

Shah's rule shaken

Wed, 11/10/1978 - 13:49

From Workers Power issue 1

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

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

America is reported to be training 100,000 troops for intervention, should their guarantor of stability in the Gulf lose control of his own forces. The Iranian army is stiffened by many thousands of American advisers. The reports of soldiers shooting themselves and their officers, show how badly this stiffening is needed.

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

Strikes

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

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

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

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

Strategy

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

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

Source URL: <https://fifthinternational.org/content/shahs-rule-shaken>