod for a genuine Trotskyist party in Iran must be its advocacy and defence of working class independence from all brands of Islamic obscurantism. Its key task is the struggle for a militantly secular revolutionary workers party, for soviets, factory committees and trade unions free of the mosque. The mullahs must be discredited and driven out of the workers' ranks. On democratic demands, real Trotskyists must be clear and uncompromising - Down with the reactionary paraphernalia of the Islamic Republic! Down with the bonapartist roles of the Velayat-e-Faquih (Religious Guardian of the State) and the Presidency! Down with the Revolutionary Council!

Dissolve the fake Parliament, elected by corruption, coercion and ballot rigging. Dissolve the pasdaran and arm the workers. For soldiers councils in every unit, and for the election of officers. For a united front of workers to smash the hezbollahi black hundreds!

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Trotskyists must fight for the right of all the nationalities to self-determination, which is meaningless unless it includes the right to separation. Focussing all these democratic demands - including equal rights for women and an end to censorship and the Islamic Tribunals - is the demand for a sovereign Constituent Assembly, elected by universal, equal and secret suffrage. Only the workers, peasants and soldiers councils could convoke, guard and supervise such elections.

A Trotskyist party must set as its goal the defeat of clerical reaction, as well as of the Iranian bourgeoisie and its Imperialist backers. No such defeat can be decisive until full power rests in the hands of the workers and peasants Shoras.

The alternative, as recent rumours of a military coup in Teheran indicate, is eventually the triumph of black reaction in one form or another. Either the black hundreds of the right wing of the Islamic Republican Party will smash the left and the workers organisations, and consolidate their power with the military and bourgeois support, or a General or Admiral, probably in Islamic guise, will organise a military coup that the Imam or his successor will bless. Time is running out on the two bedrock alternatives - full counter-revolution or working class power.

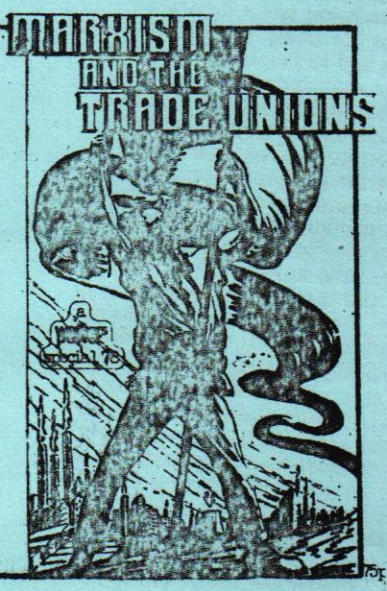


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