



False strategies cripple Iranian Left

Fri, 11/09/1981 - 14:59

From Workers Power number 25

Despite the successful elimination of yet another two murderous leaders of the Islamic Republican Party (IRP), Radjai and Bahonar, the inefficacy of the tactics of individual terror and urban guerilla warfare, divorced from mass working class action, has been highlighted in Iran over the last few months.

Whilst the Islamic butchers deserve all they get and we stand in moral solidarity with the leftists resisting the IRP's onslaught (Mojahedin, Fedayeen (Minority), Peykar and the Kurdish nationalists, we must say loud and clear that the tactics of individual terror cannot defeat the reactionary terror of Khomeini and the IRP. Just as the mullahs found a new Beheshti in Bahonar, so they will find a new Bahonar in someone else. The fact is that the tactics of individual terror play right into Khomeini's hands.

Revolutionary Marxists object to individual terror because it relegates the fight against repression to a technical-military battle with the forces of reaction - a fight from which the masses are excluded - or are encouraged to support only passively. The mounting popular resistance to Beheshti, the IRP and Khomeini was aborted by the attack on the IRP headquarters. (Whilst the Mojahedin do not claim responsibility for the attack, neither have they disclaimed it.)

Millions of workers, peasants, the urban poor, whose hostility and suspicion towards the regime were increasing daily, could and should have been mobilised on all the issues which caused their distrust - democratic rights; control of production; economic chaos; land reform; etc. Instead they were faced with the point-blank question, did they desire the death and destruction of the IRP leaders? Many, perhaps most did not, and were summarily hurled back into Khomeini's arms, the hundreds of leftists executed are the price exacted for this tactic.

Integration with Bani-Sadr

They may interpret the "divinely integrated society of Islam? (Towhid) as a classless society. Khomeini will interpret it as a society based on class-collaboration and indeed the forcible suppression of the workers and peasants. He will stigmatize the expression of the class interests of the oppressed as violation of the unity of Islam. The Mojahedin are now engaging in 'integration' with Bani-Sadr, when in power a butcher of the Kurds and leftists* and the ex-president lacking any significant mass base inside Iran, is welcoming this. The young leftists being put to death by the mullahs are, for the time being, useful as an adjunct to his democratic demagoguery.

If the destruction of leaders was the critical question then the destruction of the 70 IRP leaders (in itself the most spectacularly successful act of individual terrorism ever carried out) has tested this to the full. The masses watch in stunned silence as the Pasdaran battle it out with the Mojahedin.

Worse the Mujahidin have formed a solid bloc with Bani-Sadr, a representative of the Iranian bourgeoisie, and seen as such by workers, the urban poor etc. This will make it very difficult for the Mojahedin to rally the oppressed masses to the defence of their most direct interests against Khomeini.

Further, the religious ideology of the Mojahedin blurs social reality. It makes it difficult for the masses to see the differences between the 'Islamic Leftists' and the Khomeinists. Thus, in reply to Khomeini's charge that they rejected the principles of Islam, the Mojahedin were quick to reply:

"The People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran like all the revolutionary Moslems of Iran do believe in the tunic principles of Towhid and Ma'ad (hereafter) which were believed by all the prophets." (July 2nd communique of PMOI).

Contradictions of religion

All attempts to pursue programmatic goals within religious ideology are doomed to failure. Marxists have always recognised the contradictory nature of religion, it is "at one and the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions". But, also, as Marx's famous dictum stressed "it is the opium of the people". Thus religion is the expression of the misery of a world of exploitation and oppression, a criticism therefore of that world, especially in the early stages of the growth of new religions (Christianity and Islam). Yet at the same time it is an ideology that consoles the masses, that seeks to reconcile the oppressed to their oppression. It inevitably becomes an ideology cultivated by the possessors and the exploiters. Whoever tries to turn the critical side of religion against these exploiters ties themselves in insoluble contradictions - is branded as a hypocrite or a heretic by the caste whose lining is obtained from the peddling of religious opium to the suffering masses.

No, Khomeini's Islamic dictatorship is a real expression of the reactionary essence of religion. Certainly, large sections of the clergy will desert him because of this terrible exposure of their mystical stock in trade to the harsh and materialist test of political power. Khomeini, before the eyes of the masses, is currently shattering the sanctity of religion and the mullah caste. He is destroying the illusions in Islam as an anti-imperialist, democratic, socially just force. The only way forward for the working class, the peasantry, the youth, women and the nationalities lies, via the dissolution of religious superstition, in the pursuit of clear socialist and democratic goals. Not only Khomeini's personal rule, not only the dictatorship of the IRP and their street gangs must be overthrown but the whole structure of the Islamic Republic must be crushed into fragments.

The Fedayeen Minority (OIPFG) do see this. Against the deeply opportunist Fedayeen Majority (now little more than an appendage of the Stalinist Tudeh Party and sharing with the latter complicity in Khomeini's bloodbath against their former comrades) the 'Minority' rightly recognise that from the overthrow of the Shah, the state and government remained bourgeois in character. Rejecting the un-Marxist notion that the Iranian state is anti-imperialist and petty bourgeois, they observe: "When the leaders of the petty bourgeoisie collude with the bourgeoisie, this collusion, with whatever purpose, that may have taken place, changes them into followers of the bourgeoisie and in every major and decisive issue they side with the bourgeoisie."

The petty bourgeoisie may propel its political representatives into governmental office but once there, the class interests they are forced to defend are those of the ruling class (the class that dominates production is the big capitalists and in the case of a semi-colonial country, imperialist capital). The petty bourgeoisie can never be a ruling class and its political representatives can only disguise continued capitalist exploitation and Imperialist domination by nationalist, anti-imperialist or traditionalist ideology whilst taking secondary actions against the foreign and domestic exploiters. The Fedayeen Minority go further and state: "Anti-Imperialist struggle inseparable from class struggle. Imperialism can only be defeated if its internal economic lead in the dependent bourgeoisie and its state be destroyed- (Kar no.78. translated by Organisation of Iranian Students in Britain, supporters of OIPFG)

Break with stageism

But to take this thought to its logical conclusion would be to break absolutely with the stages theory of Stalin and to adopt the strategy and tactics of Lenin's "April Theses" and Trotsky's "Permanent Revolution". It would mean recognising that only the proletariat's seizure of state power, the smashing of the bourgeois state machines-the standing army and bureaucracy - its replacement by a state of a new type based on workers and peasants Soviets, the universal arming of the masses, their organisation in a democratic workers and peasants militia, can achieve the decisive defeat of Imperialism and the Iranian bourgeoisie.

There would be no real stage of democratic unity with the bourgeoisie against imperialism. Thus the key struggle of revolutionaries before, during, and since the Shah's overthrow should have been the struggle to bring the working class, under the slogans of revolutionary socialism, to the leadership of the revolution. Only in this way could the revolution

having thus toppled the Shah be made permanent. Only in this way could the forces of clerical and bourgeois monarchist reaction have been defeated once and for all. Concretely, this would mean that while unity with mullah-led forces in action (against the Shah, against the Iraqi invasion, no objectively pan-imperialist invasion, for example) was permissible at given moments in the Iranian revolution, at no time was it ever permissible for revolutionaries to give any political support to Khomeini, the IRP, or any other faction of the bourgeoisie. Tactical movements should never be confused with the revolutionary strategy - the conquest of power by the proletariat. This course of action is fundamentally different from the "Trotskyism" espoused by the various USEC groups in Iran. All of these groups (HKE, HKS HVK) have capitulated before Khomeini's 'anti-imperialism'. They differ only in the degree that they are united in turning the Permanent Revolution from a strategy that has to be fought for, into an objective process that will occur regardless of living parties and their programmes. Their version of Trotskyism is a grotesque distortion that reduces the revolutionary party and its programme to the sidelines of history. The working class, totally the non-urban, non-proletarian strata behind its banner, does not need to drop the goal of its class dictatorship.

Proletarian dictatorship

It has to prove to all other oppressed strata that only the dictatorship (resting democratically through a system of peasant? soviets, soldiers? soviets etc on the support of these classes and strata) can solve their fundamental social problems. Since the thwarting of the democratic aspirations of the Iranian masses by Bazargan, Bani-Sadr, Beheshti, Redjai and above all by Khomeini himself, the support the proletariat must give to democratic slogans and to those who till it: Self-determination of nationalities up to and including separation; equal rights for women; separation of mosque and state; freedom of speech; of assembly and press and must focus on the call for the convocation after the overthrow of Khomeini and the IRP of a sovereign revolutionary constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage and secret ballot. Only committees of workers, peasants and soldiers (necessary to overthrow the IRP dictatorship and to block the road to Pahlavi restoration) could convene such an assembly democratically. In elections for such an assembly the revolutionary party would fight for a workers and peasants? government based on all power being transferred to the workers and peasants committees and to the armed workers and peasants militias.

If the Fedayeen Minority comrades can break completely from all varieties of the stageist theory of revolution, if they can forge a revolutionary party in Iran committed to the strategy of Permanent Revolution, then the heroism of their comrades and other leftists in Iran will be repaid by a revolutionary victory. The only alternative outcome is bloody defeat for the mass working class at the hands of one or another faction of the ruling class.

Source URL: <https://fifthinternational.org/content/false-strategies-cripple-iranian-left>