

Khomeini prepares attack on the left

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

The calls of the Ayatollah for guns to be handed in to the mosques have been largely ignored. Workers on strike have only returned to work slowly and grudgingly and there have been protests from workers' representatives about the high handed and undemocratic hijacking of the revolution by the mullah-dominated revolutionary committees. Yet, despite the crucial role played by the workers and the armed masses in the overthrow of the Shah, State power has not passed into their hands but into those of the shadowy 'Islamic Revolutionary Committee' of the Khomeini entourage. Bazargan's cabinet is a poor second, existing mainly to provide international respectability. This governmental apparatus is in no sense a gain for the Iranian masses. Indeed, it is seeking to cheat them of the fruits of their suffering and sacrifice during the last fifteen months.

Stampede

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

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

creation of soldiers' committees and the election of all officers. Only a well-armed and disciplined workers' militia can protect the working class, the national and religious minorities and extend the revolutionary demands of the masses.

Time

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

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

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

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

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

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

Defeat

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

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

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

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

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

Their goal for the workers' struggle is a government of 'national independence' made up of the National Front bourgeois parties, religious leaders and themselves. They offer to hold back the workers to placate these allies. Allies who moreover uphold the law banning the Tudeh.

The Fedayeen are much more abrasive, calling a large demonstration (15,000) in Tehran University on February 22nd in partial defiance of Khomeini's warnings. Their demands include the call to dissolve the army, forming a real 'people's army'. They call for 'people's councils' in running factories, businesses and local affairs. They call for land to the poor peasants and full rights for women and the oppressed nationalities.

But in the last analysis they too call for a 'share' in the power at the moment exercised by the mullahs and the bazzari bourgeois.

The Fedayeen's 'militancy' amounts to a more radical list of bourgeois democratic demands plus the hybrid 'peoples councils'. They add to this a commitment to guerilla struggle "as a strategy as well as a tactic". This approach is likely to prove an obstacle to the formation of democratically controlled mass workers' militias.

Groups founded on this basis - whether in Portugal (PRP) or in Latin America show a tendency to desert the working class at the key moment, either by putschist adventuring or by voluntary disappearance into the underground when ruling class repression looms.

To stand any chance of influencing militants or sympathisers of the Stalinist organisations, Iranian Trotskyists will have to stress a number of key positions. In the face of Khomeini's offensive these should be an appeal for a united front of workers' parties centred on legality for all workers' parties, trade unions etc. An armed workers defence militia. For a sovereign Constituent Assembly. Boycott the Islamic Republic Referendum The centralisation of factory and strike committees into city wide workers' councils.

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

Trotskyists must win the organised workers, peasants, soldiers and oppressed nationalities contradiction (proletariat versus bourgeoisie) at this stage.

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