

# The tragedy of the Iranian Revolution ? lessons for today

Jens-Hugo Nyberg Fri, 25/09/2009 - 13:37

Jens-Hugo Nyberg

Thirty years ago a huge movement of workers and the poor overthrew the despised and hated dictatorship of the pro-American Shah of Iran. The mass workers' uprising and the high level of organisation achieved in the revolution, illustrated the revolutionary socialist potential that existed in the situation. Jens-Hugo Nyberg looks at how the appalling betrayal of the mass struggle by the Stalinist leadership led to the formation of Iran's reactionary theocratic state.

On August 1953, Mohammad Mosaddeq, the popular nationalist prime minister of Iran, was ousted in a coup, jointly directed by the CIA and MI-6.<sup>1</sup> At that time, the US and the other imperialist powers did not feel the need to use hypocritical democratic rhetoric to justify their regime changes. The most ardent US apologist would have struggled to find even the slightest traces of democracy in the dictatorship of the Shah that replaced the overthrown premier. He immediately used brutal force to crush the opposition. In the first instance his target was the Stalinist Communist party, the Tudeh, which led key sectors of the workers, and had important cells in the army.<sup>2</sup>

The new Shah, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, oversaw the building of a huge military apparatus, including the secret police, SAVAK that became one of history's most bloodstained and infamous. Even by the standards of Guantanamo Bay and Bagram Airbase, the Shah's torture chambers were truly appalling. The International Red Cross were allowed into the Shah's prisons in 1977. They found more than 3,000 political prisoners who had been beaten, burned with cigarettes and chemicals, tortured with electrodes, raped, anally penetrated with bottles and boiling eggs. Interrogators even forced electric cables into the uterus of female prisoners. The Red Cross named 124 prisoners who had died under torture.<sup>3</sup> Anyone who believes the US and its British ally would bring democracy to Iran would do well to remember the regime of the Shah that they installed and supported for more than two decades.

For 25 years, the Shah sat on the Peacock Throne. In that time, apart from the severe repression, Iran also saw industrial growth in the so-called 'white revolution'. The proletariat grew and gained greater weight in society. Especially important were the workers in the oil industry, the most important in the country.

As usual with despotic rulers and the widespread corruption that is part and parcel of their rule, dissatisfaction grew amongst the less favoured parts of the ruling class who were excluded from power over the state and did not receive 'their' shares of the enormous riches that the Shah's clique assembled. For the first two decades of the Shah's dictatorship, the mullahs, the Muslim clergy, raised few objections but then their attitude began to change. The Shah's 'white revolution' and its limited agrarian reform did little to improve the conditions of the rural poor, but it drew millions into the cities. This was enough to weaken the economic status and the influence of the mullahs and the mosques.

The Shah was fond of acting out fancy dress charades based on Persia's ancient and pre-Islamic history as a great empire, embodied in his titles King of Kings and Light of the Aryans. His most infamous act of extravagance was the 1971 celebration of '2,500 years of Iranian monarchy', which included a huge banquet in the ruins of the ancient capital, Persepolis, which cost some \$200 million. He was also strongly westernised in his cultural pursuits and pursued a policy of modernisation. While this did not extend to human rights and democracy, it did include measures opposed by the conservative Shia clergy, the Ulema, such as expanding education, and promoting secularisation.

Shia, as opposed to Sunni, Islam, only became dominant in Iran during the reign of Shah Ismail and the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722). Under the rule of the Qajar dynasty (1794-1909) Shi'ism developed into a much more hierarchical, church-like body quite distinct from and not directly under the control of the Iranian state. It was headed by a number of Grand Ayatollahs, respected interpreters of Islamic law who administered the mosques, charitable endowments, Islamic schools and colleges themselves. In short, the mullahs constituted a powerful and conservative caste, prone to clash with the state if the latter took any action that weakened their influence or material position in society. On several occasions since the 1890s (the Tobacco monopoly protests of 1896, the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-11, the early 1950s and again in the early 1960s) the Shi'ite clergy had clashed with the state authorities, a very rare occurrence indeed in Sunni Islam. Their principal social base was among the rich traditional merchants and bankers of the bazaars who, through their charitable foundations, also attracted the support of the urban poor.

The increasingly autocratic Shah, though he owed quite a lot to the Shia hierarchy who had switched sides to support him against Mossadeq in 1953, treated them with scarcely concealed contempt. The bazaar capitalists, too, felt discriminated against by the policies of the Shah, who favoured large-scale industrial enterprises and foreign businesses. The urban poor, who gathered into huge slum areas on the fringes of the major cities like South Tehran, were also a potential source of support. Flooding in from the countryside where the land reform benefited only large landowners linked to the court, they were completely neglected by the Shah's 'reforms' and felt increasingly disinherited. Of course, they could have been, and should have been, an ally of the working class against the regime but we must not forget that a lumpenproletariat and a petit-bourgeoisie, squeezed by big capitalist concerns, can easily be mobilised under a reactionary leadership. They have often provided a social base for highly reactionary politics, and this was certainly the case in Iran.

### **The Shah in crisis**

Shah Reza Mohammad Pahlavi also faced some severe disruption from outside Iran. Not, of course, from the wealthy Western democracies. They continually backed the Shah and the strategic importance of Iranian oil for western economies made him an important asset. The new US president, Carter, always big on fine words about democracy and human rights, would probably have preferred it if the Shah did not outrage public opinion to the extent he did and Carter did use his influence to give the Red Cross some access to the torture chambers. However, Iran was by now firmly established as the primary US gendarme, together with Israel, in the important and oil rich region, so any destabilisation of the regime was out of the question. As late as November 1978, after much bloodshed in the streets, Carter still spoke of the Shah as a friend and a loyal US ally. The external factor that destabilised the regime was thus not geopolitical but economic. The crisis of the 1970s hit Iran hard. To fund a huge army and secret police, at the same time as trying to industrialise and stash away some billions for a rainy day for the family, is not cheap. The crisis of the 1970s made balancing these interests much harder. Inflation grew alarmingly and unemployment rose dramatically. Iran was heavily dependent on imports, especially of foodstuffs. Rising prices on the world market caused shortages, as well as rising prices at home, which directly undermined the standard of living of the workers. The years of repression that followed the crushing of a revolt in 1963 had seen only a low level of class struggle by the proletariat but, at the same time, the industrialisation

programme had strengthened the socio-economic position of the workers. By 1977, the working class had grown to 2.5 million people, many of whom worked in large factories. Price rises naturally caused dissatisfaction and strikes became more common during the second part of the 1970s.

At the beginning of 1977, the Shah was forced to make some political concessions, after both internal and international criticism. A few political prisoners were released, the dictatorship of SAVAK was partially relaxed and the prime minister, Amir Abbas Hoveyda, was sacked and replaced by Dr Jamshid Amuzegar. It is a well-recognised fact that in a profound revolutionary crisis reforms, which in other circumstances could head off a crisis, merely speed up the process, since they signal the weakness of the regime. So it was in Iran. Despotism in general tends to rely upon fundamentally fragile foundations that, once they are challenged on a sufficient scale, can crack and then collapse at great speed, as anger at years of repression boils over into mass revolutionary action. By the late 1970s, in Iran, representatives of writers, lawyers and students started to raise demands for civil liberties, and for a return to the constitution of 1906.

A militant mass movement under Islamic leadership also entered the scene. In January of 1978, an article in Ettelaat, one of Iran's leading papers, hinted that Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, in exile in Iraq for 14 years after inspiring the 1963 clerical resistance to the Shah's land and legal reforms, was a British agent, and questioned his faith. Seminary students at Qom, hometown of the exiled Khomeini, took to the streets, and several demonstrators were killed in clashes with the police. This caused demonstrations in several cities on January 18th, including riots at Tabriz. Islamist-led demonstrations and clashes blossomed in various places during the spring and summer. Among other things, cinemas and nightclubs were attacked as symbols of moral decay, banks as symbols of exploitation and police stations as bastions of repression.

Slogans against the Shah himself started to appear. The tensions were further heightened in August when more than 400 people died in a fire at the Cinema Rex in Abadan. The government blamed the Islamist opposition, further enraging the protesters who, in turn, blamed SAVAK. The Shah made more concessions, appointing another prime minister, Jafar Sharif-Emami. He lightened the censorship of the press, allowed more debate in the parliament (the Majlis) and released some additional political prisoners. But what did that help? On 4 September 100,000 people demonstrated in Tehran, and demonstrations continued over the next couple of days, with more participants and increasingly radical slogans.

Martial law was then declared and, as if to underline that the concessions had only been a manoeuvre, the Shah's troops fired on a demonstration at the Zhakeh square in Tehran on 8th September, killing hundreds of unarmed protesters, the so called Black Friday. Much like the Bloody Sunday massacre of Russia's Tsar Nicholas II, 73 years earlier, this completely failed to crush the opposition, which on the contrary continued to radicalise. The Shah, used to hearing nothing but the lies of obedient courtiers, was totally at a loss. Whatever he did, offering concessions or playing the brutal tyrant, nothing seemed could stop his fall from power.

### **The working class intervenes and the Shah is overthrown**

The mullah-led movement spread, causing considerable dismay for the regime. However, it was when the working class entered the fray on a significant scale that the movement acquired real force. Between June and August there had been occasional strikes in both private and state industry. Partly as a direct reply to the Black Friday massacre, the Shah saw the next week turning blacker still, as the workers at the Tehran oil refinery went on strike in solidarity with the victims, demanding an end to the state of siege. Over the following days, the strike spread to the oil workers at Shiraz, Tahriz, Abdan and Isfahan, and soon to virtually the whole of the industry. The oil workers' strike did not only spread rapidly but also turned more and more radical. Soon slogans like 'Down with the Shah!', 'Down with the SAVAK!', and 'Death to US

Imperialism!? were heard.

More and more sections of workers were drawn into the strike, especially public sector workers: postal workers, hospital employees, transport workers, teachers, doctors, and civil servants. One of the most politically effective was the bank workers' strike. When they went on strike they revealed that the ruling elite, including the relatives of the Shah, had moved over a \$1 billion abroad over the last three months, in addition to the billion they already had stored in foreign bank accounts.

The government, under the new prime minister, Sharif-Emamis, had quickly moved to satisfy the demands of the oil workers for higher wages and other benefits, but that was no longer enough. The tide of the mass movement kept rising, the strikes kept growing and on 10 December 1 million, and the following day as many as two millions, demonstrated against the regime in Tehran.

Having failed abysmally to solve the country's growing problems, the Shah now desperately tried to split the opposition by creating a government of compromise. He looked for allies in the more conservative part of the National Front, once the movement behind Mossadeq. After some initial failures, at the end of December he reached a compromise with Shapur Bakhtiar. The latter, however, demanded that the Shah himself should leave the country and, when both chambers of the Majlis supported that demand, Shah Pahlavi decided to leave Iran "on a short vacation" on 16 January 1979.

Acting as regent for the Shah, Bakhtiar now faced the task of saving what he could of the state machine and re-establishing order. This, however, is no simple task during a full blown revolutionary situation. It is especially difficult if it is the privileges of the ruling class you want to protect, and the insurgent masses hate the state you want to preserve, with or without its figurehead. The country was paralysed by a general strike, anti-government demonstrators began carrying arms, and sections of the army refused to obey orders; there were even instances of rank and file soldiers turning their weapons against their officers. Bakhtiar didn't hold out for long either. Two weeks after the exile of the old regent, Khomeini returned from his exile, aiming for power. The officers of important army units swore loyalty to him and, behind the scenes, the Ayatollah tried to reach a negotiated settlement. The revolution was not ready to stop just yet though, and the army of the Shah kept falling apart as the wave of desertions continued, and the occasional officer was shot by his troops.

When Bakhtiar deployed military police and the Imperial Guards against a mutiny amongst the cadets of the air force, new battles broke out. The insurrection was joined not only by a section of the National Front led by Mehdi Bazargan, the most militant part of Khomeini's followers, but also, and perhaps most importantly, by the previously underground Fedayeen and Mojahedin guerrilla groups. Rapidly, they crushed a large part of the Shah's remaining war machine, while arms factories, military bases, TV stations, prisons and the parliament were stormed. The February insurrection was victorious, and Bakhtiar went underground.

### **The situation in February**

The February insurrection was victorious in that it crushed the monarchy and its apparatus of repression. It did not, however, solve the problem of how power would now be organised. The mullahs were undoubtedly one of the main organising forces, although it would be wrong to give them all the credit for overthrowing the Shah. Their foremost leader, Khomeini, appointed Bazargan, a representative of the National Front, as Prime Minister. But the main force in liquidating the monarchy had been the working class, in particular the oil workers. During the strikes, the workers had organised themselves into councils, shoras, ranging from strike committees under cautiously reformist leaderships to more advanced committees that had seized control over their factories. The workers and the rest of the insurgent masses were now also partly armed, at the same time as no organised police force or army existed. Who would now rule Iran and in whose

interest?

## **Breaking with the revolutionary tradition: the Communist Party of Iran**

Iranian workers and intellectuals had a long tradition of socialist thought and class organisation. Founded in 1908, the Iranian Social Democratic Party played a significant role in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-11 and its leading figures corresponded with Karl Kautsky and Georgii Plekhanov, two of the leaders of orthodox Marxism within the Second International (1889-1914). An Iranian Communist Party (ICP) was founded as early as June 1920, before the British Communist Party.

In 1925, the British, now eager to control Iran's oil wealth since it was rapidly replacing coal as the principal fuel for the mighty British fleet, encouraged Reza Khan, commander of the Persian Cossack Brigade, an elite Iranian army regiment, to seize power. Crowning himself Reza Shah, he soon proceeded to crush any independent workers' or democratic organisations, including the ICP. However, in the 1930s, he became more and more sympathetic to Nazi Germany and in 1941 the British overthrew him and installed his 12-year old son as Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi.

After the crushing of the ICP there was a long period when the remaining Iranian Communists were in exile in the USSR. Like the other sections of the Communist International, the Iranian party was not able to withstand the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Union in the twenties and thirties. All critical thought was weeded out and all sections were turned into pliant tools of the Kremlin's at first opportunist and, eventually, counter-revolutionary, politics. In 1941, the Stalinist ICP nucleus refounded a mass party in Iran, the Tudeh Party, initially as a bourgeois populist party (its name means 'Masses'). During the Second World War, with Iran divided into Soviet and British spheres of influence, the party became more openly a Stalinist party in its politics. After 1953 and the fall of Mossadeq, it too fell victim to the Shah's police regime with its members, assassinated, tortured and driven once again into exile.

Throughout the 1960s, and most of the 1970s, the Tudeh had only the weakest organisation inside Iran. Worse, its total dependence on the Soviet Union meant it was bound to follow Soviet international state interests and in the 1970s the USSR was developing increasingly cordial relations with the Shah. Only in 1978-9 did the Soviets fully realise that the Shah was finished and start to refer to Ayatollah Khomeini as 'the leader of the national democratic and religious opposition'. The Tudeh consequently changed its stance and became loyal supporters of the Islamic revolution. Ayatollah Khomeini, the Tudeh explained, leads the anti-imperialists; therefore, the Tudeh is behind Khomeini.<sup>4</sup>

The Tudeh's uncritical support of Khomeini may seem bizarre but a study of earlier twists and turns in Stalinist politics makes it far from incomprehensible. The key lies in the political counterrevolution that Stalin led between 1924 and 1935 that not only led to a brutal bureaucratic dictatorship in the USSR but transformed the Communist International into a political replica of the policies of Russian Menshevism.

When the Russian Social-Democracy was founded in the 1890s, that is, before the split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, it was on the understanding that even if the coming revolution they faced would be a bourgeois-democratic one, the leadership of it could not simply be left to the bourgeoisie. G.V. Plekhanov, founder of Russian Marxism, said at the founding congress of the Second International in 1889, 'The Russian revolution will be victorious as a workers' revolution, or not at all?.'

The Bolsheviks, above all through Lenin, developed more consistent revolutionary democratic positions.<sup>5</sup> The coming Russian revolution, he believed, whilst it would be bourgeois, in the sense it would clear away all feudal obstacles to the further development of capitalism, would be led by the workers in an alliance with the revolutionary part of the peasantry, who also had an interest in liquidating the landed estates and

all feudal remnants. Lenin's slogan of a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants expressed just that. The working masses would drive the bourgeois-democratic revolution as far as possible, but without yet passing on to socialist goals.

Lenin's slogans, however, cannot be interpreted as a call for the working class movement to surrender leadership in bourgeois revolution to capitalist forces or abandon independent action in order not to scare away prospective bourgeois allies. This was the policy of the Mensheviks from 1907-1917 and it became the policy used by Joseph Stalin and Nikolai Bukharin after Lenin's death in 1924. The most clear-sighted alternative to this was that of Leon Trotsky. Trotsky, who from 1905-1917 stood outside of the two social democratic factions, held that proletariat would lead the struggle to destroy Tsarism, in alliance with the peasantry for sure, but would establish a workers' government. This would, out of necessity, because of the counterrevolutionary sabotage of the capitalists and the big landowners, adopt measures that would directly attack the latter's ownership of the means of production. A workers' government would thus not be able to refrain from taking socialist measures, without breaking with its own class. He argued that the bourgeois revolution must, therefore, grow over into a socialist revolution and, in order to survive, that would need the support of other workers' revolutions abroad.<sup>6</sup> This was the perspective and programme of permanent revolution. Every revolution of the twentieth century has confirmed this prognosis.

In the Chinese revolution of 1925-27, the leadership of the Communist International pursued a radically different course from that advocated by Trotsky. The bourgeois-nationalist Guomindang (Kuomintang) led by Chiang Kai-shek, was declared the leadership of the anti-imperialist revolution, which was to be strictly limited to a bourgeois-democratic framework. The young, but rapidly growing, Chinese Communist Party, was instructed to enter the Guomindang, make no criticisms of the existing leadership and so, in effect, liquidate itself as an independent force.

Trapped in his Menshevik schema, Stalin stopped the Chinese Communist Party from openly competing for the leadership of the masses. Instead, a 'left-wing' bourgeois leader was found to capitulate to politically. Finally, as if to show that he still had not mastered the ABC of communist strategy, but was prepared to embark on senseless ultra-left adventures under certain conditions, Stalin ordered the Communist Party to launch an uprising, when their main forces were already crushed. The result of Stalin's and Bukharin's politics in China was complete political capitulation, an unrestrained adaptation of the worst aspects of Menshevism, and three major massacres of communists and the wider labour movement. And what happened to the Soviet communists who had advocated a position in line with Lenin's, like Trotsky and his co-thinkers? They were silenced, expelled, exiled, imprisoned and murdered on a large scale.

The point of this digression is not to explain some of the general trends in Chinese history during the 1920s, but to illustrate the origins of the political practice and method that became the calling card of Stalinism. The need to 'not scare away' the bourgeoisie, and the consequent capitulation to its leadership of national and democratic struggles, had never been Lenin's method, it was alien to everything that the Comintern formulated during his lifetime. Under Stalin it became a cornerstone of Comintern politics, which always had the same result: defeat for the working classes.

In country after country, revolutionary situation after revolutionary situation, the Stalinist Communist parties tried to restrict the struggle to a democratic stage, always leading to the defeat of all prospects of socialism. Perhaps most tragic of all was the case of Indonesia in 1965. Here, the Communist party had millions of members, but completely tailed the populist Sukarno bourgeois-nationalist leadership. Despite its massive size, the party offered no resistance to the military coup led by General Suharto so, instead of a victory for the revolution, the result was the massacre of around a million communist party members.<sup>7</sup>

## **Stalinism in Iran**

The Tudeh party fully embodied the Stalinist method in Iran. When Mossadeq was overthrown in 1953, the Tudeh had been at the height of its strength, leading mass trade unions and having important cells organising amongst the army rank and file. It had not been particularly sympathetic to Mossadeq's oil nationalisation programme because this adversely affected Soviet interest in the oilfields of northern Iran. Only in 1952 did it suddenly change its line to supporting him, now uncritically. When the British-American backed coup came, the party leadership fled abroad leaving the rank and file to join in the unsuccessful resistance. Had the party mobilised the working class, there might have been a chance of victory, which might have opened the prospects of a Communist takeover. Instead, the Tudeh suffered a crushing defeat and after that the 25 years of bloody dictatorship under the Shah. Thus it was perhaps no surprise that in 1979 they hailed a new 'anti-imperialist' dictator, Khomeini.

In an interview with Robert Fisk, Nur al-Din Kianuri, First Secretary of the Tudeh party, said: 'But for us, the positive side of Ayatollah Khomeini is so important that the so-called negative side means nothing'.<sup>8</sup>

To put the question like that, to judge whether a non-communist force is primarily good or bad, and then either support it fully or not at all, has just nothing in common with the method developed by Lenin. As early as 1905, Lenin clarified his basic approach to alliances with other classes, the capitalists and the peasantry. While the Mensheviks tried to win liberals to a common political platform with the social democracy, which was meant to be adhered to by both classes, the tactic of the Bolsheviks was to make limited agreements for concrete goals, while the political independence and programme of the party, and in particular its right of criticism of other political (class) forces, was always upheld. Above all, the leading role of the working class and, therefore, its class independence, could not be sacrificed.

In Iran, before 1979, the most immediate question was certainly the overthrow of the Shah, oppressor of the people and gendarme of US imperialism. This would not only be a necessary step towards freedom for the Iranian masses, but also a severe blow against imperialist control of the region. To reach this goal it was, therefore, correct for communists to strive for concrete agreements with other forces, including the Islamist led sections of the masses. Direct steps in the struggle against the regime, for example, organising and defending demonstrations and strikes and, once the movement had developed sufficiently, direct military attacks on the state were essential.

The mullahs were neither a homogeneous force nor the only force that emerged as the Shah's regime collapsed. There were various bourgeois liberal parties that held governmental office and the presidency in various combinations from January 1979 to June 1981. However, they always faced a more radical and politically reactionary force, grouped around Khomeini, in the Revolutionary Council. This exercised a sort of dual power with the official government bodies that was based on the parties in the Majlis. The 'radicals' were centred on the Islamic Republican party headed by Ayatollahs Mohammed Beheshti and Hashemi-Rafsanjani and Hojatoleslam Ali Khamenei (to be Khomeini's successor as Supreme Guide).

Almost the entire left, from the Islamist-populist Mujahidin, through the Tudeh to the Fedayeen-Majority and the Trotskyists saw, or pretended to see, the main danger in the bourgeois liberals, because of their apparently greater softness on US imperialism. Because they argued that the main yardstick had to be 'anti-imperialism' and, indeed, anti-liberalism, they were willing to block with Khomeini against the more liberal forces in government when they tried to introduce or retain bourgeois democratic institutions. By and large, the left supported Khomeini in all his attacks on the liberals because they thought he was a radical anti-imperialist and they were willing to accept him as the 'leader of the revolution'. For example, they were prepared to meekly overlook Khomeini's thundering against atheistic communism, his hezbollah thugs' attacks with clubs and razors on their demonstrations and meetings, even his closing down of their papers and, ultimately, the banning of their parties. In this they made the mistake that Ferdinand Lassalle

had made in Germany, in the 1860s, when he sided with Bismarck, the representative of the semi-feudal Junkers and the monarchy, against the capitalistic Liberal opposition. Marxists are anti-liberal from the left, never from the right. We defend all democratic rights, alongside the liberals if they are, in practice, engaged in that struggle, because the working class needs these freedoms as long as capitalism is in existence. We attack bourgeois democracy exclusively from the perspective of a more democratic programme, that of proletarian democracy, the rule of workers' councils.

The need for blocks with liberals or even with right-wing Islamist mass forces, against a dictatorship in no way means the communists should renounce their independence. On the contrary, the communist approach to temporary alliances, episodic blocks or united fronts has two aspects. One side is fighting for the largest possible mobilisation of the masses in struggle, the other is during the course of that mass mobilisation to fight for leadership of the movement by advancing a strategy counter-posed to that pursued by other political forces in the movement. In Iran, in 1978-79, there is no getting round the fact that the reactionary mullahs had huge influence over the mass mobilisations and this would only be broken by united front policy towards these forces, which would show in practice that the communists consistently represented the anti-capitalist and democratic interests of the masses. As the Shah's regime crumbled, however, all unity with these forces should have been broken and an uncompromising strategy for working class power launched. This would necessarily have included the fight for, and defence of, democratic freedoms against Khomeini and against all concessions to imperialism by the liberals.

### **The mullahs attack the revolution**

Khomeini himself only returned to Iran after the Shah fled in January. That he was pretty far from being a consistent revolutionary, even in relation to the bloodstained monarchy, is shown by his continual attempt to reach negotiated deals behind the scenes. Under pressure from the masses, some of his forces participated in the February insurrection that ousted the Shah's replacement. That part of the masses that saw Khomeini as their leader undoubtedly played an important part in the victory against the Shah and, up to this point, military cooperation was therefore correct.

The Tudeh, with its theory of stages, however, drew the conclusion that Khomeini was the natural leader during a whole period of anti-imperialist revolution. This was quite absurd, albeit to be expected from a party loyal to the Kremlin. Soviet theorists had by now, further developing their Stalinist political heritage, come up with the theory of the non-capitalist path of development. That meant that forces that were not communist and not working class, but also not big bourgeois, could embark on a development that was not capitalist and, with the aid of the national communist party and, above all, the Soviet Union, could move towards socialism. In Iran this meant that the reactionary Khomeini regime that was supported by the Tudeh, and had friendly relations with the Soviet Union, would evolve along non-capitalist and eventually socialist lines.

History may remember this as the most absurd distortion of Leninism ever invented.

In the case of an American invasion, or another CIA operation to restore the monarchy, military cooperation would have been correct. The objective of defeating the imperialist and monarchist troops, however, should not entail hiding the banner of communism and renouncing anti-capitalist slogans for a whole period, but practical joint action to defend Iran from such attacks. In the absence of such an imperialist intervention, which was not to occur, it quickly became obvious that the Khomeini and his mullahs were the archenemies of the revolution. Khomeini himself showed this in the first days after the February insurrection when he not only told the workers to stop striking, but also called on the armed masses to part with their weapons. Already, after the experience of 1848, Marx remarked that after every revolution, the masses were armed and the first task of the bourgeoisie, to defend their rule, was to make



sure they were disarmed. This leads us to the question: what kind of revolution was Iran facing in 1979?

Iran was an under-developed and semi-colonial country. Progressive goals that tend to be associated with the bourgeois-democratic revolution were still to be completed, in particular the agrarian revolution and breaking from imperialist dependency, not to mention the task of separating religion from the state and from education. The problem was, as we have seen in Russia in 1917, in China in the twenties, and in various countries since, that the bourgeoisie was not strong enough, or radical enough, to lead this development. The dream of a separate democratic phase, with steadily rising living standards for the masses, under the leadership of the patriotic bourgeoisie and alongside a continued peaceful growth of the socialist forces, has everywhere proven to be a utopian fiction. This was especially true in countries like Iran in 1979, where the proletariat had a particularly strong relative social weight, which made the capitalists quite fearful of their potential power. Consequently, Iran provided further evidence of the maxim of the French Jacobin revolutionary Saint Just 'those who make half a revolution dig their own graves.' The alternative to an uncompleted revolution is counterrevolution.

In 1917, the Bolsheviks had concluded that, despite the backwardness of Russia, the bourgeois-democratic revolution must grow into a socialist one. This was, indeed, the only way to complete the democratic tasks of the February Revolution and to stop a semi-restorationist coup against the masses. After the early years of the Comintern, which had emphasised the need for the Communist parties to retain their political independence, and not to limit their demands to what the bourgeoisie could accept, it was the by now exiled Trotsky who most consistently formulated the Marxist view on revolutions in colonial and semi-colonial countries, by elaborating on his theory of the permanent revolution.<sup>9</sup> The main point is not whether a country 'immediately' can build socialism, but that only under a revolutionary workers' government can the interests of the working masses be protected. During the epoch of imperialism the socialist revolution, in short, is put on the agenda of all countries.

The working class in Iran was still a minority of the people, but a bigger one than it had been in Russia in 1917, numbering some 2.5 million out of 30 million people. The workers' seizure of many factories, their organisation of shoras and, to a large extent, their arming themselves, shows they were ready to push the revolution further. It was necessary to choose; either support a continuation of the struggle, which meant that the workers, supported by the poorer peasants and the city poor, should seize state power, nationalise the factories, banks, etc, in other words, a socialist revolution, or support the bourgeoisie and all non-socialist forces in their quest to disarm the workers, break their new position in production and push them back to their usual position under capitalism. It was, furthermore, obvious early on that a stabilisation of capitalism could only occur under the leadership of the mullahs, and the counter-revolutionary potential of that should have been clear to all socialists. Tragically, it was not.

It should have been obvious that the mullahs increasingly came into conflict with the revolution. Immediately after the February insurrection, the Islamist armed groups, Pasdaran and Hezbollah, were organised, and pretty soon they started attacking the left, workers' organisations and women, albeit, at first, on only a small scale. In March, Khomeini declared that women must wear the chador in public. Within 24 hours, 20,000 women marched against this attack on their freedom. The Tudeh condemned the 'bourgeois' women for not obeying the Ayatollah.

Later that month, a referendum gave the people the chance to choose between monarchy and an Islamic republic. This was a prime example of how referendums, far from guaranteeing the 'will of the people', as metaphysical democrats imagine, can be used to drum up a passive mass support for reactionary solutions. Instead of inspiring debate and argument over a number of possible programmes amongst the masses, such as would occur with elections to a sovereign Constituent Assembly, a referendum can be

used to force one particular bourgeois programme through. In this case, the 'choice' the referendum gave the masses was plainly reactionary; mass struggle had just overthrown the hated monarchy so why would they now vote to retain it? Worse still of course, the only alternative presented in the referendum question was for an Islamic republic. While the referendum result expressed the hatred of the masses for the Shah, the votes were, of course, also seen as providing support for another reactionary solution: an Islamic republic. A basic democratic demand socialists defend is for the separation of the church and religion from the state and it is a duty of all progressive people to support secularisation. The referendum should have been condemned and boycotted.

The Tudeh, again, saw things differently: 'because we want unity with the people, we wholeheartedly support the referendum'.<sup>10</sup>

To talk about unity in general, without specifying what kind of unity, is meaningless. Communists strive for unity around progressive goals, and we are for unity in action in the struggle that takes the working class forward. Above all, we aim to win the biggest possible unity among the masses behind a revolutionary programme. However, unity can equally be struck around counter-revolutionary politics and, therefore, it can also become the slogan of the reactionaries. Marxists are not for an abstract 'unity' they support a revolutionary and fighting unity of the masses. We can never be in favour of unity behind reactionary slogans, but that is exactly what uncritical support of the Tudeh entailed. The more radical left, like the Fedayeen, did boycott the referendum, but the Khomeini line won and, on 1 April, the Islamic republic was proclaimed. That did not mean the revolution was lost, the class struggle is not settled by one formulation in the constitution, but it was obviously a big victory for the mullahs.

On May Day, demonstrations were attacked by Islamist youth armed with bicycle chains and other makeshift weapons and, in August, organisations and papers of the left were attacked. At the same time, the minorities, like the Kurds and the Turkmen were attacked for having dared to demand autonomy. The Fedayeen and the Paykar defended themselves bravely, and Khomeini's still irregular forces could not defeat the Kurds. The mullahs had to beat a retreat that time, but their intentions were obvious. Other signs that should have alerted the Tudeh were that the Islamist militia had already during the spring of 1979 started to purge anti-clerical books, and there were instances of book burning, such as in the town of Khorramabad, where left wing books were destroyed to cries of 'Islam is victorious, Communism is crushed!'<sup>11</sup>

In November, Islamist students occupied the American embassy. Until then, representatives of the Iranian government, as is shown by shredded documents pieced together, tried to negotiate with the Americans. Indeed, Khomeini's initial response to the news of the occupation was that the authorities should 'kick them out'. Later, however, he was persuaded that it was an extremely popular act and could be used to outflank the left. Now he embarked upon a policy of verbally radical 'anti-imperialism'. Naturally, it would still have been the duty of revolutionaries to help defend Iran against actual attacks by US Imperialism, but the fact that the mullahs were now yelling 'death to America!' did not change the fact that their troops had already attacked the revolutionary workers and the left with force of arms, and it did not make them any less of a threat. It certainly did not make the need to actively take up arms against the growing counter-revolution any less necessary. The proponents of the theory of stages, however, did not draw these conclusions. The 6th plenum of the Tudeh in February and March of 1980 laid down the line:

'The foremost duty of the Party in the political field is to co-operate with genuine revolutionary forces, the Party clearly supports those who are behind ayatollah Khomeini.'<sup>12</sup>

In June 1980, six people were stoned to death. When middle-aged women can be sentenced to death by stoning for 'deceiving young girls?', it is obvious that the clerical counter-revolution has raised its head

considerably. No such events could shake the theory of stages, however. The Tudeh, and the Fedayeen-majority, too, continued to support Khomeini, even openly siding with the regime against the rest of the left, which were purged by the mullahs' security forces. This support did not stop until 1983, and then only because they themselves were butchered.

### **The workers' shoras**

As in so many other situations of heightened class struggle and revolution, embryonic workers' councils, shoras, were formed in Iran. Starting from strike committees, they organised the workers at the factories, in more radical cases they interfered with the running of production, even going as far as to seize the factories. Communists have since 1917 seen the basis of the power of the working class in councils of this type, which directly mobilise the revolutionary masses. The task, when they are formed, is to spread and coordinate them. They must merge into a countrywide structure, organise their armed forces and seize state power by dissolving whatever remains of the bourgeois state machine. This has nowhere been an entirely spontaneous process, if no conscious revolutionary leadership emerges, the development will come to a halt, either at atomised local stages, or under a political leadership that wishes to compromise with the existing order, is hesitant or even against seizing power.

The real alternative to a determined revolutionary leadership fighting for the overthrow of capitalism is not a free, optimal and harmonious organisation of the working masses, but a vacillating or even, subjectively or objectively, counter-revolutionary workers' leadership. The shoras of the workers in Iran showed many examples of radical organisation, and there were many cases where they not only took control over the factories, but also increased production. The left has spent much time before and since discussing their role in production but, when the enemy forces arm themselves, local instances of workers' rule over the factories will not be enough. As Karl Marx, writing in 1848 about the Frankfurt Assembly, which engaged in doctrinaire debates about the best form of constitution but did nothing against the advancing counterrevolutionary forces of the King of Prussia and the Austrian Emperor, remarked: "what use is the best agenda and the best constitution when in the meantime the government have placed bayonets on the agenda?"<sup>13</sup> The shoras had to move rapidly from dealing with production to becoming soviets, in the original Russian sense, that is taking control of the cities and arming militias in their own defence. If they did not do this then they were doomed. That they had this potential explains why the reactionaries moved to incorporate and destroy them.

The Mullahs soon started to attack the shoras and were only restrained by the necessity to be careful against an organised and often armed working class. Already, in February 1979, Khomeini had warned the mobilised workers: "disobedience from, and sabotage of, the provisional government will be regarded as opposition to the genuine Islamic revolution".<sup>14</sup> Systematically, shoras were attacked by credits being withheld, deliveries cancelled and finally by direct violence. Soon, they were replaced by "Islamic" shoras controlled by the clergy and imposing class collaboration. By the summer of 1981, very little remained of genuine workers' rule in the factories.

### **The Left organisations**

**When the revolution started, the Tudeh, having been hunted down by the Shah's security forces, was not very strong inside Iran, although it was the biggest left organisation amongst exiles. In Iran, the guerrilla groups, the Organization of the Iranian People's Fedayeen Guerrillas (OIPFG or Fedayeen for short) and the Mojahedin were bigger. Apart from them, several small splinter groups had emerged from all parties.**

Throughout the seventies, the Fedayeen carried out an armed struggle against the Shah's regime. Their prestige was much enhanced by the role they played in the revolution in 1979, and, although at that time

far smaller than Khomeini's forces, they could mobilise considerable masses.

On 10 February 1979, at Farah Abad army base in east Tehran, there was a clash between Fedayeen supporters and soldiers loyal to the Shah. The Fedayeen quickly overwhelmed the officers and won over the rank and file soldiers. The following day they did the same at all the army bases and police stations in Tehran. At 2.00 pm on 11 February 1979, the army commanders declared they would not fight the people any longer. The revolution was victorious. Important as Khomeini was, powerful as were the mullahs in mobilising the vast demonstrations of 1978, the overthrow of the regime had been primarily accomplished by the workers' strikes, led increasingly by Tudeh militants, whilst the insurrection itself, which disintegrated and disarmed the military, was in large measure the work of the Fedayeen. This fact alarmed Khomeini who repeatedly tried to restrict the scope of the strikes and was horrified at the Fedayeen's successful insurrection.

The courage and initiative of the Fedayeen cannot be doubted but they, too, were crippled by a stages theory, drawn primarily in their case from Stalinism's Chinese variant, Maoism. Although they were not able to develop a revolutionary programme to lead the working class, for a while they did resist the Islamist counter-revolution. They also called for a boycott of the referendum on an Islamic Republic, which Khomeini rushed to impose to prevent the election of a democratic and sovereign Constituent Assembly. They defended the Kurds and the Turkmen from the new regime's first attacks. KAR, the official newspaper of the Organization, had a circulation of 100,000 and, as late as 1 May 1981, they could rally a similar number of supporters in Tehran.

Unfortunately, they came more and more under the influence of the pro-regime positions of the Tudeh. In June 1980, this led to a split. The majority, like the Tudeh, sided with the regime as it hunted down and killed all other left groups, still clinging to the hope that the reactionary and murderous mullahs represented the revolution. The Fedayeen minority developed in a more radical direction, correctly drawing the conclusion that the mullahs had spearheaded the counter-revolution. Although still weak politically, and not able to lead the masses, at least they acted like revolutionaries in fighting reaction, declaring that Khomeini's regime must be overthrown and helping the minorities in their armed struggle against the re-emerging oppression.

The People's Mujahedin of Iran (PMOI) had been a Muslim populist guerrilla group, founded by Tehran university students in 1965. They were increasingly influenced Maoism and in 1975, the Maoists seized control over the organisation, and purged, with some bloodshed, their opponents. Two Mujahedin organisations, one Muslim and one Maoist, now fought the Shah. After the revolution of 1979, the Maoist Mujahedin formed the Paykar, who developed along somewhat similar lines to the Fedayeen minority in resisting Khomeini. Together with some other smaller splinter groups, they, although failing to put forward a revolutionary programme, at least resisted the Islamic counter-revolution, and were an honourable exception to the outrageous betrayal of the Tudeh and the Fedayeen majority. The Islamist-populist Mujahedin, under the leadership of Massoud Rajavi grew to mass proportions, supporting Khomeini but deeply distrusted by him and were heavily repressed as the Ayatollah consolidated his theocratic dictatorship.

The Iranian revolution also gave evidence of how 'Trotskyists', if they reduce the theory of permanent revolution to an automatic process in which an 'anti-imperialist' like Khomeini is believed to be forced by 'history' to play a leading role for an allotted period, can end up in practice no different from the defenders of the Stalinist stages theory. The Fourth International (United Secretariat) established a section, the HKE (Hezb-e Kaganar-Sosialist / Socialist Workers' Party) shortly after the revolution. Its politics and principles were confused from the very beginning. The Fourth International was at this period divided into majority

and minority factions, one based around the Socialist Workers Party of the USA (SWP-US) and the other around the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) and the veteran post-war FI leader, Ernest Mandel. Neither offered a revolutionary guide to Iranian Marxists but the predominant influence of the SWP-US (The 'International Minority' in the FI) was particularly disastrous.

When, for example, the Islamic students' organisation (ISO) wanted to close down the university in June 1980, they were supported by the 'Trotskyists' in the HKE, who did not back away from denouncing the Fedayeen and others who defended the universities from the attacks of Hezbollah.

'The HKE also pointed out that by opposing the ISO's occupations, the leaderships of the Tudeh Party, Fedayeen and Mujahedeen not only 'showed their bankruptcy' but also played into the hands of the 500 capitalist families and their underground hit squads'.<sup>15</sup>

The organ of the International Minority Tendency of the FI, Intercontinental Press, continued: 'Contrary to press accounts, the HKE says there is no escalating anti-communist campaign or witch-hunt against the Mujahedin or Fedayeen in Iran today'. On the contrary, it affirmed that what was happening was 'a deepening of the revolutionary process'. The HKE and its SWP (US) mentors could not tell the difference between revolution and counter-revolution.

The HKE, however, soon split into two factions, which developed completely diverging policies. One faction, led by Rahimi and Khosravi, correctly saw the need to resist the emerging dictatorship, and developed links with the Socialist Revolutionary faction of the Fedayeen minority. It is difficult to tell how this leftward moving force could have developed, as they were soon mercilessly crushed. The other faction of the HKE, connected to the SWP (US) showed a near complete subservience to Khomeini. They provide one of the most absurd examples of the belief that revolution is an automatic process, that is, one that continues on its course without the need for revolutionaries to shape events by their own actions, without the need for conscious revolutionary leadership. As the counter-revolution of the mullahs grew stronger, these misguided supporters denied the existence of an anti-communist campaign in Iran, until it destroyed them, too. The moral responsibility for this disaster lies firmly with their US mentors and it is scarcely any surprise that in 1982 they unceremoniously ditched their 'Trotskyism' and became open Stalinists on the Cuban model.

### **The prospects for a victory of the workers**

The working class in Iran was a minority, but its key role in the economy made its social weight, as is always the case, much greater than its formal numerical strength. In 1979, it was also well organised, radical and partly armed. The old army of the Shah was dissolved, important parts of it had refused to shoot at the demonstrations and in several cases joined the insurgent masses. The mullahs at once started to organise the city poor and petit bourgeois in armed organisations like the pasdaran and the hezbollah, which were soon to be the vanguard of the counter-revolution.

It is basic Marxism that the lumpenproletariat and the petit-bourgeoisie do not have any independent class interests that can act as the social basis for a new state. In the last analysis, they can only be mobilised under the leadership of either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. Under Khomeini, they were mobilised for the interests of the bourgeoisie, pace the layers most connected to the Shah, around a fiercely reactionary programme. The alternative for communists would have been to fight for leadership over these layers. The mullahs promised economic improvements for the poor and opened certain career possibilities. To ally with the poor in the cities and the countryside is a key task for the proletariat, but the working class can do it in a revolutionary form by winning these strata to the fight against private property.

It is incontestable that the mullahs did have significant support among the urban poor and it would not have

been easy to win the masses they led. But then, this is always the case in revolutions, and the only way to win is to fight for it. The alternative is a certain defeat. The possibility of victory became clear once the workers had formed their own organs of power. Had they co-ordinated them fully on a country-wide scale, organised their armed forces, drawn in semi- and non-proletarian layers into the workers' movement, they would have powerfully obstructed the counter-revolution. Furthermore, the goal would have been to nationalise big companies and banks, to put the economy under the central direction of the workers. This perspective is not to be confused with the mullah regime's nationalisations, which were carried out to take the factories away from the revolutionary workers. Finally, and above all, the task would have been to spread the revolution beyond Iran's borders.

The workers and peasants of Iraq, for example, had a long tradition of radical struggle, and that could have been re-awoken, although they were oppressed by Saddam's dictatorship. The Palestinians could have become an important ally, as could workers and oppressed throughout the region. Not least important were the national minorities within the borders of Iran who could have been won to the revolution as they in fact were defending themselves from the regime's attacks. Especially the Kurds had considerable military strength, which they showed by beating back the invasion of August of 1979, and by holding out for years. Although possessing less strength, the Turkmen and the Azerbaijanis also put up an armed fight. To support the national rights of the minorities would not only have been an obvious democratic duty, but was also essential to create an alliance to defend the revolution.

### **Reasons for the rise of Khomeini**

**Although religious leaders had, as we have seen, a long history of political interventions in Iran, most opposition to the regime was secular until the 1960s. One reason why the mullahs increasingly gained leadership was that, while political opposition under the Shah was suppressed, religion could be practiced more freely. More importantly, by talking about Western ideals, whilst torturing and murdering the people and being slavishly dependent on US imperialism, the Shah discredited the liberal values to which he claimed to adhere. Still, many clerics like Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Shariatmadari were much more liberal than Khomeini. They were closely linked to the National Front and other liberal Islamists such as Mehdi Bazargan and Abolhassan Banisadr, who envisaged a milder form of Islamic rule, even keeping religion largely separated from politics. Even Khomeini, since the early sixties the most prominent opponent of the Shah among the mullahs, often toned down his reactionary radicalism. Many progressive people believed Islamic rule would not be that bad if they allied with the more liberal mullahs. The Tudeh, however, actually supported the Khomeini faction, because it was shouting 'Death to imperialism' louder and louder. It would turn out they were also to execute the Tudeh with much more energy than they would attack America. Counter-revolutions always hold the worst surprises for political opportunists.**

The hostage taking at the US embassy in late 1979, and the violent verbal assaults on American imperialism, gave the mullahs of the Khomeini faction a means of mobilising the radicalised masses under their banner. These masses organised by the Islamic students, the Islamic guards or pasdaran and the hezbollah street gangs from the slums, were repeatedly unleashed on the numerous, but unarmed, left forces to murderous effect. These were truly clerical fascist gangs, the spearhead of the counterrevolution. Another important event in consolidating Khomeini's rule was the war against Iraq. Saddam Hussein, supported by the US, attacked Iran in September 1980. He believed Iran would be greatly weakened by the revolution, but the attack fuelled a wave of patriotism. Naturally, any progressive government would have mobilised for the legitimate defence against the attack. Now, however, this was used to augment the legitimacy of the mullahs, and gave them an excuse to suppress opposition, which, of course, they took gleefully.

### **The need for a revolutionary leadership**

but, above all, it lacked a consistent revolutionary programme and a determined leadership. Embryonic soviets existed in the shoras, in some places less developed and under bourgeois and Islamist leadership, in others areas more radical, even taking control over production. It remained to unite the shoras into a real power. Strike committees and soviets are organised as a kind of a united front, which draws in the workers and other layers into a common struggle to organise strikes, supervise and control the bosses? running of the factories and, at a higher level of struggle, taking over production. When the workers? organisations are attacked by armed forces, as they were in Iran, the most pressing task will be to organise armed defence. The task of revolutionaries is in no way to separate themselves or to limit the role of the councils, but rather to fight loyally as the best organisers in all this. This precisely means to fight for leadership in the soviets.

Nowhere, have the workers? councils been able to go all the way to secure victory without having a revolutionary party at their head. Anti-Leninists may cite examples of self proclaimed ?revolutionary parties? which, in a sectarian manner, demand obedience from the workers or because of ?revolutionary? schemas demand that the workers do not fight for their rights now but sometime in the future. This can in no way negate the lessons unanimously given by the history of revolutions; without a really revolutionary party, organising the most radical and militant parts of the working class under correct slogans, no final victory is possible.

### **Workers Power**

Workers Power, now the British section of the League for the Fifth International, was, in 1979, an emerging British-based organisation trying to orientate to the international class struggle. Their articles on the Iranian revolution, starting from 1978, show that they managed to do this in a way the rest of the left could not.<sup>16</sup> In January 1979, Workers Power called for the strike committees to develop into soviets, organs with the task not only to lead the strikes, but also the armed insurrection. Further, they stressed the need for a Trotskyist party to break the workers from the mullahs, the Tudeh and the Maoists, and stated that the democratic demands of the revolution could only be fully won under a conscious revolutionary leadership.

The headline in an article in February 1979 warned of the danger of ceding leadership of the struggle to the mullahs and said a clear ?No!? to an Islamic republic. The article ended by saying that the goal must be to fight for a workers? state. The article of the March 1979 issue, ?Khomeini prepares attack on the left? correctly stated that even if the mullahs had problems building up an efficient army, their goal was obvious; to crush the left and the workers? organisations. This was not, in itself, a particularly perceptive insight, Khomeini, after all, had already called Marxists ?traitors to the Islamic revolution? and threatened to crush them, nonetheless, it was virtually unique on the international left.

In May, Workers Power put forward the following slogans:

- ? Break with the bourgeoisie, break with the mullahs!
- ? For a united front of workers? parties centred on legality for all workers? parties, trade unions etc and an armed workers? defence militia!
- ? For a sovereign Constituent Assembly! Defend the democratic rights of women and the national and religious minorities!
- ? For the centralisation of factory and strike committees and the organisation of the unemployed into city-wide workers? councils!

It was added that the demands should be accompanied by a call on the Tudeh and the Fedayeen to break with the bourgeoisie and the mullahs and join the struggle for a workers? and peasants? government.

The correct analyses and slogans of Workers Power should not even have been that hard to reach. Basically, these were basic Marxist tactics, building on more than a century of experiences, and the positions of Lenin, Trotsky and the Communist International. But, once again, the depth of the crisis of proletarian leadership was shown. This time, the Iranian workers were to pay with tens of thousands dead, and a dictatorship that still remains after 30 years.

It is to be hoped that the lessons will be learned by the new generation of youth and trade union militants who have relaunched the struggle against the clerical dictatorship over the past few years.

## Endnotes

- 1 The main source on Iran is Keddie, N., *Roots of Revolution*, Yale University Press, 2001
- 2 On the Iranian left, see primarily Behrooz, M., *Rebels with a cause. The failure of the left in Iran*, Tauris, 2000
- 3 Fisk, R., *The Great War for Civilisation*, London, 2006, p. 123
- 4 Dr. Zayar, *The Iranian Revolution*, <http://www.marxist.com/the-iranian-revolution-past-present-future/chapte...> <sup>[1]</sup>
- 5 Most elaborated in Lenin, 'The two tactics of Social-Democracy in the democratic revolution?'
- 6 For Trotsky's analysis in 1906, see Trotsky, L., *Result and Prospects*
- 7 See Sedley, N., 'The Indonesian Massacre of 1965?', *Fifth International*, vol. 2, no. 2
- 8 Fisk, R., *The Great War for Civilisation*, p. 148
- 9 Trotsky, L., *The Permanent Revolution*
- 10 Dr. Zayar, *The Iranian revolution*, chapter 3
- 11 'Executions protect Khomeini's allies?', *Workers Power* June 1979
- 12 Dr. Zayar, *The Iranian Revolution*, chapter 3
- 13 Karl Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, Penguin books, 1973, p 120
- 14 Dr. Zayar, *The Iranian Revolution*, chapter 3
- 15 Intercontinental Press, May 5th, 1980
- 16 The articles are available at [http://www.fifthinternational.org/iranian\\_revolution](http://www.fifthinternational.org/iranian_revolution) <sup>[2]</sup>

---

**Source URL:** <https://fifthinternational.org/content/tragedy-iranian-revolution-%E2%80%93-lessons-today>

## Links:

- [1] <http://www.marxist.com/the-iranian-revolution-past-present-future/chapter-three-the-communist-party-of-iran.htm>  
[2] [http://www.fifthinternational.org/iranian\\_revolution](http://www.fifthinternational.org/iranian_revolution)