

# *Against the Current*

*Organisation of fedaian(Minority) -  
Abroad Committe*

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## Revolution Yes, Referendum NO!

As the political crises in Iran deepen, referendum has become one of the main slogans of various bourgeois groups and organisations. A broad spectrum of bourgeoisie, from royalists to the so called republican and from national-religious around the ruling machinery to groups bordering on them within the government together with "liberal left" call for referendum with a single voice. They make up of forces and political ranks formed around that slogan sufficiently expose the real meaning and content of the slogan. But only in the light of existing political conditions and perspective of the situation changing, the purpose of referendum is completely exposed. It seems no longer there is any need to prove the depth and spread of existing political situation in Iran. Today everyone presupposes the crisis to express any opinion on the political situation in Iran. The reality is so clear that the Iranian bourgeoisie in its totality has also accepted no longer it is possible for the Islamic republic to endure and remain. Home and international bourgeoisie organised a broad effort to control the crisis right from the time it began to appear and adopted new tactics and slogans. The phenomenon of Khatami and slogan of reform were the expression of those tactics and slogans in the primary stages of the crisis. The bourgeoisie employed all its international strength to convince the masses of Iranian people, or at least a broad section of them that "reforms" had commenced in Iran. And that the Islamic republic has the capacity to correspond to the new conditions through internal reforms and "reformers" within the government lead by Khatami are able to overcome the existing chaos. They made such a noise that even some organisations and groups claiming to be left and socialist joined the ranks of Khatami's supporters. International capital flooded Iran and contracts of several billion dollars were signed to control the economic crisis. Also several newspapers and publications were given permission to publish so that the commencement of political reforms could be heralded. Khatami was welcome by the heads of European states as the symbol of "reforms" and "democracy" and the return of Iran to the "international community" was celebrated. But the crisis is deeper than that to be solved by exporting capital and propaganda. The existing contradictions, with a more destructive force knocked the equation out and drove the crisis to higher stages. Broader masses resorted to open and direct struggle. Defeat of the "reforms" project and saving the regime became a hard and undeniable reality. But that did not mean the end of bourgeoisie's efforts to harness the crisis. To confront the crisis and revolution that arises from the nature of crisis, the bourgeoisie resorts to variety of tactics. At every stage of the growth of crisis and mass movement the bourgeoisie puts on the agenda new tactics and slogans. Thus following the defeat of saving the regime through "reforms", according to the development of political situation and growth of crisis, the bourgeoisie has put on the agenda the slogan of referendum, so that possibly it could control the struggle and prevent the crisis developing into a revolution. Now the problem of Islamic republic being toppled is devoid of any importance for the Iranian and world bourgeoisie. The important issue is saving the existing economic-political system. This system can be saved with less head ach if the foundation and the pillars of existing state machinery, armed forces of repression and bureaucracy are saved without being interfered with and the power is transferred to another group of the representatives of the bourgeoisie in a calm manner. This would be done in a guaranteed way so as to stop the crisis leading to revolution, uprising and violent overthrow of the Islamic republic, and to prevent the masses of workers and toilers maintaining the initiative. The slogan of referendum is employed to achieve such an objective and for that strategy. For a second let's suppose things go the way bourgeoisie wants them. And next day it is declared that supposedly a referendum would be held in Iran within a few days and its subject, not even the way supporters of Mohammad Khatami want- choice between this wing and the other, is yes or no to the

Islamic republic. In order to give it a democratic appearance too, international observers supervise it being held correctly. It goes without saying that to whatever extent people take part in the referendum, their reply would be no. What next? The question would be what would replace the Islamic republic? The bourgeoisie's maximum slogan is calling a constitutional assembly. Who would be calling it? Probably the Islamic republic or a group and committee from the bourgeoisie in the name of the nation. Up to here the beard and scissors are all in their hands. Every thing has remained untouched in its place. They would ask the people to put aside their demands and struggles for the time being so that the constitutional assembly could decide every thing on behalf of the nation. While that is going on, the bourgeoisie would employ all its home and international economic and financial, political and publicity means so that in the name of people, bourgeoisie's representatives could hold their constitutional assembly and make decisions correspondent to bourgeoisie's interests and needs. Let's leave what would happen next. But at the same time, should workers and other sections of oppressed and toiling people of Iran want to form soviets and take the initiative into their own hands, the bourgeoisie would simply say no soviets. Should they want to enact their political, social and welfare demands, the bourgeoisie would refer them to the establishment of constitutional assembly and its decisions. And if masses of people wanted to resist, the ready organs of repression, the army, guards, police, courts and prisons are ready to put people in their place. Even if the constitutional assembly is formed, since the bourgeoisie owing to its nature can not and does not want to realise people's demands or at least their main demands, the mass of people would have no other choice than restarting struggle to realise their demands. Even if masses of workers and toilers only had economic and welfare demand, the bourgeoisie would tell them they must wait as the Islamic republic has destroyed every thing and it is not possible to deliver the demands in the short term. Should the masses of toilers say it is years such promises were given to them and they would make efforts to realise them by intensification of struggle, the very same Islamic republic's force of repression that has now sworn allegiance to the new regime, would rise up to confront the masses. The heads of the state too, who thus far were making democratic postures, would put on their jackboots and show their true faces. The people whose initiative has been taken off them now must once again start their struggle from scratch to realise their demands. And this is a struggle that has cost the Iranian people dearly to this day. Therefore it is clear that the aim of propounding the slogan of referendum is to take away the initiative from the masses of workers and toilers from this very day on. The oppressed and toiling masses and in their fore front the working class must disagree with any slogan that wants to take the initiative off them from now on and fight for realisation of slogans that puts the initiative in their hands more than before. Therefore, against the slogan of referendum which is propounded by the capitalist class, the working class, places the slogan of total and absolute overthrow of the Islamic republic through revolution and armed uprising. Why and how of this slogan, is the guarantee of the initiative remaining in the hands of the working class and the toiling and oppressed masses, and a guarantee for the realisation of their demands. For a very simple reason that only through revolution the masses of workers and toilers can become the real masters of the society, and they can make revolution because they have taken the initiative into their own hands. If the Islamic republic is to be overthrown and this is the demand of the very great majority of the Iranian people and if that overthrow must be in a way that the demands of all peoples of Iran from workers and toilers to women and youth are realised, in that case it is clear only the mass of people, women and men workers, toilers and the youth who are their children, have the power and strength to carry out the overthrow. But somewhere this power must find a material expression. Struggle is that material expression. Struggle too is not without form. It takes various forms. Depending on what class is the main carrier of

transformation in any society, particular forms of struggle become the main and dominant ones. The working class too has its own particular and unique forms of struggle. In revolutionary periods when the problem of revolution and transformation of the existing system is placed on the agenda as an immediate imperative, the working class first resorts to a series of strikes that are of course joined with other peripheral forms of struggle. At a stage in this struggle, those strikes are exalted to a general political strike. But the general political strike can not be formed unless strike committees are formed in every factory and the strike committees of factories and various establishments have formed a co-ordinating and leading general strike committee. This means workers have taken the initiative at factory level and throughout the country and are operating as a real power. In reality it is the strike co-ordinating and leading committee which decides as a revolutionary power and enacts the decisions. In that way the initiative is taken off the bourgeoisie. Even if for whatever reason, such as low level of workers organisation and awareness, the bourgeoisie attempts to take the initiative off the working class with complicated tactics, only through attracting the support of strike committees and particularly the strike co-ordinating and leading committee the bourgeoisie can do that. Same as what occurred in the previous Iranian revolution. Nevertheless the point is proved that establishment of strike committees, strike co-ordinating and leading committee and holding general strike, is the first expression of establishing a revolutionary power, parallel to the reactionary power of the bourgeoisie. The working class takes the initiative in that way but can not stop there. Requirements of class struggle compels the working class to step towards settling the issue once and for all and taking the whole initiative, because the bourgeoisie too has not remained idle and is making efforts to settle the issue once and for all. Therefore the working class must advance and sort out the issue of power in its own interest or hand over all power to the bourgeoisie. Progress to settle the issue of power means exalting the form of struggle and going further than the general political strike to armed uprising. This means that in the conditions of victory of uprising, the possibility of mass initiative has advanced to such an extent that seizure of power by the working class and the oppressed toiling masses is also facilitated. Because through the uprising not only the existing ruling group is overthrown, but the disjoining of the government's organs of repression weakens the power of the bourgeoisie more than ever. The masses of workers and toilers get armed and strike committees are exalted to soviets. Observing this advance of workers initiative, neighbourhood soviets and committees would be formed. The main force forming them would be workers and masses of toilers and poor of the towns. This is also another expression of the very revolutionary initiative and exertion of power from workers and toilers. Such, by establishing soviets in factories and neighbourhoods and masses taking up arms, by removing the whole of the old government machinery, it becomes possible for workers and toilers, to establish soviet power and realise their demands by themselves. Here no longer the masses of workers ask anybody to realise their demands, but they decide themselves and from the lowest of levels commence work to implement them. It is here that the mass of people truly can, by establishing the countrywide congress of soviets of the representatives, aware and freely make decisions about their future economic-social and political system. Needless to say the process of class struggle is a complicated one and the development of the situation does not progress as simply as written on paper. No doubt the capitalist class would employ all its means and tactics placing numerous obstacles on the way of progress of the working class and mass initiative. But the reality remains that only revolution can leave the initiative to the masses and the wise class struggle of the working class can neutralise the efforts of the bourgeoisie attempting to take the initiative off the masses. The objective realities of the Iranian society, unsolved and astronomic existing contradictions, daily deepening political crisis, the perspective of ever exalting mass movement and the hopeless resistance of the

ruling reaction, are all facts in favour of revolution and contrary to the interest of Iranian bourgeoisie's tactics and slogans. These realities show the bourgeoisie's slogan of referendum has no future other than their slogan of "reforms". Even if a small and meagre section of the unaware mass of people at this moment had the illusion of gaining something towards their demands through referendum, the acute process of class struggle soon would remove that illusion. We have seen how, in the conditions that the crisis had not extended to the degree of existing depth and spread and the class struggle was not as acute as now, the unaware mass that had put their heart on Khatami's "reforms", quickly turned away from him. It is a great lesson that in revolutionary periods, the masses of people quickly gain experience, remove obstacles off their way, gather around the most radical slogans and march the route of revolution. It is the revolution which corresponds with the interests and aims of the working class, the class that has an irreconcilable contradiction with the whole of capitalist economic-social and political system. Obviously, we as an organisation which defends the interests of the working class and from the position of that class defends the interests of all toiling and oppressed masses, must consistently expose the nature of bourgeoisie's slogans and against the bourgeoisie slogan of referendum defend revolution.

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## Towards Unity and Countrywide Strike

As the guards of the existing system have employed all their capacity and talent to save and continue the system and to secure the stability and security of the ruling regime resort to more open and brutal repression and injustice, they still remain unsuccessful in securing that old objective. Every day that passes, not only the degree of possibility of temporary and even medium term existence of such an order and calm is reduced greatly but gets closer to zero. Now it is at a point where the collapse of the whole system is the everyday talk of even the guards and the most ardent supporters of the regime. It is so bad that they speak of the "break up", "under the feet of those in charge" and the "terrifying tragedy" that would be created as a result of a "shake up". They do not hide their worry about the collapse of the system which is situated at the "edge of abyss". The current problem or the problem specific to the Islamic government at this moment is not only that this government is at a complete dead end, the important problem is that the Islamic government at the present moment and in its totality, is much weaker and vulnerable even compared to a year ago. We can even say that the ruling regime is going through one of its weakest and most fragile stages of life. Political, economic and social pressures on the toiling strata has intensified much more than the past. The extent of discontent among workers, toilers and other deprived strata of society are immense. At the same time, political awakening and awareness among these social layers and their resorting to direct and open struggle against the regime is gathering momentum fast. Mass protest movements, with all their ebbs and flows, are growing, spreading and all together reaching higher stages. On the other hand political and economic crises have reached greater depths. Internal confrontations of the ruling group and severe political waves have pulled the society to the threshold of serious and fundamental transformation, placing uprising and revolution on the agenda of lower classes and strata of the society. It is more than a month that student strikes and protests, despite prohibition and arrests, have continued without a break. The whole of Iran has been transformed to being the arena of student struggles and protests against the existing situation and the regime. Three years after the students protest movement in July 1999, the movement is fast traversing stages of

progress and development, particularly in respect of complete independence from government organisations and putting those borders behind. Today every aware and fighting student knows the progress of the students protest movement is dependent upon deepening and spreading the struggle. The necessary tool to spread and deepen the struggle is to break the barriers of the university and take the movement among the rest of toiling strata and to graft the struggle to the protest movements of those layers of society. The ruling regime too experienced the 1999 and knows the consequences of such a unity and grafting. During the whole of recent students protest movement, the state apparatus and its various payees spent maximum effort confining students' protests to the auditoriums and four walls of universities. That massive effort was made to prevent the protests reaching the streets and to stop the rest of unhappy layers of people joining the protest movements. At the same time, by attempting to confine the protest to the four walls of university, the regime could suppress and put out the movement with greater ease.

Although the Islamic regime employed the most brutal methods of suppression and intimidation against the protesters, those measures had and would not have any influence on the structures and grounds for emergence of such protests. The protest rally of Tehran's teachers and education staff is the evidence of that truth.

On the morning of 1 December 2002, following governments disapproval of Teachers rally in Haydarian Sports Hall, hundreds of teachers and education staff assembled in Hafez and Revolution streets then resorted to march and demonstration. During the march, as usual a great number of youth and other strata of people joined the ranks of demonstrators. Teachers stated their political and trade demands through various slogans. They demanded freedom for political prisoners, resignation of Haji, the education minister and with slogans such as "Teachers unity unity! Teachers strike strike! Teachers, students unite!" called teachers and students to unite, strike and continue the struggle. To smash the protesters, in addition to the methods and instruments used to suppress the students, such as tear gas, vomit gas, spraying onto faces of protesters, kidnap, terror gangs assaulting protesters with knives, machetes and other cold weapons, use of batons, firing into air and so on, this time Islamic government's forces of repression threw several grenades into the crowd and then brutally attacked the demonstration. In the very short time since the new wave of students' protests, several workers strikes and protest rallies have been taking place. Although great effort is made to overshadow workers protests and rallies, nevertheless news here and there indicate thousands of workers in various towns and states have resorted to strike, protest and holding protest rallies. On the very same 1 December 2002 a great number of workers too resorted to gathering and protest in front of the Labour Office in Tehran. In spite of the Islamic government this time responding to those protests with speed and the forces of repression brutally putting down the gatherings and protests before it was too late, such brutality, as was not effective in the past would not get anywhere in the future either. Such brutality would not be able to prevent mass protest movements, since their origin is deep mass discontent over the existing situation and conditions, and they are formed on the grounds of certain political and economic conditions. In spite of these brutalities, protest movements are reproduced. Looking at the very current demands of those movements, it is possible to realise mass protest movements would be entering the arena with deeper and stronger political character.

Workers, teachers and students carry the experience of last and previous years. Still the slogan "workers, teachers, students unit unit!" constantly repeated during the past years and the countrywide strike is not forgotten. Still the joint protest rally of workers and teachers in front of the parliament on last February and the support of huge numbers of students and pupils for it, and the joint march and demonstration of those forces have not faded from memories.

We must learn from that experience and the experience of recent protests and rallies. Every labour movement activist, every aware revolutionary force must have realised through experience that the vulnerability of sporadic protests and strikes, separate and without connection to one another is very high. It allows the regime to suppress these protests and strikes easily. Unity in struggle and making those protests and strikes countrywide not only increases the strength of protest and the force wanting change and revolution openly, but reduces the strength of the force that wants to maintain the existing situation, reducing the strength of regime's resistance intensely. At the same time it facilitates the possibility of mass protest movements advancing to higher stages. Therefore, forward to unity, towards protest and countrywide strike!