

SOCIALIST VOICE

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Iran: Revolution, War and Counterrevolution



U.S. Elections: The Fall of Austerity Liberalism
Imperialists Win Jamaican Vote
Crime Without Punishment

Egyptian Trotskyist Murdered

The following article was submitted to *Socialist Voice* by the Vienna Palestine Committee. The RCL referred to in the article is an Egyptian organization that considers itself Trotskyist. We too mourn the loss of Comrade Mohamed, a martyr in the class struggle, and join in protest against Sadat's crimes.

At the beginning of June, Comrade Mohamed Awad Chamis, a leading member of the Egyptian Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), "disappeared" in the Torra prison in Cairo-Helwan. Although he had been there since his arrest on January 15, 1980, the prison officials suddenly denied his existence, and his name vanished from the records. His fellow internees, also political prisoners of the Sadat regime, reported that one day in early June he was taken away for interrogation and did not return. His comrades report further that during such interrogations they are tortured with electric shocks and other physical and psychological means, and that several comrades have been physically injured as a result.

Mohamed was well known to the police as a leader of the January uprising in 1977 and as a leading member of the RCL. The following facts: the sudden "ignorance" on the part of the prison officials and the police in Mohamed's case, the record of tortures, and the fact that Mohamed, as a leading member of the RCL, had much information wanted by the police (the RCL, like all other left organizations, is illegal) — all lead to the conclusion that Mohamed in all likelihood was murdered by the police during the interrogation.

The murder of Mohamed takes place at a time when the Sadat regime is becoming increasingly isolated. The basis for this isolation is, most importantly, the utter failure of its economic policy, the so-called "Infitah" — an attempt to open up the country completely to foreign capital. Sadat promised that this project would lead to a decisive improvement in the economic situation and above all in the material conditions of the poor. Through this project Sadat sought to pacify the masses after the 1977 uprising — and for a short time he succeeded, in conjunction with the renewed full illegalization of the leftist opposition. The escalation of basic food prices and unemployment, however, clearly demonstrated the

emptiness of his promises, especially for the masses directly affected.

This led to an increasing readiness, above all on the part of the workers, to once again undertake the struggle against the regime. At the end of December there were strikes in the most important factories in Alexandria and Cairo; they were followed by strikes at Cairo University in January and by the workers of a factory in El Mahal el Kobra in February, strikes directed against the economic policy of the regime and its dictatorship. Since then the turmoil has not diminished: strikes, rallies, outbreaks of opposition in the army — all these highlight the internal crisis of the Sadat regime. The position of the regime is all the more critical now, with the de facto breakdown of negotiations with Israel over the Palestine question.

The regime reacted, as so often happens, with massive power against the rising opposition. Strikes were "settled" by the army, Cairo University was quickly closed and there were massive arrests. It appears now that the regime wants to definitively destroy the left. Already on December 18, 1979, Zaki Mourad, the chairman of the Egyptian Communist Party, was brutally murdered in the street; he was run down by four automobiles of the secret police.

The murder of Mohamed Awad Chamis is a further step in this direction. Especially so, since the RCL is one of the few organizations that offered resistance in the period after the quashing of the January 1977 uprising, and it was therefore rooted in the working class. In the factories where strikes had been carried out in December, it had won the (illegal) union elections. And it also initiated strikes.

The resistance as well as the regime's repression have been concealed, in order to maintain Sadat's image as the Angel of Peace and the Sun of Calm and Security in Egypt.

We therefore call on the international left to protest against the repression by the Egyptian regime against the left and against the murder of Mohamed Awad Chamis. We must show the regime that its crimes cannot be carried out in the dark, and that there are forces in solidarity with the Egyptian left! ■

— Vienna Palestine Committee

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The Fall of Austerity Liberalism

No class-conscious worker can be happy over the prospect of Ronald Reagan as the next U.S. president. Our only solace is that we won't have to put up any longer with that sanctimonious liar Jimmy Carter. The electorate had similar feelings. Many didn't vote, and a majority of Reagan voters were voting against Carter and the miserable failure of Democratic liberalism. Within a few short years people will have their reservations about Reagan's policies more than confirmed. The crisis is that of the capitalist system, and it is that system, not its administrators alone, that must be changed.

Profound problems are justifiably scaring the American public. The old liberal prescriptions for buying off the masses of disaffected people no longer work; capitalism doesn't have the surplus to spend. The bourgeoisie has become more conservative: it seeks to bear down upon the workers to produce more with less pay and with fewer of them to pay. The middle classes which subsisted on the past prosperity bubble feel threatened by the crisis and are grasping for a way out. Workers have become increasingly cynical about the system and have begun, in uneven waves, to look for more extreme solutions.

Workers Object to Cutbacks

Even Carter knew that the old liberalism was dying. In office he acknowledged his identity with the capitalist class outlook by pursuing a policy of austerity, cutting back on the social services the working class had won through past struggles. This gave rise to a small problem: the great majority of the electorate, and especially the followers of the Democratic Party, are working class people who have no desire to tighten their belts in order to fatten profit rates. Carter's campaign on domestic issues boiled down to celebrating the gains "given" to the masses by Democrats in the past while stressing that only sacrifice was on the agenda for the present.

Throughout the campaign spokesmen for both Carter and Reagan agreed that if Carter's record became the major issue Reagan would win; while if Reagan's past views became the focus, with Carter striving to nail him as a warmonger and a racist, Carter would survive. Neither of the major capitalist candidates could win on what he stood for. It was a question of who would lose and "None of the Above" was the clear winner with almost 50 percent of the eligible voters.

The electorate's fears about Reagan were largely quelled by his "nice guy" stance, whereby he explained away his past attacks on social benefits and claimed to favor them but on a more libertarian basis. The frustrated wing of the petty bourgeoisie hoped that "less government" and more military spending would allow a renewed climb to a mythical age of plenty. Many workers also decided to give Reagan a chance: his not-quite-believable promise of prosperity was better than the reality of Carter.

The only identifiable voting group that did not shift to the right was the minorities — blacks and Hispanics — who voted overwhelmingly for Carter to the extent that they voted at all.

Here again the reason was negative: there was ample reason to oppose the candidate whose views were endorsed by a section of the Ku Klux Klan. Even so, fewer blacks voted than in 1976, and the percentage for Carter dropped from 90 to 84 percent. As well, black figures like Ralph Abernathy and Charles Evers felt free to back a right-winger without fear of outraging their

Editorial: Crime Without Punishment



On November 17, the capitalist state gave its seal of approval to the murder of five members of the Communist Workers Party in Greensboro, North Carolina by the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazis. The monstrous "not guilty" verdict in effect declared open season for fascist killings of blacks, leftists and other workers and oppressed people. Not accidentally, it came in the midst of a barbaric wave of mutilation and murder directed toward blacks throughout the country.

It is fitting that the Greensboro decision was perfectly legal. It was the product of a "fair" trial, itself a part of "our democratic system of justice." It is the most vivid proof, written in the blood of its martyred victims, of the communist contention that there is no fairness, justice or democracy for the working class from the capitalist state. That state runs "our country" and is fair only to the rich, the racists and the reactionaries.

Their promise of "equal justice before the law" has once again been proven to be as hollow as their promises of full employment, affirmative action, integration and decent housing. There is only one benefit to be gained from the legal massacre in Greensboro. More black people, more Latin people and more working people in general have learned the bitter truth that justice, democracy and fairness will come out of the barrels of our guns, not those of the animals who now hold state power. ■

plebeian base — an act which would have cast them into oblivion only a few years ago. Carter's empty liberal program had led in reality to a huge black jobless rate and blind-alley integration and affirmative action efforts. The black vote for Carter was an extremely reluctant one, an attempt to hold on to a few remaining gains.

A number of writers on the left are trying to explain away Reagan's victory by claiming it was not a right-wing vote. They get this by adding the 48 percent of non-voters to the Carter and Anderson totals, leaving Reagan with only about a quarter of the electorate. However, Carter and Anderson both ran conservative campaigns differing from Reagan's only in degree. A large number of the non-voters, if pressed, would have chosen Reagan as the best hope. In ideological polls more people now say they are conservative as opposed to liberal.

The leftists' conclusion is that working people are merely being fooled; once they learn that Reagan also means austerity they will return to the old liberal coalition and be more open to the left. But this is by no means assured. Most voters have grudgingly accepted Reagan's warmed-over trickle-down theories that begin with increased incentives to private business. Thus the election reflected a kind of pro-business conservatism which cannot simply be explained away. Not by accident, Reagan's counterparts in Britain (Margaret Thatcher) and in Jamaica (Edward Seaga) have also won office on similar platforms.

Reagan's Promises are Lies Too

As prosperity collapses around the world, the phony promises of liberalism and its kindred social democracy are becoming exposed. If capitalism is the only reality — and, of course, the liberals and social democrats agree that it is — the real capitalists might as well be given their chance since the traditional do-gooders clearly can't deliver, many voters feel.

Reagan will not be able to deliver on his program either. The capitalist crisis will inevitably explode his "less government" formula. The century-long tendency of concentrating bourgeois economic and political power, foreseen by Marx, is not about to be reversed. Even some popular pundits agree. Writing in the November 20 *Wall Street Journal*, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. quoted *New York Daily News* columnist James Wieghert approvingly as follows: "The problems facing the country and the world — the energy crisis, pollution, overpopulation, structural unemployment, pervasive inflation and much more — simply do not lend themselves to solution by a weak central government which is subservient to an unfettered private sector."

Indeed, Reagan's administration may well start off only somewhat to the right of Carter's. In order to win the confidence of the dominant finance and monopoly capitalists (who feared that his radical-right record was too precipitous), Reagan had to moderate his rhetoric and surround himself with politicians the upper bourgeoisie had confidence in. Hence the "co-president" flap with Gerald Ford at the Republican Convention and the nomination of George Bush of the "Eastern establishment" for vice-president. Such people are not about to dismantle the state whose apparatuses, non-military as well as military, have served U.S. imperialism so well for decades.

Moreover, the bourgeoisie at the moment sees no need to

crush the trade unions or to start a race war through an active right-wing campaign. With the help of the class-collaborationist union officials and the petty-bourgeois leaders of the oppressed groups, it has no need to — it is winning the class war without an all-out fight. But when Reagan's program eventually fails both to restore profits and to satisfy the masses, then it will be a new ball game.

Inevitably, Reagan will have to attack the unions more directly in order to increase profits. Accordingly, he will have to rely on his petty-bourgeois base as well as the more reactionary layers of workers; the bourgeoisie's appeal to them will increasingly have to rest upon racist, anti-union and anti-communist rhetoric. The far right will thereby be given a powerful shot in the arm. Of course, the present Republican victory has already strengthened the extreme right, even though Reagan is not its creature. The outrageous verdict in Greensboro, North Carolina that freed the murderers of five leftists was part of this resurgence.

The far right today includes the overt fascists of the KKK and the Nazi sects as well as the far more numerous independent racists and reactionaries. It is led by a melange of petty-bourgeois operators and speculators, and it attracts harried middle-class and upper working-class people as well as lumpen elements. Given Reagan's necessary ties to the upper bourgeoisie, as the crisis worsens the right-wing will move away and push anti-monopoly and anti-Wall Street rhetoric combined with full-scale racism. The tracer bullets for this future are already evident in the spectacle of old-line Reaganites who have already become alienated from the new president because of his "establishment" surroundings. The bulk of the complainers are not Nazis, but they are preparing the ground.

While significant numbers are polarizing to the right, a polarization to the left is also under way. The Miami revolt last summer was just the most publicized of a number of ghetto upheavals around the country. The people who participated in these uprisings were demonstrating a tremendous hostility to the ruling system and its false promises. They see no hope in liberalism but have no alternative; they haven't organized on a class-conscious basis since the only mass working-class institutions in the U.S., the unions, appear to be part of the problem.

Another form of polarization is occurring within the Democratic Party. One wing, featuring old liberal cold warriors like Senator Daniel Moynihan, is moving rapidly even further right as a result of the Republican victory. Another, less prominent, has been taking on a socialistic coloration for some time. It recognizes that liberalism is no longer an alternative for many workers and that it must appear more radical and militant to counter the radical right-wing pole. Thus ideological publications of the left liberals like the *Nation* and *Progressive* magazines now call themselves "democratic socialist," and black Congressman Ron Dellums has publicly joined the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC) along with a bevy of left-reformist labor figures.

This too reflects an international development. In the face of the polarization symbolized by Thatcher's election in 1979, the British Labour Party has installed a faintly pink relic, Michael Foot, as its new leader. Throughout international

social democracy, in fact, a mildly activist current has arisen which tries to escape the mass hostility to failed reformism by changing its label to "democratic socialist" — in order to purvey the same old program of getting capitalism to make more promises it cannot carry out. In contrast to Britain, where the workers long ago forced the union leaders to form an independent class party, in the U.S. the trend is occurring within the strictly bourgeois Democratic Party.

The vacuum on the moderate left created by the collapse of liberalism has sucked in the bulk of the far left. Several sects have moved rightward to fill the vacuum, each putting forth an almost identical program in order to claim the space for itself alone. In the recent election campaign the Citizens, Communist, Socialist Workers and Workers World parties all played tunes around the theme of "people before profits" instead of standing for the revolutionary overthrow of the profit system. Their campaigns stressed the rights and reforms that they wanted to win by more militant action under capitalism; the Marxist lesson that the only way to fight even for reforms is through revolutionary struggle was ignored.

The program of these groups is in essence that of a Popular

the Democrats, a new "pro-labor" party will occur only if there was no other way to detour a working-class eruption. So the coming attempt to forge a new Popular Front will take place within the Democratic Party.

The current of popular frontism now stirring on the left will be accelerated by the rightward trend under Reagan. But if such a Front is created it will serve only as a seedbed for future fascism. By advocating a reformed capitalism (or "democracy") when everyone knows this road is a dead end, it cedes the ground to fascist demagogues who present themselves as a total alternative to the rot of capitalism. In power, fascism only tightens the iron rule of the monopolist bourgeoisie; but as a movement, it makes an appeal to the polarizing masses through fake anti-capitalism and genuine racism and anti-leftism. The leftists' unrelenting defense of reformism only makes the fascists' "anti-capitalist and anti-communist" amalgam seem accurate. The recent election, where Carter's lying liberalism enabled Reagan to leap over him into the White House, foreshadows a possible future where a real Popular Front will lend its shoulders to a real fascist movement for it to vault into power.



Behind the electoral curtain, the reality of capitalist rule lies in the armed police power of its state. The Carters and Reagans come and go, but unless the state is overthrown, increased repression will be the lot of the workers.

Front, a bloc of liberal bourgeois and reformist working class forces designed, like the old Roosevelt coalition, to keep alive the decaying body of capitalism. The difference between these outfits and DSOC is not the question of reform versus revolution; they quibble chiefly over whether their common reformist program should be attached to the Democratic Party or to some independent vehicle. Given the fear of the labor bureaucrats in the radicalizing potential of a real break with

In contrast to the capitulationist line of the left in the elections, communists must dedicate themselves to presenting the real alternative of revolution to the mass of people looking for a way out. It is necessary to reach those rebelling in the ghettos, those who refused to vote for capitalist fakers and those who voted but with disgust, with a message echoing their real needs, not the pabulum offered by "practical" crackpot realists who dare not say that capitalism has no answers.

Imperialists Win Jamaican Vote

Less than a week before the U.S. presidential elections, parliamentary elections were held in the Caribbean nation of Jamaica. The outcome was a landslide victory for the conservative and openly pro-imperialist Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and a stunning defeat for the liberal capitalist government of Michael Manley and his People's National Party (PNP). After eight years of PNP rule, the tables were turned against the party that had been swept into power in a landslide victory in 1972. In the October 30th election, the JLP won 300,000 votes and 51 parliamentary seats, and the number of PNP parliamentary seats was reduced to 9. The JLP made major inroads into PNP-controlled areas or districts.

If we strip away the lies spread by both Jamaican parties and

"non-aligned movement" and developed close relations with Cuba. Of course, this could not hide the anti-working class character of the government or Manley's embarrassing inability to throw off the yoke of imperialism. The "New Economic Order" espoused by Manley, Castro and other "third world" nationalists was an attempt to obtain a more equitable deal with imperialism while accepting its domination over the world.

As the economic crisis grew sharply worse in Jamaica, the PNP government launched a series of attacks against the workers in the form of wage freezes and repressive legislation, culminating in the 1977 state of emergency. In the same year, Manley caved into the demands of the International Monetary Fund. In exchange for massive loans, a series of austerity



Seaga thugs in shootout with Manley forces. Jamaican workers must compel unions to form armed guard to defend against ruling class violence.

the bourgeois media in the U.S., it is obvious that these elections were anything but "a choice between capitalism and communism." Although the differences between the JLP and the PNP erupted into violence (over 650 people were killed during the campaign), both parties are capitalist. They differ in their strategies for dealing with the crisis-wracked Jamaican economy and for curbing the struggles of the working class and oppressed masses.

PNP's Liberal Capitalism

While in power, the PNP implemented certain liberal reforms, thereby attempting to prevent upheavals like the one that had struck Jamaica in 1969 as part of the rebellion which was convulsing the world in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Censorship was eased, the minimum wage was increased and key industries were partially nationalized. A tax on the profits of imperialist corporations was levied to finance social programs, create jobs and introduce reforms in agriculture. Internationally, Manley became a leading spokesman for the

measures against the workers was carried out. Reduction of imports caused severe shortages of such basic commodities as rice and soap. The devaluation of the Jamaican dollar slashed the standard of living of the workers by nearly half. These measures were not enough, however, to stop the plunge toward economic collapse.

In 1980 Jamaica was expected to earn \$650 million in foreign exchange, but given that it would have had to spend \$1 billion just to keep the economy afloat and use 90 percent of its foreign exchange just to pay off the debt service, it became vital for the government to float new loans in order to avoid defaulting. Manley turned again to the IMF, but the fund demanded even sterner measures than in 1977. Manley rejected the IMF's conditions and broke off negotiations, not because he wanted to "challenge the power of the Western economic structure," as he claimed, but because he was afraid that a new round of attacks would unleash a rebellion by the workers which the government would be unable to control.

Manley's inability to force the workers to accept even

greater sacrifices led the Jamaican bourgeoisie and the U.S. imperialists to actively connive for the victory of the more right-wing JLP. A JLP government, they hoped, would bring economic recovery to the battered island as well as restore profits by whipping the workers into line. The CIA helped Seaga to win, but its aid was not decisive.

Because of the failure of Manley's liberal program to prevent growing unemployment, plant closures and the flight of capital, the workers voted in large numbers for the JLP. Manley had presented a "solution" seemingly hostile to imperialism which led only to disasters. If dealing with imperialism was the only way workers can eat, they felt that they had to subordinate their hatred for the exploiters and elect someone who could actually deal with the U.S. for aid and investment.

The danger for imperialism and its Jamaican compradors is that if economic recovery does not take place, even greater upheavals by the masses will follow. In an editorial before the elections, the *Washington Post* cautioned, "To restore prosperity would require more aid than the rest of the world is willing to provide."

Isolated Economy Not Viable

As the economies in the imperialist powers are themselves slowing down, dependent countries like Jamaica are faced with economic ruin. Not only is imperialism unable to prevent crises, but it is also incapable of restoring prosperity. But to boost its profits it must attack the workers with ever greater ferocity. Only a socialist revolution and the creation of a workers' state can prevent the growing immiseration of the masses.

Indeed, no nation can build a viable economy in an increasingly interdependent world. This is especially true for a small island country whose economy has been systematically milked by imperialism. Jamaican production has been distorted to fit international capitalist priorities so that it does not function to offer a decent life for Jamaica's workers and small farmers. A Jamaican socialist revolution, however, would reverberate throughout the Caribbean and Central America. Moreover, the West Indies have long been a catalyst for black movements in Africa and the United States. Thus a Jamaican revolution and a Socialist Federation of the Caribbean would constitute the real lever against imperialism that Manley, Castro or the present bourgeois CARICOM (the Caribbean "common market") can never be.

That is what the message of revolutionaries should have been during the elections. They would have propagandized against the PNP and JLP, demonstrating that while there are serious differences between the two parties, neither one represents the interests of the workers and oppressed masses, nor can they solve the deepening economic crisis. In the case of the PNP, this meant unmasking its socialist pretensions and making clear that its election would not only fail to prevent reaction but would hasten its coming by politically and physically disarming the people. The history of the similar Allende regime in Chile is a case in point. As for the JLP, it was necessary to show how a program of increased imperialist investment could only mean more exploitation and suffering for the masses, a diet of more bullets and less bread.

The revolutionary answer to the partisan violence in which

many workers were killed and left homeless, particularly in the most economically devastated areas of Kingston, would have been to politically campaign for an armed defense guard organized by the unions, independent of the two capitalist parties and the state. Again, as in 1977, the situation required that revolutionaries demand a united front of the mass organizations of the working class to launch a general strike against the worsening economic attacks and the reactionary violence (see our "Letter to Jamaican Comrades" in *Socialist Voice* No. 5, Fall 1977).

Jamaican Leftists Back Manley

As before, the left failed to meet the challenge. The pro-Moscow Workers Party of Jamaica (WPJ) led by Trevor Munroe openly campaigned for the PNP. As Stalinists, they believe that a capitalist stage of development is necessary in Jamaica before a socialist revolution can be contemplated. They labelled the JLP fascist in order to tout the PNP and the liberal bourgeoisie as progressive despite its openly anti-working class record.

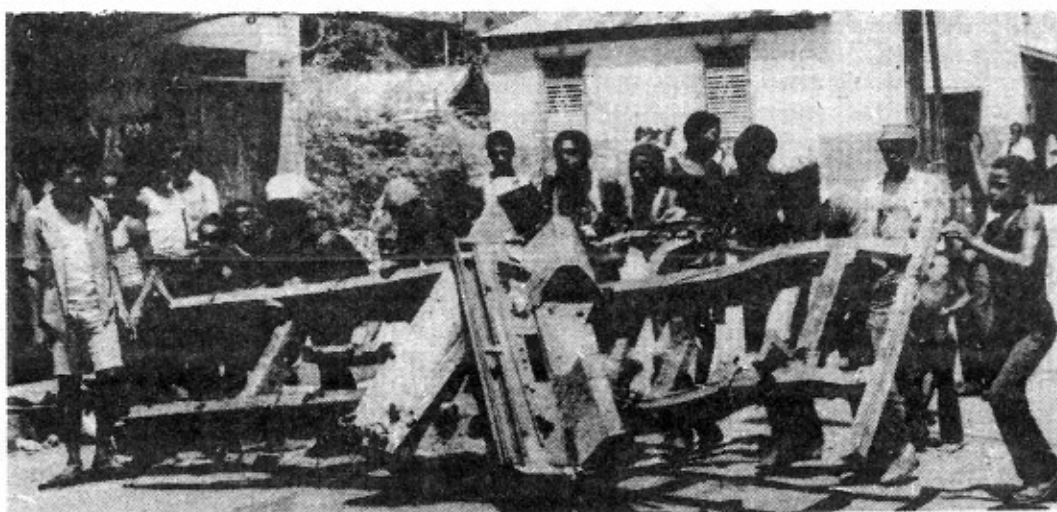
American and West Indian politics are closely interrelated. On the left, it has become obvious that the U.S. Socialist Workers Party is trying to play a greater role in the Caribbean. As part of its new interest, it has been actively trumpeting the PNP's virtues (and the JLP's crimes) without specifically endorsing Manley for re-election — openly supporting a bourgeois politician would shred the last remnants of the SWP's paper-thin "Trotskyism." Here is the *Militant* (November 7) describing a PNP rally: "Red flags waved through the air. Others carried the rising sun, emblem of the PNP. I could make out one banner in the foreground which read, 'Down with IMF, forward to socialism.'"

Readers of the *Militant*, however, would never learn that the PNP is a *capitalist* party for which socialism is only a rhetorical flourish that has nothing to do with working class power. After Manley's defeat, the *Militant* (November 14) allowed criticisms to surface to cover for the workers' massive rejection of the PNP:

"Despite some important reforms in Jamaica, the key weakness was precisely that the Manley regime did not put forward a clear program of basic social change, a socialist policy that sought to advance the fundamental interests of the working class and challenge the capitalist and imperialist stranglehold over the island."

This assessment is perfectly true. But to expect that Manley could do such things, that a bourgeois party could rationally be asked to "challenge the capitalist stranglehold" and promote a socialist policy, is to turn Marxism upside down. The SWP has been eagerly tailing the Jamaican WPJ (never pointing out that it is a Stalinist organization), in the apparent hope of finding a Jamaican counterpart to the left nationalist governments it admires in Grenada and Nicaragua. In doing so it is deepening the illusions of workers in fraudulent capitalist "anti-imperialist" alternatives and thereby paving the way for reaction when these schemes inevitably fail.

Another Jamaican group, the Revolutionary Marxist League (RML), is linked to the U.S. Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL). Unlike in 1977, when it urged a vote for Manley, this year the RML did not cross the class line; it urged workers to break with both bourgeois parties (*Torch*, October



Residents in central Kingston removing barricades after gun battle. Imperialism takes fat, leaves blood. Jamaican workers will not tolerate this much longer.

15). This is certainly welcome. It is also to be noted that the RML, in response to the deepening class struggle and the need to compete with the popular frontist and Stalinist WPJ, at least calls itself Trotskyist, a label which its U.S. ally, the RSL, has discarded in its move to the right.

In the past the RML was committed to the RSL's brand of slippery opportunism. It carried out small-group maneuvers instead of fighting for a powerful classwide unity, on the one hand, and an open, unwavering revolutionary program, on the other. The RML still avoids probing the roots of its worst capitulation, giving political support to a party it knew to be bourgeois. Hence its leftward swing is still erratic. In the campaign the RML naturally called for struggles against the capitalist attacks and the thugs of both parties, the JLP and PNP. Whereas before it had ignored the workers' mass organizations by placing no demands on the pro-capitalist misleaders of the trade unions, this year the RML did raise the demand for armed guards on the unions as well as the left. However, it still avoided calling for a union-led general strike which could have turned the workers' drift to Seaga into a real class challenge to imperialism instead.

Workers' Combativity Increasing

On the critical level of revolutionary program the RML has made less progress. The communist alternative to imperialism's "solution" to Jamaica's isolation is the spread of world revolution; revolutionists must show the real and immediate potential of this to the working class, as difficult as this task is. The RML's electoral program (*Torch*, November 15; *Forward*, October 26) correctly calls for cancelling the massive debt owed to the imperialists and the use of foreign exchange to buy needed goods for the masses. It then adds: "Efforts to win international working class support for this stand, especially in countries with left-leaning governments."

Whatever this deliberately vague statement means, Jamaican workers could only take it as an equivocal version of the failed Cuban alternative pursued by Manley. For the RML, which analyzes all present governments in the world as capitalist, the phrase "left-leaning" is a return to the traditional RSL-RML maneuverism as a substitute for uncompromising revolutionary honesty and internationalism.

In the face of a tremendous assault on their standard of living by the bourgeoisie and growing repression, the Jamaican workers have steadily increased their combativity since 1968. The PNP's fake socialism failed to defuse the class struggle. The JLP in power is certain to prove even less successful. The development of revolutionary consciousness and a complete break with the bourgeois parties will, however, only take place with the creation of a genuine Trotskyist party which consistently shows the working class the way forward and relies on the power of the workers rather than the liberal bourgeoisie. Only such a party will find a path to the Jamaican workers and to the socialist revolution, which will be a beacon to the workers of the Americas, Africa and the entire world. ■

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Iran: Revolution, War and Counterrevolution

Introduction

The fundamental question at stake in the Iraq-Iran war, for communists, is simple: we defend revolution from counterrevolution, the gains of the working class and the oppressed from the exploiters and oppressors. Therefore, in the present war we defend the Iranian revolution from the attack upon it. In contrast to Iraq, where bourgeois rulers have succeeded in wiping out every gain from the struggles of the past, the revolution in Iran still lives.

Workers' councils (*shoras* in Persian) arose during the revolution that overthrew the Shah in February 1979 and have mushroomed since. Many of them have grown independent of Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic regime and even hostile to it. Many local shoras control their factories and even the output and production priorities of their industries. Peasants have begun to take over the land themselves. National minorities have forced the Teheran regime to recognize some of their rights. The far left and working-class political organizations can now organize, publish and demonstrate in the face of the regime. All such gains will turn out to be untenable over time unless the working class takes state power, but none of them

could have existed for a moment under the Shah's rule.

Every one of these gains was achieved against the wishes of Khomeini's various governments. In addition, the regime itself has been forced to take other steps as the price it had to pay the masses in order to hold power. Khomeini cut off Iran's previously generous oil supply to the U.S., South Africa and Israel. This modest blow to imperialism was accompanied by the removal of 40,000 U.S. military personnel and their bases from Iran, to the dismay of every reactionary in the Middle East.

The gains achieved by the Iranian revolution are not its alone but belong to the working class everywhere. They must be defended against an Iraqi victory which would put back into power friends of the Iraqi rulers, who also happen to be friends of the former Shah.

Why then is the fundamental class line so hard for many on the left to see? To them the situation appears impossibly complex. After all, the Iraqi "Arab socialist revolution" is at the throat of the Iranian "Islamic revolution." How can one understand the shift from the covert support given Iraq by the U.S. government at the start of the war to the covert support



Khomeini's support for Islamic student takeover of the U.S. embassy in Teheran was a distorted concession to mass anti-imperialist sentiment.

given Iran by the same government later on? How could the "revolutionary" president of Iran publicly embrace unrepentant officers of the ex-Shah who are warring against a state that embraces other officers of the same Shah?

What renders the events so complex in appearance is the deviousness of the contending ruling classes and the illusions and false consciousness of the masses. If there was a revolutionary communist vanguard leading the working class (or even vying for its leadership), the fundamental dividing lines of class versus class and revolution versus counterrevolution would show through the layers of muck. The masses' illusions in their rulers could be dissipated daily.

A proletarian vanguard would fight to enlist the Iranian masses behind a program to qualitatively deepen the gains of the revolution. It would call for the workers' seizure of power to establish a proletarian state, based upon the shoras and maintained by an armed people. It would stand for the right to self-determination for all national minorities, including the right to independence. It would call for land to the peasants. It would fight for separation of church and state and couple this with the party's own efforts to educate against religious mysticism. It would accelerate the struggle against imperialism by aiding the revolutionary struggles in surrounding countries, all of which are powder kegs. It would fight above all for a socialist federation of the Middle East.

In the present war a genuinely communist vanguard, not yet able to take power and overthrow Khomeini, would offer a military bloc to the regime to the extent that it actually fights the Iraqi counterrevolution. But it would not cease its revolutionary political opposition to the regime and would continue to work for its overthrow. It would call for mass mobilizations for the war independent of the regime. If it was represented in the Majlis (parliament), it would vote *against* war credits to the government to show its lack of confidence in it. It would attempt to fraternize with the discontented Iraqi soldiers and align itself with the masses throughout the Middle East; in particular, it would defend the Kurds against the ongoing attacks from Teheran during the war. Above all, it would warn that Khomeini, while not immediately firing on the revolution as are the Iraqis, will do so at the earliest opportunity.

Leftists Betray Workers

Such a program would force the underlying class issues to the surface. But the muck keeping them concealed is not the creation of counterrevolutionaries alone. The far left in Iran, as we shall show in this article, has proved unable to find the Marxist road forward. And what passes for the left in the U.S. is no better. We plan to take up the specific obfuscations of American leftists in a subsequent article, but now it must be pointed out that the League for the Revolutionary Party was condemned on all sides for our position on Iran at the outset of the revolution. Leftists who liked the revolution approved of Khomeini (or declined to say otherwise in public); those who disliked Khomeini refused to support the masses in their revolution.

Today, ironically, many of those who claimed that we were not really supporting the revolution have now deserted the revolution's defense. Others, who were forced by Khomeini's most blatant anti-revolutionary acts to timorously criticize his

regime at long last, reverted in the face of the war to adulation of the regime. And some who supported the Shah's overthrow now are joining the scabs who opposed the revolution in the first place by turning their backs on the workers' gains.

Fortunately, there are signs that the Iranian working class itself has begun to learn not to confuse Khomeini's rule with its own revolutionary aspirations. Workers do not have the class luxury of abandoning the military defense of their gains in favor of purer struggles. It is with them that we take our stand, not with a fraudulent middle-class "Marxism" unable to tell progress from reaction or distinguish between the leaders and the led. The workers in Iran still have the opportunity to sort out the contending socialist forces, make themselves aware of the necessary tasks and build a genuine Trotskyist revolutionary party in time to turn the present war to the advantage of their class throughout the world.

The War Begins

On September 22, Iraq abruptly escalated its incessant border attacks against Iran into a full-scale invasion. In the first few days the Iraqi blitz seemed unstoppable. The Western press reverberated to the trumpets of victory blared in Baghdad: Khorramshahr, Abadan, Ahwaz and Dizful had fallen or were just about to fall. Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq and head of its ruling Baath party, was heralded as the new strongman of the Middle East.

As of this writing, however, Iraqi control over the Iranian cities it has besieged is at best partial and is still hotly contested. The Iranian defense has unexpectedly stiffened and a bitter war of attrition has begun. Saddam Hussein can no longer dream of empire; he must now fight for more limited goals and for the life of his regime. Nor will the desert war continue in isolation. It already has shown the potential to engulf the Middle East and has drawn the military attention of the major imperialist powers. The Iraqis' hope for a quick victory without external interference has disappeared.

Iraq's original stated war aims were to seize full control over the Shatt al Arab, the estuary of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and the key waterway for transporting Iraqi and Iranian oil to the Persian Gulf and the world. The Iraqis also claimed borderlands extending up to 90 miles into Iran. As well, they claimed three supposedly strategic islets near the Straits of Hormuz, the gateway to the Persian Gulf — not for Iraq itself, Saddam Hussein grandly announced, but for the whole "Arab nation."

But Iraq's aims were actually far more ambitious. The battleground for much of the war was the Iranian province of Khuzistan, known to the Iraqis as Arabistan. In it live a large number of Arabs who have been in conflict with the Khomeini regime. It also contains Iran's major sources of oil and its principal refineries. Most significantly, it has been a focal point for revolutionary activity by the working class.

In the first few days of the war, the Iraqis claimed the support of the Arab population of Khuzistan. Saddam Hussein could not expect to win outright control, but he did hope that his troops would be able to oversee a nominally independent Arabistan as an Iraqi protectorate. Likewise, he hoped that the war would give him an increased role in dominating the Persian Gulf, a task once performed by the Shah of Iran with his U.S.-supplied military power. Military domination over



Egyptian general greets arriving U.S. Rapid Deployment Force troops. Iraqi invasion provided cover for beefed-up imperialist presence in Middle East, to the delight of Arab reactionaries like Egypt's Sadat.

the strategic oil route would have placed Hussein on the international stage and would have given Iraq the pre-eminence in the Arab world once held by Egypt under Nasser, a position now vacant.

Above all, the war aims of Iraq included the establishment of a new regime in Iran which would quell the incessant pressure for revolution in Iraq and other Arab states emanating from the turbulence of Iran. The secular Baathist regime in Iraq is Sunni Moslem in background, in contrast to the generally less privileged Shiite majority of the population. The Iraqi Shiites have been the object both of intensive oppression by the Baathists and of religious and anti-Baathist appeals by the Khomeini forces. However, it is not Khomeini's propaganda that represents Iraq's fundamental problem.

Mass Upheavals in Western Asia

For the Iraqi rulers, far more frightening than Khomeini's strength was his weakness, his inability to prevent the disintegration of Iran. Iran's revolution had been brought about not by Khomeini but by the masses' unwillingness to put up any longer with the rule of the Shah. For the year and a half since the Shah was ousted in February 1979, the Ayatollah and all his men could not put Iran back together again. He maneuvered between liberal nationalist subordinates like former Prime Minister Bazargan and President Bani-Sadr and Islamic fundamentalists like Ayatollah Beheshti, head of the Islamic Republican Party which holds the majority in Parliament, and current Prime Minister Rajai, but Khomeini

could not prevent the polarization of Iranian society as the masses fought to achieve oft-promised benefits. The large Kurdish minority had moved into open warfare to gain its rights, and other minorities like the Arabs and Azerbaijanis were continually restive. Workers' councils were expanding rapidly in many industrial areas in Khuzistan and elsewhere and were increasingly coming into conflict with the Khomeini regime.

A free Kurdistan, wrested out of the Ayatollah's hands by a successful Kurdish struggle, would have had a tremendous impact on Iraq, which also has a large Kurdish minority with a rebellious history. No less was the danger for Saddam Hussein of the workers' councils mushrooming just over the border among kindred Arabs in Khuzistan — especially for an Iraqi regime that tolerates no independent trade unions internally. Iraq's main war aim was to smash the Iranian revolution. The fact that Saddam Hussein chose a path different from that of the U.S. or the USSR towards this end (or, for that matter, different from those of the other Arab states or the Iranian ruling class itself) does not mean that the goal was different. It merely proves that capitalists even when uniformly hostile to a common enemy still pursue their normal narrow self-interest.

The uncontained Iranian revolution was constantly threatening to spill over its borders, not least because the Middle East and all of Western Asia have been tottering at the edge of anarchy. In India, Indira Gandhi's regime has been paralyzed in the face of communal, religious and class struggles including general strikes. In Pakistan General Zia ul-Haq conjures up every reactionary trick in the book to stay afloat on a sea of mass hostility, as Pakistan's economy labors

under a foreign debt totalling 41 percent of its gross national product. In Turkey, the military has just seized power in a desperate attempt to repress and stabilize a country beset by seemingly permanent polarization. In Afghanistan, the Russian invaders have made little headway in pacifying the reactionary-led bands that control much of the country. Nor have they been able to prevent anti-government activity by the left-nationalist Khalq. Saudi Arabia, despite all its oil riches, trembles under the threat of its foreign, though chiefly Arab, proletariat; rebellions are now a feature of life in the oil fields. (To maintain order, the Saudi rulers have brought in Pakistani troops whose primary virtue is their inability to speak Arabic and thus be contaminated by the contagion of revolution.) Likewise Kuwait and the Arab Emirates fear their radical, alien and combustible working classes. Lebanon is no longer a nation but a bloodbath contained within artificial borders by foreign forces. Egypt, the most populous Arab country, is growing restless in the absence of the prosperity promised by President Sadat through his capitulation to the U.S. and Israel. Israel itself, the seemingly impregnable colonial-settler bastion of Western imperialism, is rent by political and economic crises and finds it necessary to step up its repression of the Palestinians.

This festering instability is a consequence of enormous class struggles that are emerging throughout the region. They are frequently refracted through the prisms of national wars and religious upheavals. The masses who cannot achieve their goals within the framework of capitalism nevertheless seek every opportunity to do so before trying the only possible successful solution, socialist revolution.

Nationalism and Counterrevolution

The upheavals throughout Western Asia testify both to the mortal crisis of imperialism and the indomitable struggle of the masses against capitalism. They also demonstrate that these struggles have been thwarted and betrayed by nationalism, a bourgeois ideology in all of its myriad forms.

The reason for this tragedy lies outside of the Middle East. The masses of the colonial world went into struggle after World War II without a proletarian leadership at home and without the beacon of successful proletarian revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries. The Stalinized Communist Parties in Western Europe, still bearing the mantle of the Bolshevik revolution, helped usher the old imperialist regimes back into power and thus betray European and colonial workers. In Eastern Europe, Stalin's legions ran roughshod over workers' revolts and destroyed the workers' revolutionary achievements wherever they appeared. Before the war, Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International had correctly concluded that Stalinism had passed definitively over to the side of counterrevolution and imperialism. Trotsky even underestimated the pace of counterrevolution, for Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy were able to complete the overthrow of the degenerating workers' state in Russia and reestablish capitalism by 1939.

Because of the worldwide defeat of the forces of proletarian internationalism, the post-war revolutionary movements fell into the hands of anti-working class petty-bourgeois nationalists, who styled themselves as "African socialists" in Africa, "Communists" in China and Vietnam and "Arab

socialists" or "Baath socialists" in the Middle East. This was because the weakness of local capitalism in the colonial areas demanded a strong role for the bourgeois states which the nationalists wanted. But the socialist label was necessary above all to harness the power of the working masses who thought that their leaders were breaking with the imperialism they hated and launching the struggle toward communist equality and abundance.

Whatever the labels and differences, each of the new states could only attempt to build a nationally dominated capitalism replacing that of the imperialist masters. The Marxist theory of imperialism is based upon the understanding that no backward capitalist power can rise to the level of the most advanced during the imperialist epoch, the highest stage of capitalism. The dominant imperialists must expropriate surplus-value from the entire world to maintain their own existence, and more backward capitalisms are forced to integrate and submit. (For our elaboration and interpretation of this theory, see *Socialist Voice* No. 2, pages 20-22.) Inevitably, the petty-bourgeois nationalists brought only squalor inequality, humiliation and a more or less roundabout route back to dependency upon the imperialist powers. China, with once the most radical of such regimes, now seeks to be America's staunchest reactionary ally. The path from nationalist-led revolution to counterrevolution is nowhere more evident today than in Iraq and Iran.

Limits of Iraqi Nationalism

The nation-state of Iraq was created after World War I by British imperialism; it continued until 1958 as a nominally independent kingdom under the control of businessmen, landowners and tribal sheiks. Under the inspiration of the Egyptian revolution of 1952, a mass uprising broke out in 1958 and toppled the pro-British monarchy. The new government was a coalition among Westernized army officers, the Baath party "socialists" and the overtly bourgeois democratic parties. The previously underground Communist Party also took part. Without an alternative leadership, the masses were tied to a regime that promised much but gave little. The paramount leader, General Kassim, soon reneged on his social promises and attempted to crush all dissidence and mass organizations. He fell from power in 1963; after a series of coups, the radical Baathists seized power in 1968 and Saddam Hussein became the strongman of the new government led by General al-Bakr.

The new regime was no more capable of fulfilling the masses' needs than the old; nor was it yet capable of stifling the Kurdish nationalists or its leftist political opponents who reflected popular ambitions. In 1973, the Baathists formed the "National Progressive Front" government which included the Communists and the Kurdish Democratic Party. But agreements with the Kurdish rebels broke down and civil war ensued. While Russia armed its Iraqi ally, the Kurds were sent arms by Syria, Israel, the U.S. and Iran in an effort to weaken the radical, pro-Russian regime in Baghdad. To end the war and the decade-long conflict between reactionary Iran and radical Iraq, al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein signed the treaty of Algiers, in 1975 with the Iranian Shah. By this treaty, the border along the Shatt al Arab was readjusted in Iran's favor and Iran withdrew all support for the Iraqi Kurds, thus ending

the rebellion.

The Shah's new alliance, a subimperialist stronghold of counterrevolution in the Middle East, enabled the Baathists finally to overcome all their leftist opponents and mop up what was left of the mass movements in Iraq. Hussein also eliminated al-Bakr and executed other high-ranking Baathists. The Iraqi Communist Party was forced underground again, and leading Communists were killed. All the vestiges of the popular organizations thrown up during the revolution were wiped out. The now-counterrevolutionary Iraqi regime came to the Shah's aid directly as well. The Ayatollah Khomeini had been allowed to live in exile in Iraq while directing hostile propaganda against the Shah; in 1978, at Teheran's request, he was forced out of the country and in 1979 Hussein cracked down harshly on all Shiite groups. As the Shah's government was toppling, Baghdad gave Empress Farah a royal welcome as a public show of support.

Hussein represents for the Iraqi revolution what Sadat does for the Nasserist revolution in Egypt, its gravedigger. It is both ironical and logical that Saddam Hussein's most ardent Arab supporter today is King Hussein of Jordan, the former partner of the former Iraqi king in the monarchical federation set up to counter Nasser's United Arab Republic. Whereas the Arab nationalists once reviled the pro-Western Arab despotisms as much as the West itself (for example, the Yemeni monarchy backed by the Saudis fought a civil war against republican rebels supported by Egypt under Nasser and Sadat), today one cannot tell apart Jimmy Carter's friend Sadat from King Khalid. And the once-bitter animosity between Baathist Iraq and Saudi Arabia has been replaced since 1978 by the "Baghdad-Riyadh axis."

Saddam Hussein's political friendship with the Shah extends beyond the grave. Iraq has been allowing General Oveissi, the army commander under the Shah, to broadcast daily propaganda into Iran and, it is reported, to operate military training camps in Iraq. The Shah's last Prime Minister, Shahpur Bakhtiar, has given unequivocal support to Iraq in the war and has announced plans for a new Iranian government to be installed after the Iraqi attack forces Khomeini out. The Iraqi nationalists have come full circle in wiping out the Iraqi revolution. Their regime is only one of several counterrevolutionary currents seeking to restore stability to the Gulf, but it is the one that stands in the best position today to attack the Iranian revolution.

Iran and Islam

If counterrevolution is international in scope, so much the more so is revolution. Underneath the nationalist and religious ideologies, the same class struggle and the same necessities motivate the masses and set up the potential for a solidarity unknown to the bourgeoisie.

The Iranian revolution has had an enormous impact upon the oppressed everywhere. Despite all the propaganda in the Western press, a spirit of exhilaration swept the neo-colonial world as the Iranians crushed the monarchy armed to the teeth by the U.S. and stood off American threats for two years. Even though the Iranians are not Arabs, popular sentiment in the Middle East for Iran persists despite the current war. Youssef M. Ibrahim, a *New York Times* correspondent, wrote on October 26:

"There is no precise way to gauge the degree of Ayatollah Khomeini's influence in the Gulf. There are no polls. News organizations print and broadcast what they are told to by governments. Most political dissent is suppressed and kept out of the public eye.

"But in many casual conversations two weeks ago in Basra, the large city in southern Iraq and a Shiite stronghold, it was more than obvious that people did not have much sympathy for their government. A typical comment in the dusty bazaar was: 'If you ask what they really think, people will tell you that in their heart they are all for Khomeini. He is a man of God. How can one fight that? This is a feeling that is sensed elsewhere in the Gulf among Shiites and Sunni Moslems almost equally.'"

Ibrahim added that "there was a clear demarcation between the rulers' coolness ... and the sense of awe and respect of ordinary people" toward the Iranian leadership.

According to this report and many others, it is Islam that accounts for much of the international solidarity in the "third world" for the Iranian revolution. How did this come about? How was it that Islam played such a large role in what was a fundamentally urban revolution, where the Shah was brought down by the modern expedient of a workers' general strike? This question gets to the heart of much of the confusion over Iran's revolution.

Secular Bourgeoisies Fail

The most common explanation is that under the Shah's rule the only institution allowed to exist legally outside royal control was the Mosque. Therefore it had a head start in organizing popular opposition to the Pahlavi regime. But more has to be said. Eric Rouleau, chief Middle Eastern correspondent for *Le Monde* who evidently has the confidence of various Iranian leaders, has accurately portrayed the revolutionary movement as a political movement with a religious face. No more than the usual proportion of leaders and followers of the Islamic revolution are insincere in their religious beliefs, but there are all sorts of goals on this earth, not in paradise, that the masses expect from Khomeini and Islam. One U.S. correspondent (*MERIP Reports*, March-April 1979) quoted an Iranian worker: "We want Khomeini. He will take power from the rich and give it to us."

Throughout history mankind has frequently expressed its political, economic and social strivings through religious superstition. (To a certain extent that phenomenon plays a role in the current Polish struggles.) But such a general observation does not account for the specific popularity of Islamic fundamentalism today.

Throughout the Middle East (and the world) the decidedly *secular* nationalism of the Westernized classes — the bourgeoisie, the professionals, the intellectuals, the military — has failed in its promise to break the grip of imperialism. As the situation worsens for the masses they search for an answer. Where the nationalist bourgeoisies failed, the pseudo-communists who backed them also showed their bankruptcy. The Tudeh Party (the Iranian pro-Moscow Stalinists) both backed the upper class anti-Shah nationalists and defended Russia's cooperation with the Shah's bloody regime; it certainly offered the masses no genuine alternative. Today it tails Khomeini, and the result is the same.

Secularism today is rife with its cynical acceptance of the imperialist facts of life, and its left face is hardly more attractive. That is the source of the rise of militant Islam as a political movement. Through religion it promises an alternative to the corruption and pro-Western betrayals of the traditional nationalists. The mullahs object to the liquor, lifestyle and relative freedom for women that they associate with the West. But what draws the masses is Islam's promise of equality, prosperity and the end of imperialism. Islam also presents itself as more than simply nationalist; it is Pan-Arab or Pan-Islamic. But it too offers the masses no future.

Islamic nationalism has triumphed so far in two countries, Libya and Iran. While Libya supports Iran in the current war, there is no love lost between Libya's Qaddafi and Khomeini. "Arab socialism" was previously supposed to link Egypt, Syria and Iraq in a close international unity but it forever broke down upon the shoals of bourgeois nationalism. So too the "internationalism" of the religious variety can not overcome the parochial basis of neo-colonial capitalism to establish a genuine solidarity. The Islamic rulers, just like their more mundane opponents, must also protect their capital base. They too struggle with the West to broker a higher percentage of the wealth that imperialism extracts from their resources and exploits from their working classes.

Iran and Libya, as oil-producing countries, can use OPEC to augment their share of the oil profits, but it is the imperialist oil cartels who control the markets and the industry generally — despite the West's attempt to blame the Arabs for the economic ruin the world faces. The income of the oil-producing countries depends on the viability of the capitalist world economy. They lose if industrial production in the U.S., Western Europe and Japan winds down; they lose if the dollars they hold become worthless; they lose if the banks they must place their funds in collapse, if the technology they need for oil production and industrial development is no longer generated, if they cannot get the armaments they need to compete with their equally avaricious neighbors.

In Iran, the mullahs have a particular tie to the bazaar merchants who seek more political and economic influence for themselves at the expense of the big bourgeois compradores enriched by the Shah's favoritism. They do not wish to eliminate the upper bourgeoisie but to join it. The mullah's link with a section of the bourgeoisie is organic, unlike their appeal to the masses. For the masses Islam is false consciousness. It is an obscurantist lie which accepts bourgeois secularism's self-identification with science and materialism in order to reject both. It reflects some of the masses' aspirations and distorts others in order to deflect the workers and their oppressed allies from their material potential. This can only be achieved by the workers' fighting for their real interest, an internationalist revolution to establish a scientific socialist society which could overcome both the middle-class secular and religious superstitions of bourgeois life.

The Regime vs. the Working Class

The Iranian revolution gave rise to a prolonged struggle between the capitalist and pro-capitalist classes and the workers of Iran. It began when the workers' general strikes and revolutionary councils played the major role in destroying the Shah's regime. Mehdi Bazargan, the first prime minister of the

new government, attacked those who "say that the army must be destroyed and councils run the affairs of the nation, and that people must be in a state of revolution all the time. If this goes on we will have no alternative but to resign." (This was cited in an important article, "Workers' and Peasants' Councils in Iran" by Shahrzad Azad in the October *Monthly Review*.) Another Khomeini aide was more direct: he damned militant workers as "prostitutes." Khomeini himself repeatedly warned the workers that they would be dealt with harshly. Azad summarized the situation: "The position of the new regime was that councils should be formed by the government."

From the outset the regime attempted to strengthen its control over the workers and other mass movements. It waged a month-long campaign to take control of oil production out of the hands of the councils and try to pressure the workers into raising production. It began a bitter war against the Kurds and attacked Azerbaijanis, Arabs and other national minorities as well. Iranian women, who played a large role in the uprisings against the Shah, were faced with measures aimed at imposing the veil as an obvious prelude to even more restrictive steps. This attempt was met in March 1979 with a mass demonstration by women in Teheran, which succeeded in stalling the attack but only for a while.

Workers' Struggle Resurges

The regime's central assault was against the working class. Many of the shoras were taken over initially by instrumentalities like the "Imam's Committees" and the Pasdaran, the revolutionary guards loyal to the clergy. Religious workers were pitted against the non-religious, and the left bore the brunt of the purges. So long as people believed that the Islamic regime could deliver on its promises, the struggles favored the government.

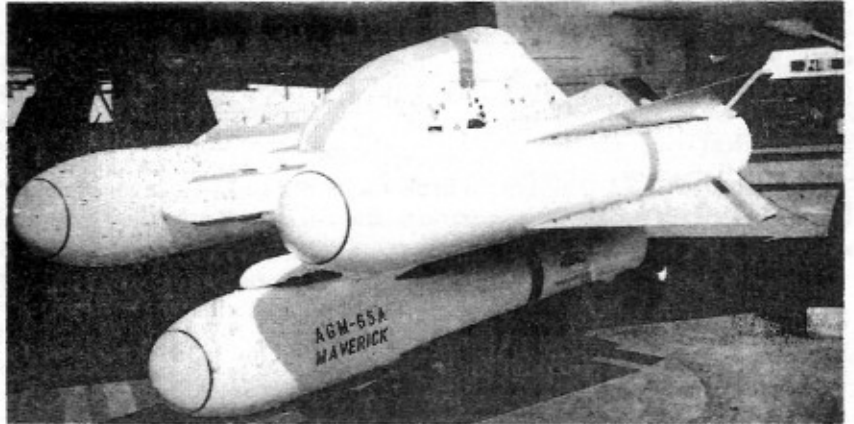
But as conditions worsened and the government took harsher measures, the struggle reignited. It is easy to see why. Nearly 4 million people (out of a population of 35 million, of whom 10.4 are "economically active") are unemployed, and the number is growing. The annual inflation rate is 50 percent. Industrial investment and production are down sharply. Oil income, the foundation of the economy, was very low even before the war, bringing in at best half of the projected \$23 billion annually.

By August 1979 the workers' struggle was resurgent and shoras began to flourish among both the workers and the peasants, especially in minority areas. The clash between the Kurds and the regime reached a climax with the military defeat of the Khomeini forces. The December 1979 issue of *Kar (Labour)*, the English-language publication of the left-wing Fedayeen organization, published an analysis written in late October:

"The class consciousness of the workers has rapidly increased. ... It must be noted, however, that the majority still believe that the clergy and the government cannot meet their demands 'because of their current difficulties,' and they still hope that something will be done, but it is true to say that since the uprising, most of the hopes, ideals and beliefs have gradually disappeared. Many workers now know that neither the government nor the clergy intend to meet the principal demands of the working class."



U.S. was quick to send reactionary Saudi Arabia four sophisticated AWAC aircraft (above), ostensibly for defense. But these planes actually can serve as battlefield command centers in the war against revolution. In contrast, Maverick air-to-ground missiles (below), part of \$400 million in military equipment bought by Iran, are held hostage by U.S. rulers until Teheran is enlisted in the struggle for counter-revolution.



With all due consideration paid to the mixed consciousness of the masses, it is indeed true that the regime was in considerable trouble, unable to reorganize the economy and unite the contending classes behind its bourgeois program. At this conjuncture, the "Students Following the Imam's Line," a militant Islamic group linked to sections of the Islamic Revolutionary Party (IRP), seized the U.S. embassy and held its staff hostage, demanding the return of the Shah who was then hospitalized in New York. They also demanded the wealth he stole, an apology for past U.S. interference and other concessions. The Khomeini leadership seized upon the resulting showdown with America to enroll the fervently anti-imperialist masses once again under its banner.

For the masses had come to distrust the regime's anti-imperialism. Oil workers had held down production — to the dismay of the regime — both to safeguard Iran's major resource and to prevent it from being shipped to particularly hated reactionary states such as South Africa and Israel. Shortly before the embassy seizure it was reported (U.P.I., *New York Daily News*, October 29, 1979) that the Joint Oil Workers Syndicate had issued a statement quoted in the *Teheran Times* saying:

"We warn that if the Iranian government fails to act in demanding the extradition of the hated Shah, or the United States refuses to heed their demand, the bold workers in south Iran will reconsider the export of oil to America and will in fact cut the U.S. oil supply."

The *Teheran Times* added that the union charged that the Shah's admittance to the U.S. "has not taken place without the blessing of the Iranian foreign ministry." The oil workers were

entirely right to be suspicious. Unfortunately, Khomeini was able to support the embassy seizure in order to divert the struggle into a nationalist confrontation; his support was aimed at preventing the masses from linking their anti-imperialist consciousness to a struggle to overthrow capitalism in Iran. Nevertheless, the seizure was a distorted product of the class struggle that also diverted Khomeini's regime from its attempted compromise with imperialism.

The embassy affair and, later, the abortive American raid on Iran did rally mass support for the regime, but this could not overcome deteriorating material conditions and a polarizing class situation. In March of this year the regime began its crackdown again. In his well publicized message to the nation on March 21, Khomeini announced that strikes would be prohibited and that strikers could be hauled before the Islamic courts as "counterrevolutionaries." He further pronounced inhibitions against peasant land seizures and inaugurated a witchhunt in the universities. He condemned the left explicitly and announced that the coming year would see the restoration of "order" and "security."

Khomeini's speech initiated an attack on the workers, peasants, national minorities and the left in defense of capitalism. The regime needed to reduce its "international isolation" — its distance from the imperialist powers and their pawns. To restabilize the Iranian economy it needed not only passivity from the masses but American and Western help. The imperialists were likewise willing to cooperate in such a stabilization by anyone, including Khomeini, because of their fear of the spread of revolution.

Fully half of the Iranian army as well as the Pasdaran were hurled once again into war against the Kurds. The Kurdish Democratic Party, itself moderate and nationalist, had been in conflict with the more revolutionary Kurdish peasants over land seizures, but Khomeini's attack forced the Kurds to unite behind their more conservative leaders.

The regime also moved to "Islamicize" and close down the universities. Increasing strength by campus leftists and the growing chasm between them and the regime's supporters reflected the deepening class struggles beyond college walls. The regime not only moved to expel leftist groups but sent the thugs of the IRP, the Hezbollah (Followers of the Party of God), to physically attack every leftist demonstration in Teheran for a period of months. There were murders as well as beatings that resulted, and the thugs, lumpenproletarians and patronage dependents of the mullahs, were frequently abetted by the Pasdaran.

As the political climate shifted, John Kifner reported in the *New York Times* (May 30) that "In the street, complaints against clerical rule are increasingly open and the word 'akhound,' a derogatory term for the Moslem clergy, is often heard."

The Role of the Shoras

In the countryside, the Pasdaran have come to the aid of beleaguered landlords when the peasant struggles for land heightened. The regime also turned increasingly hostile to the workers' shoras in the cities. Azad points out that "The policy of the Islamic Republic has been to discredit, deform or dismantle these councils; and in recent months, certain factory councils, peasants' councils and students' councils have been the target of verbal and physical attacks."

The shoras are highly heterogenous in nature, many being entirely working class while others include some managerial personnel as members as well. Some still favor the regime while others are independent and antagonistic. Few accurate statistics are available to us at this time, but it is clear that the shoras are widespread in the major industrial centers. In some cities there are central shoras coordinating and responsible to the local factory and industry councils. In the months prior to the war, the proletarian shoras were spreading throughout Iran and radicalizing.

In an interview in *Socialist Worker* of September 1980, an Iranian leftist, Shirin Rani, reported that the government has "lost control over the 'Islamic' workers councils" in the vital oil industry. "Two days after a national meeting of 1000 oil workers delegates, the Revolutionary Court ruled that the councils must be disbanded. Yet they have been unable to make their order effective." Rani also points out that the IRP recently lost control over the shora at the huge Ahwaz rolling mill. It immediately set up an Islamic Association of only 12 to 20 people to counter the shora. "Yet three weeks ago two members of the IA were expelled from the factory when it was proved that they had been members of the old secret police, SAVAK." He added: "A few days later they ejected Ayatollah Jannati, head of the Revolutionary Court, who attempted to intervene. In the past in Iran it was enough to bring in a mullah to quell a dispute."

Another victory: in July, Teheran's water workers discovered that their wages had been suddenly cut in half.

7000 went on strike and 2000 occupied the offices of the Water Board. The workers forced a meeting with President Bani-Sadr and won all their demands.

But the picture is by no means entirely rosy. Government workers, notably women, have been forced to retreat. The regime still retains its grip on many shoras. And, as Azad describes it: "In May the most militant of the Tabriz factories, the pro-Fedaii machine-tool plant and the farm tractor plant, were physically attacked by the 'black gangs' of the Islamic Republican Party and forced to dismantle their councils."

Khomeini's Regime

Despite all the setbacks and the continued influence of the clergy, the direction of the working class and its institutions has been clearly positive. Equally clear has been the motion of the regime. Indicative facts summarizing the first year of Khomeini's rule were given by Michel Rovere in *Intercontinental Press* of August 4:

"Last year 7 billion rials were spent for workers' housing and 4 billion rials went to unemployed persons. On the other hand, the total aid to industrialists was 80 billion rials. Industrial debts benefitted from a one-year moratorium, while the banking reform and the lowering of interest rates represented another gift of 300 billion rials to investors."

Although the regime is undoubtedly capitalist, fundamentally defending the interests of the Iranian bourgeoisie, Khomeini's role cannot be so openly unambiguous. He acts as a Bonapartist figure, balancing between the competing wings of the bourgeoisie and upper petty bourgeoisie in order to appear as the spokesman for the "national interest" of both the capitalists and the working masses. He projects a populist egalitarian appeal on the one hand and attempts to rebuild bourgeois order and discipline on the other. This is the source of his frequent unwillingness to be specific, his incessant demagoguery which is expressed through overriding religious generalities.

Within the ruling groups, Khomeini most comfortably spoke in pre-war days for the upper strata of bazaaris and petty bourgeoisie who see their salvation in a strong nationalist movement which would have a great appeal throughout the neo-colonial world. This would give them bargaining power within the world market which, although dominated by the imperialists, contains some room for maneuver because of the inevitable imperialist rivalries. To accomplish this, they require the resumption of orderly oil production, general stability and the obeisance of the working class and all of the discontented masses. They have tried to whittle away at the nationalized character of vital industries. The regime's use of the Islamic appeal is designed to accomplish all this, but even Khomeini's charisma has been unable to overcome the fundamental class struggle and establish the order and disciplined unity that they see in Islam.

The moderate wing of the bourgeoisie, represented currently by Bani-Sadr and Ghotbzadeh and formerly by Bazargan, is made up of those in the bourgeoisie who see that there is no hope for capitalism in Iran except through a restoration of commercial relations with imperialism. It has much in common with pro-Shah elements like Bakhtiar, who was a political associate of Bazargan in the old National Front, many of whose adherents are in Bani-Sadr's camp today. The

moderates' greater willingness to end the crisis over the American hostages reflects this attitude. This wing also includes the top layers of the military, only a small portion of which was purged by the new regime. Its Western-trained and U.S.-oriented political and technological leadership may or may not be loyal to the monarchy but will act for restoring imperialist ties under whatever government.

While Khomeini balanced between the class forces in Iran in order to defend capitalism, various pseudo-Marxists held that his class interests were different. The most common current believed that Khomeini's populist Islamic rhetoric represented a major step towards socialism; this variety of opportunist leftism surfaces in every mass revolutionary event. But the uniqueness of the Iranian events brought out another species, represented by the Spartacist League in the U.S., who took Khomeini's religious rhetoric seriously and warned that he was about to restore "feudalism" and return the country to the 7th century! No doubt many of Khomeini's ideas are medieval; no doubt he did subject women to the chador and he did see to it that homosexuals, adulterers and others he called deviants were stoned to death. But he did not restore pre-capitalist society (which in Persia was not feudalism but oriental despotism) nor did he destroy any capitalist institutions. Modern-day capitalism is more than happy to tolerate such acts as long as bourgeois social relations are untouched.

Agents of Bourgeois Rule

Unlike the Western feudal lords who held political and economic power in their own hands, the bourgeoisie generally does not rule directly. The financial and industrial oligarchs delegate political authority to special officers who form an executive committee for the management and defense of capitalism. There is usually a close fraternal relationship between the bourgeoisie and its political minions, but in a crisis this is not always the case. Thus reformist working class leaderships like the British Labour Party have run capitalism for the capitalists; so have Nazi petty-bourgeois thugs. Given the revolutionary and anti-imperialist sentiments of the masses, the Iranian bourgeoisie had to turn to Khomeini, and Khomeini has frequently had to turn away from the openly bourgeois types like Bazargan and Bani-Sadr to the religious "fanatics." He uses the religious ideas as an opiate to satisfy and restrain the masses, as well as the Hezbollahs to discipline them. Indeed, the fanatical thugs have even been used against bourgeois elements themselves to keep them from demanding too obvious bourgeois rule and thereby risk the survival of their own system. Khomeini is a fanatical obscurantist but he is not the crazy fool depicted by American chauvinist commentators.

When the mass struggles gained in strength, Khomeini played his Islamic card to divert them. When he felt that the workers and national minorities could be successfully attacked, he allowed himself to link arms openly with the bourgeoisie through its "moderate" politicians. Also, he favored the moderates when it became clear that Iran's decaying economy needs Western assistance. The West's most far-sighted spokesmen have approved. When Khomeini's attacks against the masses this past spring became evident, the *New York Times* wrote in an editorial (June 12):

"Important revelations can come in ludicrous ways. In a midnight conversion to the views of Jimmy Carter, Ayatollah Khomeini declares that 'the masses cannot any longer govern' Iran, that the revolution has become its own worst enemy, that the nation needs a government to address its terrible problems and finally end the distraction of the hostage game."

Whenever Khomeini endorsed Bani-Sadr he was also compelled to slap his wrist in order to maintain his above-the-fray credentials. He had no intention of alienating his mass base in the petty bourgeoisie and more backward sections of the working class. He could afford no flat-out deal with the West such as the masses suspected Bani-Sadr of favoring.

The Islamic Republicans, on the other hand, used their anti-imperialist credentials through the popular hostage incident to win control of the Majlis (the Iranian parliament) and nibble away at Bani-Sadr's powers; they succeeded, for example, in forcing the president to accept their candidate for prime minister, Rajai. For all its victories, however, the IRP has reached a dead end. Even the petty bourgeoisie relies on foreign trade. The most nationalist elements would go so far as to rupture friendly relations with the West but they would not want to see the economy sink. There is no independent route for the petty bourgeoisie; ultimately its top layers must come to terms with the dominant sectors of capitalism (which in the world today means imperialism and in Iran means the pro-imperialist bourgeoisie) unless it is displaced by socialism. Indeed, the increased verbal and physical attacks by the IRP's thugs as well as the introduction of more anti-working class laws testify to the growing chasm between the IRP and the masses. The logic of events was pushing the workers' shoras and their allies to the left and into confrontation with all wings of capitalism, including the Islamic reactionaries.

Effects of the War in Iran

The Iraqi attack was a godsend for the Ayatollah. At first it helped lock together the various polarizing class forces behind Khomeini. Workers, peasants and students, feeling that the issue was the defense of the revolution as a whole, flooded government offices to enlist. Even though the Western press at the outset of the war favored Iraq, it nevertheless communicated the amazement of the American intelligence officers and the reporters themselves at the unexpected spirit and defense put up by the Iranians. The contrast with Iraq was striking, for the Iraqi military has been very careful to rely on heavy weapons rather than infantry assaults out of fear that a large death toll would ignite anti-war rebellion at home. The Iraqis have got little or no response from the Arab people of Khuzistan to their "fraternal" appeals against Teheran.

But Iran, despite its much larger population and potentially stronger army, seems incapable of mounting an offensive. The regime's unwillingness to arm the masses and the past decimation of the Shah's army (and its current use as a political weapon) are the key factors. A *Le Monde* dispatch cited in the September 30 *New York Times* pointed out that the "authorities have had to turn many men down. In fact, radio broadcasts have discouraged people in certain cities, such as Tabriz, from signing up, saying that so far they have enough volunteers." Tabriz, it should be noted, is the capital of Azerbaijan where Khomeini is not exactly popular.

In the first days of the war, the KDP announced its support

for Teheran, and Kurdish forces blew up an Iraqi oil pipeline. Nevertheless, shortly afterward an Iranian dispatch announced the suppression of a Kurdish rebellion in Iran. It later became clear that the Iranian regime had taken advantage of the war to treacherously attack the Kurdish city of Mahabab; Michel Rovere's article in the October 30 *Inprecor* (French-language edition) quotes articles in *Le Monde* of October 15 and 16. 20,000 Iranian troops are maintained in Kurdistan away from the front with Iraq to keep the Kurds under suppression.

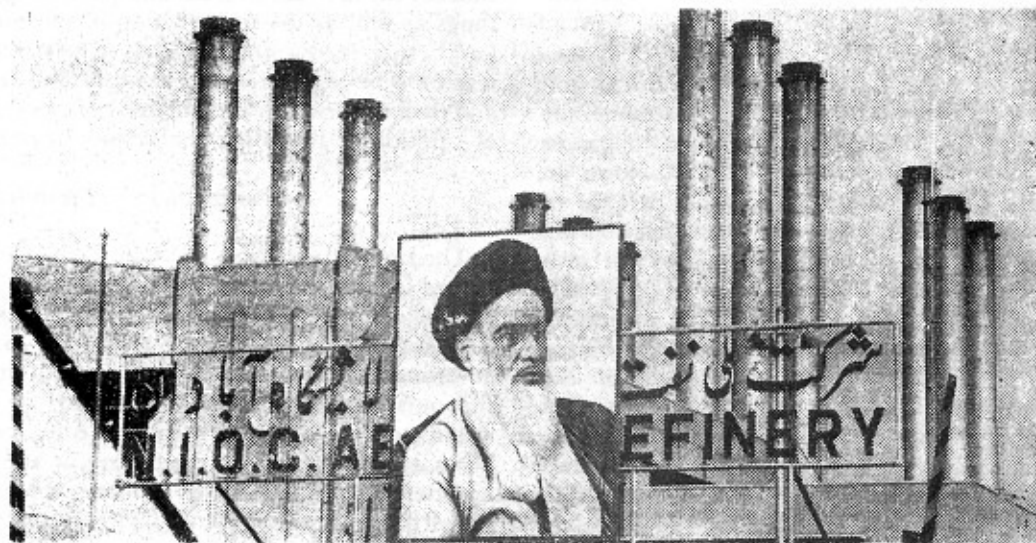
The bulk of the fighting in the besieged cities of Khorramshahr and Abadan has been carried out by the Pasdaran and irregular militia (some if not most of them organized by the leftist Fedayeen and Mojahedin). The French Press Agency (cited by Rovere) reported that the fighting in Abadan featured street barricades and actions by numerous neighborhood committees. It is not Teheran's army which is bearing the brunt of the war.

French reporters covering the second Iraqi offensive of October 15 to 22 noted the almost total absence of artillery, helicopters and anti-tank missiles on the Iranian side defending Abadan. Rovere quoted *Le Monde's* correspondent Eric Rouleau, who recalled how Iranian guerrillas had asked of him and Iranian journalists: "But where are our ground forces? Why are we not receiving heavy weapons and

defend the revolution. In July, the Central Council of Islamic Shoras representing 900 factory councils called for the general arming of the population. Obviously the regime has not complied. Leftists report from Iran that shoras are raising militia and have set up schools to train fighters. Rovere indicates that neighborhood committees are now organizing rationing of goods and suppression of the black market, with even more autonomy from the clergy than in the February 1979 uprising against the Shah.

There is method to the regime's seeming madness. The army is avoiding battle because it is being rebuilt for another purpose — and it is being rebuilt. The regime had begun before the war to release from prison former SAVAK agents and pro-Shah officers; once the war started, this trend was accelerated. Some 200 airmen jailed for counterrevolutionary plots were freed along with a large but unspecified number of army officers. The air force officers were probably not pro-Shah like the army top brass; in fact, air officers had been in the forefront of the insurrection that toppled the monarchy. But they did constitute an upper-class elite, trained in the West, whom the government apparently wants to have available for use.

President Bani-Sadr was closely identified with the release of the officers. His stock has gone up during the war: for example, the Ayatollah awarded the Supreme Defense



Workers' councils (shoras) in oil and other industries were crucial in the Shah's overthrow. Many have broken with the Islamic regime. Shoras will be key to Khomeini's overthrow and are the embryo of a future workers' state.

munitions?...During the conflict with the Kurdish rebels we promptly received reinforcements and arms at the slightest request. But for three weeks our anxious appeals have gone unanswered." It seems apparent that the regime is willing to let militant guerrillas perish heroically against Iraq rather than strengthen the workers of Khuzistan who have learned not to trust Teheran. In the same October 16 dispatch, Rouleau refers to the "almost total absence of the ground forces in the oil triangle" where the major fighting is taking place.

Behind the front it is the masses who are mobilizing to

Council which he heads full power over the press, radio, television and all interviews by government officials. Technocrats and modern bourgeois elements like him appear to be the only "practical" people around, able to mobilize the armed forces and the wartime economy. Bani-Sadr has made little attempt to hide his willingness to deal with non-revolutionaries. According to Rouleau of *Le Monde*, he said: "As far as I'm concerned, competence and patriotism come before fidelity to the regime." (*Washington Post*, October 10).

Bani-Sadr's attempt to rebuild the Iranian army's officer



In 1979, thousands of Iranians marched in demonstrations pledging their lives to defend revolution from American attacks. Khomeini regime has since confiscated their weapons and still refuses to arm the people, even in the face of Iraqi invasion.

corps, together with the limited fighting tasks given to it, show that the army's strength is being saved to smash the revolutionary forces (the workers, peasants, minorities and many Paskandaran militants). This task also requires an alliance with imperialist forces outside Iran. Thus the president has been trying for some time, cautiously, to get the American hostages released in exchange for the approximately \$350 million worth of military equipment and spare parts owed to Iran and the unfreezing of its assets held by Americans. In this venture Bani-Sadr has been joined by successive waves of defectors from the IRP, braving the anti-imperialist hostility of the masses. Still, a significant sector of the IRP has withstood the pressure placed on it by the regime and resisted any deal. But they fundamentally have no alternative to the reestablishment of solid bourgeois power based on an alliance with one or another imperialist force.

Given the Byzantine character of Teheran's ruling class politics it is impossible to predict who will emerge as the chief Khomeini lieutenant or government leader in the future. However, if capitalism is to survive, power must rest more squarely with the dominant bourgeoisie. A military attack on the masses' gains will be needed and is being prepared. The army will not permit differences over whether the Shah or the new regime should have been supported in 1979 to prevent it from smashing the proletariat when all other measures have failed. It is not only the Iraqis who seek a military coup in Teheran. They differ from Khomeini and Bani-Sadr only in that they are firing their guns today while the latter are getting ready to do so tomorrow. If the Iranian working class does not come to understand these fundamental relationships of forces it will be crushed.

Imperialism and the War

The U.S. had long maintained its alliance with the Shah to safeguard imperialist exploitation of the Middle East. Not only did the imperialists wring oil profits out of Iran's resources and workers, but they built up the Shah as a

subimperialist military strongman to protect the entire Gulf region from revolutionary "anarchy." When the Shah was ousted, the U.S. and its allies quickly decided that Khomeini, however distasteful he appeared, was the only hope for a new stabilization. Thus arms were sent to Iran in mid-1979 to strengthen Teheran's war against the Kurds. And even after the hostage seizure, the U.S. government hoped Iran's divided rulers would find a solution so that normal relations could immediately resume. But the U.S. also recognized that Khomeini could not assume the Shah's pacifying role in the Gulf — indeed, the Ayatollah was stirring up trouble for imperialism by *widening* the aspirations of Persian nationalism even more than the Shah dared in his last years.

For these reasons the United States initially "tilted" in favor of Iraq. The Western press played with the idea of a Bakhtiari-Oveissi regime in Teheran inspired by Iraq, and the imperialists certainly were pleased with the idea of a quick war to choke off the disruptive effects of Iran's revolution. At the very least they hoped Iraq would take over the Shatt al Arab and thereby lessen the chances of bottling up the oil supply. So for the first period of the war the U.S. expressed its "neutrality" by supporting Iraq's phony cease-fire proposals that did not call for troop withdrawals and therefore could not have been accepted by Iran. Even more ominously, the U.S. took the opportunity of the war to greatly strengthen its naval forces near the Gulf. As well, it secured additional military bases in the region to the relief of pro-imperialist regimes. And AWAC (battlefield headquarters) planes were sent "for defensive purposes" to Iraq's friend Saudi Arabia.

But as the war continued, the U.S. reconsidered. Saddam Hussein won no lightning victories, Khomeini's rule was not undermined, and, worst of all, the belligerents did not refrain from bombing each others' oil installations. If the war were to spread to other countries, its effects on world oil supplies could be disastrous. Thus the U.S. warned Jordan and Oman not to give aid to Iraq and demanded that Iraq limit its war aims to the Shatt al Arab. At the same time, the U.S. began making overtures to Iran: Iraq was labelled the "aggressor" in public, and Carter said that the military spare parts ordered by the



Iraq jubilantly claimed victory at outset of war. Soon Iranian militia wiped away counterrevolutionary glee. Iraq now executes suspected Iranian leftists and revolutionary guards on the spot.

Shah could be freed if the hostage question was settled. This was not simply an electoral ploy by Carter but a logical consequence of imperialism's quest for stable allies in the Gulf region. Brzezinski had always favored a counterrevolutionary alliance with Islamic reaction, and the new moves recognized the careful steps toward accommodation being made by Bani-Sadr and Khomeini in Teheran.

The Russian imperialists played the diplomacy game in similar fashion. At the outset of the war Russia had a "friendship" treaty with Iraq but little real influence there since Baghdad had begun looking Westward for support. At the same time, the invasion of Afghanistan had confirmed Khomeini's distrust of the superpower on his northern border. But Russia still preferred Khomeini to an overtly pro-Western ruler, even though it had lived quite easily with the Shah. Anything would be better than the alternative of destabilization and possibly revolution just over the frontier.

As we have demonstrated many times before (most recently in analyzing the Afghan events in *Socialist Voice* No. 9), Russia, like the West, is committed to the support of imperialist stability in the Middle East as elsewhere, and only desires a greater measure of influence for itself. A heightened role in the Middle East would enable the USSR to better defend itself in its inter-imperialist rivalry and would also be a bargaining point with the economically stronger West on which state capitalist Russia depends for vital capital and technology imports. So the Russian rulers tried to use their arms deal with Iraq to temper Hussein's war aims and thus curry favor with Iran. Replacements continued to be supplied to Iraq through Jordan when the Shatt al Arab became unsafe for shipping, but transport of arms to Iran through Russian territory was

also permitted.

Russia's attitude was made clear by the pact concluded between the USSR and Syria during the war, an agreement that went beyond any the Russians had been able to secure previously in the Middle East. Syria was at swords' points with its fellow "Arab socialists" in Iraq, and the new alliance enabled the Syrians to support Iran openly against its rival. Like Libya, which also backs Iran, Syria is not a Russian puppet, but the new pact is an indication of Russian diplomatic gains as a consequence of the war.

The imperialist powers are maneuvering to keep the area as stable as possible under the volatile conditions of outright war. That is their intent; however, their national self-interest could easily lead one or the other to fear that its rival was gaining too much influence with the local potentates and could thus precipitate a wider conflict. The lesser capitalist powers too are frightened by the regional volatility. The Arab states of the Gulf, for example, have publicly condemned but privately welcomed the increased U.S. and Western European forces sent in. And Israel is openly gleeful over the war because its enemies are killing each other and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, its primary foe, has lost favor with all sides by trying to mediate. Israel fears that the U.S. might not take proper advantage of the situation while the Russians advance, but its main fear is that Khomeini will collapse and Iraq will be greatly strengthened. Thus it has leaned towards Iran throughout the conflict. The diplomatic interplay that puts Israel together with Libya and Syria on the side of Khomeini is quixotic but only the result of the necessary absurdities of capitalistic logic. Given that their own survival is at stake, the Israeli subimperialists have a sharp eye out for their interests. An aide to Prime Minister Begin summed up the situation accurately and concisely: "Khomeini is Kerensky" (*New York Times*, November 1). The Israelis and the more powerful imperialists offer support to Iran the nation, not the revolution; that is, they support the nationalist capitalist forces in Teheran out of fear that their weakness before the masses will result in their fall and the beginning of the collapse of imperialist power in the Middle East. For everyone knows what happened to the weak provisional government of Kerensky in 1917, when the masses would take no more and a revolutionary leadership was on the scene.

The Iranian Left

The question of the leadership of the Iranian working class is absolutely crucial, both for determining the outcome of the immediate events and for the future of the revolution. Its power and revolutionary consciousness already established, the Iranian proletariat is facing decisions that will determine the fate of the masses throughout the Middle East. If it can find the route to proletarian revolution the history of the world will be altered.

However, to our knowledge no organization on the Iranian left is following a genuine Marxist and Leninist strategy towards the revolution. The capitalist logic penetrating the radical petty bourgeoisie and even the most advanced sections of the working class has not yet been overcome. The Bolshevik position must be based on the following fundamental principles:

- 1) The Khomeini regime in all of its wings rules fun-

damentally to preserve the power of the bourgeoisie. The state it serves is capitalist.

2) The petty bourgeoisie, religious or secular, anachronistic or modern, has no potential for independent class power. Its top layers blend into the bourgeoisie and will inevitably support capitalism. Its plebeian base, urban and rural, can be won to an alliance dominated by the proletariat but only if that class poses a decisive way out of the social impasse.

3) Bourgeois national power, energized either by the bourgeoisie directly or by its petty-bourgeois minions, has no lasting independence in the industrially backward countries. It must inevitably align with one or another imperialist power and rejoin the world market as a subordinate factor.

4) Faced with a proletariat which struggles for class independence and ultimately state power, all the bourgeois forces and their top petty-bourgeois allies will in time go over to the counterrevolution. No intermediate democratic anti-imperialist state (whether "beneficent" capitalist or indeterminate in class character) can persist as opposed to the two real alternatives, bourgeois or proletarian rule. In this epoch, capitalism is imperialism and must succeed in super-exploiting the masses, and thus in destroying democratic gains, if it is to survive.

5) Only a workers' state, the proletarian dictatorship, based upon institutions such as shoras or soviets can preserve the gains of the masses and offer an alternative to the miasma of capitalism. And just as capitalism is international, and no bourgeois state can survive in isolation, the proletarian revolution must be internationalist and must spur revolutions beyond national borders in order to survive.

6) To succeed, the workers must be led by layers conscious of their tasks and the necessity of state power. The most advanced and combative forces must organize into a vanguard party, part of an international revolutionary party.

Lessons from the Bolsheviks

These fundamental Marxist principles of this epoch are derived from Lenin's analysis of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism characterizing its epoch of decay, and Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. They have been deepened and validated by the success of the Bolshevik revolution, and confirmed in a negative way by the Russian counterrevolution and the rotting of all the petty-bourgeois nationalist "anti-imperialist" revolutions ever since.

Along with the basic principles, a number of necessary tactics were tested in the 1917 events and are applicable in other revolutionary situations that follow the same general laws. For example, the Bolsheviks offered a tactical military bloc to Kerensky against counterrevolution while maintaining their absolute political hostility to his government. In the current war, the proletarian military policy requires defense of Iran against the Iraqi attack. If Iran falls, the revolutionary gains and the shoras will be destroyed.

However, such a military bloc means above all the independent mobilization and arming of the workers based upon their shoras. It means warning the workers that although the Iraqis are the ones firing on them now, their own rulers will be doing so tomorrow — thus not one iota of political support to Khomeini. If and when the regime uses the war as a cover for attacking the masses — as the Khomeinists

attacked the Kurds — then fire back and use the episode to open the social revolution against all the counterrevolutionaries. Such a revolutionary defense of Iran will prove to the masses that it is indeed the communists who are the best defenders of their interests rather than Khomeini who betrays them.

The greatest danger on the Iranian left today comes from the petty-bourgeois "socialists" who give political support, with criticisms or not, to the Khomeini regime. Such opportunist leftists hope to profit from the initial patriotism of the masses who are flocking to the defense of the regime. But as the war continues and the government's counterrevolutionary activities become clearer, the working class will rapidly learn who are its leaders and who are its betrayers.

Tudeh's Abject Betrayal

The most prominent left organization is the Tudeh party already mentioned. Because of its past betrayals, the Shah's repression and its pro-Moscow line, it was unable to play any significant role in the revolution. Subsequently it has subordinated itself to Khomeini in every way: it was the only left group to vote for the Islamic Republic in the March 1979 referendum, and it proudly identifies its program with the Ayatollah's. We have seen no reports on its activity during the war, but there is not the slightest reason to expect even a wobble in the Bolshevik direction.

Of the groups that consider themselves oppositionist and revolutionary the most significant at the moment are the Mojahedin (Organization of Freedom Fighters of the Iranian People) and the Fedayeen (Fighters, or Organization of Iranian People's Fedayeen Guerrillas). We note that the translation of these names varies in the English-language press; we are using the most common spellings. The Fedayeen are also sometimes referred to by the initials OIPFG. Both of these groups waged guerrilla struggles against the Shah and have lost numerous martyrs in the struggle. Both are influential in the workers' shoras. The principle ideological difference is that the Mojahedin considers itself to be radical Islamic, while the Fedayeen is "Marxist-Leninist," that is to say, pro-Stalinist, in its historical orientation and in its present policy.

The Mojahedin policy towards the Khomeini government has been confused and ambiguous, reflecting its ideology that mixes devoutness with elements of Marxism. Its anti-clericalism has gained it some support among the Westernized nationalists, including, some reports say, Bazargan and former foreign minister Yazdi. More recently there have been indications that Bani-Sadr is sympathetic towards a bloc with the Mojahedin. Such a link with the ruling bourgeoisie which is at the threshold of counterrevolution would be complete betrayal of the working class.

The Fedayeen are smaller than the Mojahedin but more important in the shoras, even though they are primarily a student-based group like the rest of the far left. Because of their radical opposition to the regime, they suffered assassinations and tortures at the hands of Khomeini's thugs — as well as the Shah's. Even so, they hold to the old Menshevik and, later, Stalinist conception of the two-stage revolution: first a bourgeois, anti-imperialist revolution and then ultimately a socialist revolution. The overthrow of the Shah

would at first appear to represent the first stage, so that now socialist revolution would be called for, but when the Fedayeen were forced underground by Khomeini's repression in the summer of 1979, they inserted what in practice amounted to an intermediate stage: the eventual replacement of Khomeini's regime by bourgeois democracy. However sincere their opposition to the present regime, their politics makes them left-wing supporters of nationalist capitalism.

In June 1980 the Fedayeen split, with the majority changing its position to critical support of the Khomeini government; the minority holds something akin to the old position outlined above. The majority's shift is a logical adaptation of the Fedayeen idea of an anti-imperialist people's capitalism; when Khomeini made one of his leftward oscillations, the majority jumped aboard, declaring that anti-imperialist bourgeois democracy did not require his overthrow. Although it would prefer that the "anti-imperialist movement" be led by the proletariat instead of the confused and frequently anti-democratic petty bourgeoisie, under the existing circumstances the majority sees no alternative but to align with Khomeini and the IRP in order to direct its primary attack ("the spearhead") against the "liberal capitalists" around Bani-Sadr who are capitulating to imperialism. (The special Summer issue of *Kar (Labour)* contains documents giving both the majority and minority views.)

Fedayeen Majority vs. Minority

The Fedayeen majority's surrender to the Islamic petty bourgeoisie was a factor in disorienting the advanced workers. It ill prepared the workers for the attack launched by the regime against left students at the universities, including the "godless" Fedayeen. It also helped prevent workers from perceiving the inevitable role of Khomeini and the IRP marching in lockstep with Bani-Sadr in his attempt to override the anti-imperialist attitude of the masses during the war with Iraq. Worse yet, it politically disarmed the masses and attempted to blind them to the increasing counterrevolutionary acts of the Khomeini—Bani-Sadr—Rajai regime.

When the war broke out (according to Shahrzad Azad in the November 26 *Guardian*), the majority flocked to the colors and eventually signed up with the anti-working class Pasdaran! This is a consequence of its line of giving *political* (not just temporary, independent military) support to Khomeini and the ruling class.

The Fedayeen minority avoids giving support to any of the wings of the present regime, but it has a difficult time squaring this with its Stalinist-Menshevik theory of stages. The majority criticizes the minority (which it accuses of "leftism" and "Trotskyism") for labelling all wings of the government "capitalist" without distinguishing between the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie; this is done, the majority argues, to avoid having to support the IRP, for the minority attributes "revolutionary and progressive characteristics to the petit bourgeoisie which only belong to the proletariat."

The criticism seems to be accurate, although genuine confusion in both majority and minority documents makes it difficult to be certain. The minority has by no means reached the "Trotskyism" it is accused of because it still bears the scars of Stalinism and its class origins. The drive to the left cannot culminate in a truly communist position until it overcomes the idea that the alternative to the present state can be an anti-

imperialist state ruled by the petty bourgeoisie and not a workers' state in transition to socialism. According to Shahrzad Azad the Fedayeen minority does not call for the government's overthrow because the masses support it and "the regime has some contradictions with imperialism." This appears to be a strategic, not simply a conjunctural tactical line based on the immediate relationship of forces, because it coincides with the Fedayeen's advocacy of a genuinely anti-imperialist capitalist state. As such, it helps prevent the advanced workers from learning that *any* form of capitalist government must ultimately be dealt with by revolution, for it is the capitalist *state* which is the enemy.

Genuine Trotskyism Necessary

On the war, Azad reports that the minority is defending Iran through independent combat forces along with the Mojahedin. This is a step forward compared to excerpts of the minority position (some of which were very confused) published in the U.S. by *Young Spartacus* and *Workers World*, where it appeared that minority supporters were condemning both sides in the war equally. At best, such a line will confuse revolutionary workers who have seized arms to defend their gains; at worst, it allows the banner of revolutionary defense to pass into the hands of Khomeini and Bani-Sadr, who will use it to promote counterrevolution.

The fact that newly developing leftists in Iran have so far been turned away from genuine Trotskyism is due in no small part to the abjectly opportunist mockery of communist politics presented by the pseudo-Trotskyist groups in Iran. The HKE, or Revolutionary Workers Party, is affiliated to and trained by the American SWP. It has continually apologized for Khomeini's religious obscurantism, it backed the Islamicization of the universities against the student left, it champions the wearing of the veil — and never even mentions the elementary Leninist idea that socialism requires the revolutionary overthrow of the present bourgeois regime (let alone the state!). It points to the danger of counterrevolution but never suggests that Khomeini might have a hand in it. When war broke out, the HKE urged the masses to jump onto Khomeini's bandwagon: "Now for the defense of the revolution, it is necessary for the toiling masses of Iran to mobilize for war against imperialism as one united family, to close ranks, and to strike as one fist." (*Militant*, October 10)

One united family indeed! The idea of ceasing to oppose the capitalists during any kind of war is an abomination to Bolsheviks. The fist will smash the workers if the HKE has its way.

As elsewhere in the world, the workers of Iran are moving forward almost in spite of their pretended leaders on the left. In the process they are laying the basis for a new leadership, a genuinely Trotskyist Fourth International, that will face the coming days of war, revolution and counterrevolution by following a clearcut line towards the socialist revolution. This is the only answer to imperialism and its servants, the nationalists of all stripes — secular and religious, bourgeois and petty bourgeois, Stalinist and phony Trotskyist. The shoras are an important start. Arming the masses will also be crucial. The decisive step will be the creation of the revolutionary proletarian party, in Iran and throughout the world. ■

Exchange on the USSR

Dear Socialist Voice Folks:

Thanks for sending me the two documents on the draft. I have carefully read them both and believe they will be helpful in the articles I want to write on the subject. I also received the package of *Socialist Voice* and *Action* and started reading them. In fact I just finished the article on capitalism-imperialism existing in the USSR (*SV* No. 2). The analysis of Marxist economics was of such a good quality that I would like to reprint it in the little prisoner newsletter I put out. The conclusions you reached, however, do not seem supported by the text. It left me with the impression that you have made a good case for an argument that the USSR is revisionist and economistic, but not for the notion that it is capitalistic or imperialistic. I'm no apologist for the Russian bureaucracy, but neither am I ready to do the work of U.S. imperialism in the American working class.

To sustain the argument that a qualitative jump backwards has taken place in a nation with a socialized means of production (where under capitalism everything is reduced to the level of a commodity — including the means of production), you will need more than a polemic on their lack of effort to overcome the law of value. To carry it a step further and call them an imperialist nation, without mention of their network of transnational corporations, their holdings in foreign countries, etc., borders on anti-soviet slander.

A similar lack of dialectics manifests itself in your position on the Polish workers. Here again I am no apologist for the bastard (socialist-capitalist) Polish state, but I see the workers as to the right of that state and objective agents of U.S. imperialism. If the workers were revolutionary in the least they'd have my full support, but all the evidence indicates that they are not.

In short, your line on Russia and Poland seems left in form but right in essence — a line that will increasingly land you in the lap of U.S. imperialism.

Love and struggle,
Ed

LRP Reply

First of all, you are welcome to reprint our article on the USSR in your prisoner newsletter. We would be interested in seeing a copy of it ourselves, as well as other issues. And, of course, we would like to read what you have to say on the draft question.

As for your comments on our USSR article, we find them entirely unacceptable. You have a right to your opinion on the nature of the Russian state, but you do not have the right to imply that "we do the work of U.S. imperialism in the American working class" without backing up such a charge with some serious evidence — especially since the charge flies in the face of everything we have ever done or written. The brevity of your letter is no excuse; no Marxist has any business making such accusations lightly.

You do not in fact state what your opinion on the class nature of the Russian state is, even though you obviously have a well-formed point of view on that question. You refer to the

USSR as "revisionist and economistic," but these words can only describe a political current like the ruling bureaucracy, not the actual state. For Marxists, a state is defined by what class rules through it. I assume you mean that in Russia the working class rules under a revisionist leadership, so that the state is proletarian (or perhaps even socialist). However, you make your argument a lot easier for yourself by never stating such a proposition so that you don't have to defend it.

In the article of ours from *Socialist Voice* No.2 which you cite, we proved more than the rulers' lack of effort to overcome the law of value. That summarizes the bureaucracy's policies of the 1920's, but in the 1930's it went further: it turned the law of value as a weapon against the workers, it crushed the proletariat through economic and repressive action and destroyed the last vestiges of what had been its revolutionary leadership. It also undermined the centralization of the economy that had been built up by the workers' state — despite its retention of the *form* of nationalized property without its proletarian content.

Your term "socialized means of production" can have many meanings. Lenin regarded nationalized and even monopoly production as "socialized" even when in bourgeois hands. The question is who controls the socialized property. If you mean that the means of production in Russia are run by society as a whole or the workers, you are very much deceived about post-1939 social relations in Russia. The alternative would be that you are a conscious apologist for the bureaucracy, which you take pains to deny.

We think that we have made a convincing case for our conclusion that the Soviet workers lost all hold on state power by 1939. Moreover, the resulting capitalist class nature of the Russian state was proved by the outcome of World War II, when Russia emerged as a newly imperialist power and conquered half of Europe and parts of Asia in order to subordinate and exploit them. It is quite laughable to demand that we show you "their holdings in foreign countries" when everyone knows that they hold whole countries, both within and without the borders of the USSR, under military domination. As for transnational corporations, it happens that Russia did set up joint-stock companies in East Europe after the war, with Russia holding a majority of the stock, to extract the resources of several countries. We did in fact "mention" these points in our article (page 27); your polemical fervor has apparently got the better of your careful reading.

To turn your point around, it seems to us that you have the responsibility, along with those who share your point of view, to analyze what are the economic relationships of Russia with Eastern Europe. To our knowledge no theorist of Russia as a workers' state has ever done this, leaving aside fantasies written by blatant apologists for Stalinism.

Your belief that the Polish workers stand to the right of the Polish state can only rest on the assumption that the state itself is somehow proletarian or socialist. For the workers have obviously done some very "left" (more accurately, revolutionary and proletarian) things: set up soviets, organized general strikes, demanded social equality and

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economic planning to solve the crisis, etc. Whereas the state apparatus has proved itself again to be repressive, privileged, unable to solve its crises, and dependent on the West for economic salvation and on Russia for its military defense — against the workers!

Your case undoubtedly rests on the friendliness of some of the workers to the Catholic Church and to Western "democracy." However, no Polish worker has the kind of ties to the Church and the West that the ruling bureaucrats do: it is they, not the workers, who borrow billions from Western banks, it is they who signed deals with the Church granting it religious indoctrination in state schools and have tried to make it a bulwark of the régime (a favor the Church returned when it urged the striking workers to go back to work at the height of the August strike wave). Most recently, the ties to the West and the Church were both strengthened by the appointment of a Catholic politician as a deputy premier, with the Pope's blessing! The régime is taking advantage of the workers' greater confidence in the Church — which the ruling bureaucrats helped to strengthen — in order to encourage the Western imperialists' confidence in its own stability and capacity to repay loans.

How Workers Become Revolutionary

Yes, the evidence indicates that the workers do not have revolutionary consciousness; that is the responsibility of their reformist leaders and their pseudo-socialist society. But for Marxists the evidence also points out that they took action that far exceeded what is normally done under reformist consciousness (their Soviets, partial dual power on the Baltic, etc.) The struggle has been so far-reaching that Marxists have every reason to expect that the workers will learn sharp lessons and be able to go further. Your statement that "if the workers were revolutionary in the least they'd have my full support" is a left cover for an evasion; if they are to the right of the state, you must apparently prefer to support the state against the workers in a conflict which may well turn bloody. It is the duty of Marxists to back the workers against their oppressors and exploiters so that they can win, and thereby raise their consciousness enough to envision the possibility of working class rule. Then they will be revolutionary. A theory that allows you to award semi-socialist status to the bureaucratic state prevents you from achieving revolutionary consciousness and choosing the proletarian side of the class line.

Finally on your charge that our line will land us in the lap of U.S. imperialism (or has already done so). That accusation is frequently made by the Stalinist apologists; it assumes that anyone who opposes the Russian rulers necessarily supports their American counterparts. The truth is quite the opposite.

Since Russia's rulers are forever seeking international "stability" and imperialist "peace," it is they who inevitably land in the lap of U.S. imperialism. (Today, of course, it is their fellow bureaucrats in China who are more intimately acquainted with the contours of that lap — but the principle is the same, since Russia and China are not qualitatively different forms of state.) Poland is a case in point. Warsaw, Moscow, Washington and Rome were all urging the workers to stay calm and to avoid disrupting production so that capitalist business could go on as usual. Iran is another: both the U.S. and USSR lived comfortably with the butcher Shah; now both are maneuvering to win amicable relations with Khomeini's régime and hope that Islam can keep the revolutionary masses quiet. As usual, their fundamental class interest unites bourgeois and bureaucratic capitalists just as much as rivalry divides them.

You think that our analysis can "do the work of U.S. imperialism in the American working class," but take a look at a comment in a left publication with views on Russia similar to your own. *On the Line* (October-November 1980, page 49) states: "Not a single reputable bourgeois scholar has seriously entertained the notion that the USSR has reverted to capitalism in any meaningful sense of the term." In all likelihood this is true, but then no reputable Marxist should expect any bourgeois scholar to have a Marxist analysis of the USSR or of anything. We can easily understand why such scholars don't consider Russia capitalist. After all, the bourgeoisie likes to paint Stalinism as "socialism" or "communism" so that people here will identify socialism with totalitarian horrors. Our analysis does not help the bourgeoisie to accomplish this. Yours does.

Nevertheless, there are many people on the left who feel that criticizing the USSR objectively helps U.S. imperialism. Underlying this opinion is the conception that, whatever the level of collusion between Russia and the U.S., their rivalry is the main force keeping the U.S. from further dominating the entire world. We are aware of this sentiment, but we are also aware of its source: the absence of a mass proletarian struggle that can be seen as the *real* alternative to imperialist power. There are two points to be made in response. A Marxist, first of all, should be able to penetrate beneath the surface and recognize both the true role of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the potential role of the proletariat. And more important, the crisis of capitalism ensures that the proletariat will begin to play its part; Portugal, Iran, Nicaragua and Poland are only among the most recent examples where the workers' revolt has shown its power and revolutionary capacity. The impact of great events can make proletarian socialists out of many a cynical and discouraged leftist; it has done so in the past and will do so again. We hope that your consciousness and devotion to the cause of the working class has not been so corrupted that you will not be among them. ■