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THE 'GULF WAR'

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All the imperialist powers and big capitalist states have lined up to save the crisis-stricken bourgeoisie in the Gulf region. The governments of the region, on the other hand, appeal to the world masters of power for help, using whatever means they have, from begging and beseeching to threatening, hostage-taking and terror. The U.S., Soviet Union, France and China are each trying to help, in one way or another, this or that country involved in the conflict. The Chinese missiles are mounted in the Straits of Hormuz. Soviets furnish Kuwaitee oil-tankers with their flags. To keep up with the Soviets, Americans send their ships to the Gulf. Britain tries to soften the tone of the U.N. resolution in favour of Iran. France mourns over the fate of her interests endangered by the crisis, and Germans are cautious not to displease any of the countries involved.

In their rush to save the crisis-ridden bourgeoisie of the region, the world masters of power have their own goals. Who is going to catch more fish from the troubled waters of the Gulf? The aim of the imperialist powers is to jostle one another and get a stronger footing among the Gulf states. This open rivalry has to be taken into account as a new factor in the seven-year-old Iran-Iraq war. U.S. imperialism is, more than others, making all efforts to maintain its endangered superiority and domination in the region. Reagan's arms-deal and flirting with Khomeini's government did not bring forth any clear perspective of coming to terms with the Islamic regime. It eventually ended up offending the Arab states and those governments relying upon the U.S. The reaction of Kuwait, hiring a few oil-tankers from the Soviet-Union, was warning enough for the Reagan government: the game in the Gulf region is not the monopoly of the U.S. and any effort to get closer to one side of the conflict would certainly provide the possibility for other rivals to

come to terms with the other side. With the initiative and support of the U.S. a series of diplomatic efforts got started. The aim was to have the rivals agreed on a joint plan to solve the Gulf crisis and the seven-year old war. The result came up in the form of the "Security Council" resolution which although bore the signatures of the big state, it had so watered down the common interests of the super powers in the region that an end to the war and thereby the conflict would still seem out of reach. The Reagan government, having just gone through the so-called "Iran-Contra" crisis, returned to its familiar politics, i.e., the dream of regaining world superiority of the U.S. by military aggression. By using this politics in the region, Reagan is following the same notorious goals as in the previous cases such as military intervention in Nicaragua, Lebanon, and Libya. These goals are: lining up European allies under U.S. leadership, terrifying local states by military power, and convincing these states of U.S. authority.

The outcome could not be much different from what happened in the previous cases. This time, however, it came up faster and with greater disgrace. What was intended as drawing the European rivals and allies under U.S. leadership, turned virtually into a demonstration of instability of this leadership and of U.S. isolation. Reagan's frequent appeals for having his European allies send their warships to the Gulf were officially rejected even by his closest ally,

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Thatcher. Even Reagan's appeal for sending mine-sweepers to the Gulf was not welcomed by his allies initially. The show of military power by a state which is preparing for "star wars" turned into an international show in which Americans were looking desperately around the world for a handful of mine-sweepers. Reagan's show of military might which failed to accomplish its first task, could not reach its second goal either, i.e., frightening the local forces and convincing them of U.S. authority. "Does U.S. seriously intend to launch a military confrontation with the Islamic Republic?!" To answer this question even Reagan's own ministers stammered: "No, at the most, a few missiles will be fired", "in retaliation, some of the Silkworm missiles will be destroyed", "these targets, of course, will be limited and carefully selected!"

Inside U.S., the issue became controversial. Is not Mr. Reagan's military adventure going to add fuel to the crisis rather than put it out? Wouldn't this military adventure lead to a situation where the U.S. would face such greater anti-American sentiments, instead of confirming U.S. domination over the Gulf region? Would not these operations make the Arab states much weaker in the face of anti-American sentiments, rather than strengthening them? These are some of the questions which American policy-makers cannot refrain from considering. In fear of the consequences of this dangerous game, and also in order to control Mr. Reagan, the situation led to a point that some one hundred Congressmen appealed to a court against Mr. Reagan!

The "Gulf war", in this stage of its development has intensified imperialist rivalries. Imperialist powers set out to work to save the crisis-stricken bourgeoisie of the region, and to put an end to a crisis which has swept the region for almost a decade and which now endangers the stability of the whole region. This situation, however, could only bring to

light the reality of the balance of forces among the imperialist powers. It confirmed the fact that the undisputed U.S. superiority and leadership within the imperialist powers has been endangered, and that the rivalry between the imperialist powers has gone beyond the conflict between the U.S. and Soviet Union, and has led to dispersion within the western imperialist camp itself. An end to the deep governmental crisis in the Gulf region is not foreseeable by an order issued by this or that imperialist power. This has virtually been left to the outcome of a series of rivalries between the imperialists, each looking for a bigger share of influence in the region.

Nevertheless, as far as the Islamic Republic is concerned, this recent attempt to terminate the Iran-Iraq war and to control the crisis by imperialist power, has its own specific meaning. As far as the whole region is concerned, the termination of the war and crisis depends, above all, upon defeating the pan-Islamic current. The Islamic regime has to be stripped of its pan-Islamic politics, tendencies and claims. For a long time, the U.S. and other imperialist powers have been looking for "moderate" and "radical" wings within the Islamic Republic. The recent attempts to put an end to the war and crisis in the region, is yet another severe pressure on the Islamic Republic, with the demand of settling matters with pan-Islamism.

The Islamic Republic has been making all attempts to repel these pressures. First, it was the turn of the "British friends"; following a diplomatic tension, official relations with Britain were broken off, hinting to the Thatcher government "not to leave the Imam alone!" This was followed by a diplomatic row with France, trying to make France understand that the Islamic Republic would break all promises given to Mr. Chirac at a high price, if France continued to put pressure on the Islamic Republic. Pan-Islamic terrorists started their operations in Lebanon. Hostages were threatened with murder. Plane hijacking were

started again. But the main arena for the Islamic Republic to exercise a show of power was the Gulf region itself and the initiation of intimidating moves in the Gulf countries. The pilgrimage ceremonies in Mecca ("Hajj") was a good opportunity for this show of power in Saudi Arabia. A mob of professional, noisy, demonstrators accompanying hundreds of pilgrims arrived in Mecca to challenge the Arab sheikhs in their own land. The Saudees, who had regained confidence because of the recent pressures upon the Islamic regime, did not remain passive in the face of this pan-Islamic show of power. They were also prepared for action by the same official means as those used by the Islamic Republic, i.e., a mob which played the role of people. The outcome was one of the most detestable religious massacres. According to official figures the death toll in this actual confrontation of power exceeded four hundred.

This ready answer by the Saudees made the pan-Islamists realize that the recent pressures upon pan-Islamism should be taken seriously, and that they were facing a stronger opposition in the region. Right after this incident, the Arab states rushed to back up Saudi Arabia against the Islamic Republic. It was an opportunity for the Arab states to speak out their opposition to pan-Islamism ever more unitedly. It also provided them with the possibility of making use of the division between the Shia'at and Sunni sects as an instrument against the pan-Islamism of the Islamic Republic.

The need for confronting the recent pressures, gave the pan-Islamists in the Islamic government the upper hand, pushing once again Khomeini forward as the official leader of the regime. But their first serious measure in the region, i.e., the Mecca demonstration, barely achieved anything but defeat. Now can pan-Islamism stay in power under such circumstances? Would they implement their threats, turning the Gulf war into an extensive regional war? The imperialists' activities to end the crisis in the Gulf and also the united opposition from the Arab states, were signs for the pan-Islamists to realize that they were in the most unfavourable situation yet. The pan-Islamist current has been able so far to stay at the head of the bourgeois government of Iran by making use of the inability of the bourgeoisie and imperialists to solve the deep governmental crisis in the region, on the one hand, (a crisis rooted in the bankruptcy of the official regimes of the bourgeoisie and their inability to overcome the economic problems), and, on the other hand, by its constant dealing and wheeling with this or that imperialist power. The fact that the pan-Islamist current has been tolerated to stay on at the head of the most important country of the region, is due to the inability of the imperialists to solve the now chronic governmental crisis. But if the pan-Islamist current is going to maintain its power by enforcing its regional claims and politics, at the expense of the spread of crisis and disruptions in the entire

governmental system of the region, then, from the viewpoint of the bourgeoisie and imperialists, it is the pan-Islamic government, not the regime's governmental system, which should be sacrificed. This fact has been clearly confirmed for the Islamic Republic by the increased efforts of the Arab states for unity and the imperialists' rush to control the crisis.

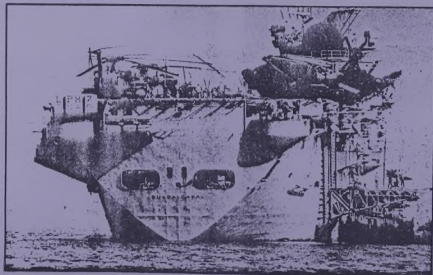
Even if the bankruptcy of the pan-Islamic government were to prevent it from implementing its claims and policies in the region, what is certain is that it will try to take the maximum advantage from the present atmosphere inside the country to extend war terror as intimidation against its attacks against the workers' movement, and strangle people's protests. Already the banner of holy war against the U.S. has been raised. The Pasdars* have taken into the Gulf waters, the Khomeini and Saudi Sheikhs are threatened with revenge, the Hezbollah** gangs have been thrown onto the streets, and militarist and pan-Islamic yellings have filled the air. It has become the habit of the Islamic regime to use every condition of crisis as a means to cover its own internal conflicts, quell any opportunity of political action, drive back people's protests against poverty and lack of rights, and escalate its attacks upon the workers' movement. This attempt has been started once again, on a greater scale, with the cries for holy war and revenge. But whilst the pan-Islamic current may be able to temporarily go ahead with this attempt inside the country, the whole of the regime, facing the failure and bankruptcy of its objectives and policies in the region, will have no choice but to give in, sooner or later, to the purging of the pan-Islamic current from the leadership of the government. And with its ranks in disarray it will be confronted by an exploited and oppressed people for whom the only way for ending the war and poverty, and achieving basic rights is through the overthrow of the whole Islamic regime.

For the Iranian workers the present situation is above all a warning that they all the more strongly and seriously prepare themselves for repulsing the Islamic Republic's attacks against the workers' movement. Workers' unity must be strengthened everywhere. Attacks by the state and employers, the regime's attempts to stop up repression and disperse the workers' ranks must be resisted in the workplaces. Workers' struggles should be carried with greater organisation. At the same time the protest-movement against the war, against destitution and the Islamic regime, should be escalated. But everyone in the ranks of the working class knows and ought to deeply realize, progress in this area is not the end of the matter. These are only necessary links in preparing the conditions for the advance of the

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* So-called "Revolutionary Guards" - BG.

** Regime's thugs; literally, followers of the "God's Party" - BG.



A U.S. helicopter carrier in the Gulf

Down with the Islamic Republic regime!

Interview with comrade Mansoor Hekmat

ON THE DISCUSSIONS OF
THE 2ND CONGRESS OF THE CPI

After the Second Congress of the CPI in March 86, the Party's central organ, Komunist, carried a series of interviews with comrade Hekmat, member of the Political Bureau of the Party, about the discussions of the 2nd Congress. The following is the second part of this interview published in Komunist No. 27, August 86. The third, and final, part will be published in the next issue of Bolshevik Message - 86.

Question: Let us return to the topic of the position and perspective of the Communist Party, i.e., the first part of the Central Committee report to the Congress. Naturally we do not mean that what was presented in the Congress be exactly reproduced here; but we want the main trends and points of this topic to be elaborated further as far as possible. In the previous section you pointed out that the Party should be placed and assessed in the context of its contemporary society. In other words, the party should be assessed by the role it plays in preparing the material requisites of the workers' revolution on a social scale. We shall later take up the issue of Congress's analysis of these prerequisites, but it would be useful if you could explain this first point further, i.e., the need to assess the party from an objective and social viewpoint.

Answer: The Communist Party may be judged and its future tasks outlined from various angles. For instance one can talk about the organisational growth of the party, the quality and amount of its propaganda, the degree of its internal discipline and financial, the number of its publications and the theoretical and practical standard of its cadres, etc. No doubt all these express facts about the party, and the party and its progress can certainly be assessed on this basis. But the criticism of our previous expectations of them. But in that case - limiting ourselves to this, we may lose sight of the wider and more fundamental basic issues. When we put the party under scrutiny to examine its various aspects and components, the danger also exists that the main issue, i.e., the wider and more comprehensive whole, of which the party itself is a part - the society, and the class struggle on a social dimension - becomes overshadowed by our micro-study. Just like when one doesn't see the wood for the trees. As a matter of fact, this is what may happen to many of us (the members and activists of the Party). When one is incessantly and continuously engaged in carrying out this or that Party duty, in this or that particular field, which normally takes up all one's energy and attention, it is really vital

(Part 2)

that one now and then looks up to see the "wood" - the wider and more comprehensive whole from which the Party draws its raison d'être. One criterion for our Party's success is certainly that it attains the targets that it has set itself regarding its work of agitation, propaganda and organisation. These may be termed "internal" or "party" criteria. But the essential indicators of our success are "external" and social. Without a clear understanding of the characteristics, position and task of the Party on the basis of these social criteria, there would basically be no foundation for defining the "internal" criteria. One must for a moment abstract from belonging to the Communist Party of Iran and suppose that one is thinking about a communist party in another period or in another country. One must ask oneself what role this particular party in that particular period of development of the class struggle has taken upon itself; which problems does it want to solve, and through which particular paths will it lead the working class to a workers' revolution?

Socialist revolution is not jugglery; it is not a coup; it is not an accident. It is a victory and success of the working class in a vast class battle on a social scope, with its own definite material requisites. In no country in which workers are scattered, communist organisations have little influence among the workers, communism is the movement of the intelligentsia, not even the most elementary forms of workers' organisations exist, will there suddenly be a socialist revolution. These defects must be overcome over a relatively short period of a revolutionary crisis - a revolutionary period is the time of rapid and fundamental changes in the workers' movement. Nevertheless, society cannot jump over the material requisites of a socialist revolution. In the period of a crisis, whether in a rapid way, in a revolutionary period, or gradually, through a process, in the period of downturn in the revolution.

If we accept that such objective criteria and standards exist, and that by a study of certain essential trends in the class-social relations we can detect how close the society has moved to a workers' revolution or how far it has moved away from it, then it is clear that we cannot judge ourselves except by these criteria. To view the communist party in the context of its contemporary social circumstances means to assess the Party's practice with regard to its influence on the progress of objective trends desir-

able for a workers' revolution, and not merely judge it according to its own quantitative and qualitative growth.

Let me give an example so that the point may become clearer. October Revolution was a workers' and socialist revolution and bore the spirit of the struggle of the Bolshevik Party. But this revolution was not merely a point along the partisan history of Bolshevism. This is a conception fed into the left movement by the revisionists. To explain October Revolution, i.e., to understand those trends and developments which led to this revolution, one cannot merely recount the history of Russian Social-Democracy, its congress, slogans, declarations and the polemics of its leaders. October Revolution was the work of the working class of Russia, and that at a definite stage of Russia's social development as a definite society under a definite international situation and balance of forces. In the twentieth century certain social processes advanced in Russia and capitalist Europe so that the prelude and the possibility of the realization of October Revolution arose, so that the active force of this revolution, the working class, became ready and entered the field; so that the bourgeois and class society of Russia reached its deadend and thus the conditions for a fundamental change, for a revolution, ripened. The Bolshevik Party played a vital role in turning these grounds and requisites into a victorious revolution. But a Marxist assessment of the Bolshevik Party is possible only when this party is appraised in the context of these social conditions and this historical course of movement. What changes and which consciousness/practice influenced the political organisation and consciousness of the Russian working class? How did this class enter the field of political expression against the forces of other classes and turn into an independent politico-social force? How were the traditions of revolutionary action established within the class? Through what process and which turning points in the revolutionary struggle did the practical leaders of this class become educated and tempered? Which crisis and turnoffs prepared this class for the seizure of political power? Which social circumstances made the striking of the final blow possible? And, finally, what was the role of the Russian workers' communist party, the Bolshevik Party, in driving ahead these processes? This is the correct way of assessing the position and practice of the Bolshevik Party. This is no doubt the way Lenin at every juncture viewed the Bolsheviks' activities. (Let me add in passing that in the study of the causes of the first defeat of the Russian working class after October victory, too, one must act in this way, i.e., analyse the communists' actions in the context of the social situation of their period. Just as October victory is not explicable merely along a process of party activity, so the eventual defeat of the revolution cannot be explained merely in terms of the deviation or degeneration of a party.)

I hope this example clarifies to some extent what we mean by "assessing the party in the context of

its social conditions". The point under discussion is this: firstly, which objective trends and processes in today's specific conditions must be pushed forward for bringing the working class and the society as a whole nearer to a social revolution? What are the key problems of the workers' revolution today? And secondly, where does the Communist Party stand in this picture and what role does it have in the realization of these conditions?

Q: the correctness of this method of approach as a materialist and Marxist methodology in appraising a communist party is understandable. But from the emphasis that the central committee report puts on this point can it be concluded that a more practical objective is being sought? In other words, had the report more practical objectives and conclusions in mind with this method of approach?

A: Yes certainly. One of the main reasons for our emphasizing the necessity of this method of approach is that we want a serious break from the "inward-oriented" outlook of the left and pseudo-Marxist groupings whose priority is that they exist and survive and probably this year have some more members than the year before or have managed to get a little ahead of the rival organisation in this or that organisational field. A left which is highly preoccupied with itself, has substituted the problems of the real class struggle with the internal problems of its own organisation and sect, and in complete isolation from the real process of the class struggle. In its own organisational world, preoccupies itself with talks about itself - no doubt together with a good deal of Marxist pseudo-science. This preoccupation, isolation, and sectarian mentality is not a specifically Iranian phenomenon. This has more or less turned into a general feature of the radical left. We, in contrast, say that if the existence of the Communist Party and membership is valuable to it because this party is the means of effecting important material changes in the outside world. Here we are talking about social material changes, i.e., changes which can be observed. Have the workers become more united as a result of the party's activity? Have they become freer from the influence of bourgeois views and parties? Has the balance of class forces in the society and the struggle changed to the workers' advantage? Has the working class through the party's efforts increased the number of its communist and experienced practical leaders? More advanced traditions of struggle been established inside the working class? Has the theory of workers' revolution and workers' programme of action for revolution become clearer and more salient? Has the weight of bourgeois and petty bourgeois distortions over this theory and programme been reduced to any extent? Has any revolutionary and protest action of working-class and tolling masses become stronger and more advanced through the efforts of our party? And, in short, has the previous situation through the party's endeavours changed to one more favourable for workers' revolution? The criteria of our success, our points of strength and weakness and the main lines of the perspective of our activities should be sought here. We have not organ-

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used ourselves to build "our own organisation". We have built our organisation and are extending it, rather, for organising and drawing to the field a class which is a force of hundreds of millions on a world scale. Hence we do not judge our organisation solely by organisational criteria, but rather essentially, by politico-class standards. This is what the Congress put at its agenda. At the same time the Congress by emphasizing this orientation and method tried to draw once again the attention of the Party activists and communists outside the Communist Party to this social reason of the Communist revolution. This emphasis is another step in the workers' and practical orientation of the Party and has been constantly strengthened and invigorated in the period between the two Congresses. This is a general emphasis on the main orientations of the Congress, in particular on the work of linking the Party and communism with the working class, confronting the religious-like sectarianism prevalent in the radical left, and intervening actively in workers' and revolutionary struggles. I shall return to this point later on.

Q: The question which arises here is that whether the role of the Communist Party in advancing the workers' revolution is carried out in other ways than the traditional propaganda organisation among the workers, by taking communist thoughts, policy and organisation amidst them? So, does not the growth of these aspects of Party activity mean the realization of the same social prerequisites of the workers' revolution which you emphasize? In other words, what particular results other than the necessity of the Party to intensify its work in the radical current and routine work arise from this discussion?

A: It is obvious that communist agitation, propaganda and organisation is the basis of our political identity and existence. Without these there can be no question of communism and Communist Party. It is also clear that extension and stepping up of communist work among the workers is our task, and that every serious role by the Party in the struggle of the working class means a great extension of these dimensions of our activities. But here I am referring to more specific problems. The point is, in which particular "historical turn" are we carrying out our work of "agitation, propaganda and organisation"? If we do not grasp this point then we are bound to be "lost in the general" without giving an answer to the problems facing our class movement in a definite period. Workers' revolution is not an abstract phenomenon. Workers are not an abstract category either. We are speaking in a specific period and place and in the wake of a specific historical experience. The question is, under the particular conditions of the late twentieth century what is the social revolution waiting for? One cannot offer a theoretical and general reply to this question about the laws of the socialist revolution and the communists' role in it. Moreover, one cannot give the same reply which for example communists gave in Marx's or Lenin's time in the face of the particular problems of their period. If we accept that the

present society on an international dimension has for long been economically ready for socialism; if we reject our present view of the existence of revolutionary and political conditions of crisis the present century has not had anything lacking; then we must say where the problem lies. Let me explain this point more. When we review the communist literature of the latter part of the last century or the first few decades of the present century it seems that a serious hopefulness and a deep optimism towards a probable and immediate prospect of workers' revolution exists in them. This hopefulness and optimism was quite justified. The rapid spread of Marxism and its turning into the banner of revolutionary leaders of workers in capitalist countries, the outbreak of revolutions and extensive workers' movements, in the first few decades of the present century, were all enough evidence for the legitimacy of these expectations. But now look at the situation of today. Perhaps it would never have occurred to Marx and Engels who had witnessed the Paris Commune, or to Lenin and the Bolsheviks who were themselves organisers of an immense revolution against the bourgeoisie in Russia that the world at the late twentieth century would still be under the sway of capital and capitalism; that hundreds of millions of people all over the world, who are the producers of all wealth, would still be forced to submit to wage slavery, and this, in most cases, in its crudest and most unrelieved form, in order to stay alive and survive; that not only workers would not have dug capital's grave, but in the greater part of the world they would still be deprived even of organisation in their trade-unions, i.e., the gain of the 19th century European workers; that communists would have become so powerless and ineffective; and that whoever now speaks about the socialist revolution would sound as though he is speaking of an event in the remote future. A hundred year after the heroic struggle of the American workers for an 8-hour day, the U.S. worker today, enslaved by the yellow trade-unions and systematically under attack by the rapid U.S. bourgeoisie, is giving in to increased working hours and the halving of his wages over one hundred years after the Paris Commune, the extreme right in France is haunting the same workers' Paris and has begun a most extensive attack against the French worker and his political and economic rights. Seventy years after October Revolution the fat Russian bourgeois has been enjoying a "high bourgeoisie" life with his machinery, bullying the wage-slave Russian worker to increase productivity and discipline and not skip work, and showing off their arsenal against the Polish worker who is demanding a 40-hour week and union. The condition of workers in Britain, South Africa, Iran, etc., need no comment.

Clearly, we must see which material obstacles, social factors and specific historical conditions have made it that the activity and sacrifice of several generations of revolutionary and communist workers, over decades, to make their class conscious and united have gone to waste. The point is that today, parallel with our communist agitation, propaganda and organiza-

tion, objective and material factors are at work which breed illusion among the workers, keep them from realizing their independent class interests and politics, and cause division in their ranks. If we are to make the working class conscious and united at this particular juncture, we must aim at the root of these problems and get rid of these factors and conditions. The fundamental trends to which I referred in the previous part of our talk are trends whose progress is vital for clearing these objective barriers out of the way of effective communist work.

Q: In explaining the particular features of today's conditions, i.e., objective trends conditioning the socialist revolution, the central committee report put the emphasis mainly on the state of the communist movement and the working class and the mutual relations between the two. Why, out of all the factors which can be named as the conditions and premises of the workers' revolution, do you put the stress here?

A: Because, in our view, the objective social conditions, the degree of growth and development of capitalism and the existing conditions of crisis of world capitalism are all ready for a social revolution against capital. What is not ready is not more than on one occasion has shown its unreparedness, is the working class, the active and motive force of the socialist revolution, and the vanguard rank of this class. Today capitalism has swept over the whole world and brought social production under its control in the farthest corners of the globe. This capitalism is gripped with a chronic and objective economic crisis; it has twice plunged humanity into the abyss of deadly world wars, and today has cast the shadow of the next war over all millions of human beings. The inability of capitalism in promoting production and social welfare can be observed not only in the poverty-stricken and starving Africa, Asia and Latin America, but also in the heart of industrial Europe, in the shape of lines of the unemployed, running to tens of millions, and the growing number of shanty towns and ghettos. If today anyone is to give a verdict on the degree of ripeness or unripeness of the economic conditions for socialist revolution, this verdict cannot be but that capitalism for long has reached the end of its line; that the setting up of workers' rule, the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, and putting an end to wage labour, for long has become the objective law governing the material and moral life of the people. Capitalism has outlived itself, and not only are the conditions ripe for socialism, but one must say that this change has been delayed for too long. Moreover, as I said, the bourgeoisie in the present century has continuously been under political crises. Contrary to what some communists assume, the problems are not the absence of revolutionary conditions. On the contrary, we must explain why so many revolutionary situations and even actual revolutions in various countries¹ the world have been missed, and why these have not led to a workers' revolution. It is here that we turn our attention to the active force

of the socialist revolution. It is this force which is in disarray, unprepared and confused. The problem is wholly over the difficulties which the rank of communist revolution is facing. The success of the workers' revolution, i.e., the cause for which we have organised, depends on the struggle to solve these very problems, and this is a task facing communists and revolutionary workers.

Q: How do you see the state and characteristics of the communist movement today? And were this movement to overcome the backwardness you talked about, what changes should it undergo?

A: Let me first say that we use this expression of "communist movement" with some indulgence. I talked about the "rank" of communist revolution,² so that both to avoid inconsistency, and also not to implicitly reduce the problem to one limited to the "communist movement". I said that we should concentrate on the state of the "rank of communist revolution". On the one hand, a significant section of what today is termed "communist movement", practically stands outside this rank, since it is no more than communism in name and defence of the interests of the bourgeoisie in content. On the other hand, the rank of communist revolution is never limited to communists. This rank is essentially the part of the working class, who is fighting against capital in various forms. It is clear that even when in this class, under the leadership of communist workers, steps forth for the seizure of political power, the bulk of the class would still not immediately and directly be part of the "communist movement" in the strict sense of the term. We should therefore look at the rank of struggle against capital. This rank includes communists, specifically, and the working-class movement, generally. In fact the divergence of these two components of workers' revolution, that is to say, fragmentation of the rank of the communist revolution into two separated parts, is one of the most fundamental problems which communists must confront and solve today.

Let me explain further, from another angle, the points I have made. The crux of our discussion in the central committee report lay here. The present state of the communist movement is the result of a historical course during which two fundamental bases of power of the communist movement collapsed. We have been facing two processes of regression imposed on the Marxist movement, in particular, and the working class movement in general. First, the alienation of the so-called communist movement from the revolutionary theory of Marx and from the cause of communism and the principles and aims of communist struggle. Second, the alienation of this communist movement from the working class, as the material force of the socialist revolution. This is the specific feature of today, not of the early 20th century. Breaking with the reforms and the national revolution, the international, (the making of) the October Revolution, and the building of the Comintern, form a course during which the Leninist tendency became established within the working-

class movement as the official and main line of communism. The latter was distinguished by two determining characteristics: firstly, it was a current deeply faithful to the revolutionary theory and programme of Marxism; secondly, it was really a workers' current, the political representative and organiser of a large rank of communist and revolutionary workers. Perhaps this is the last time in the history of the revolutionary movement of the working class when revolutionary Marxism appears as a workers' phenomenon on a social scale, i.e., as a form of unity and struggle of the advanced section of the working class itself. In other words, the October revolution and the initial stages of the Comintern are the last strongholds in which we see a powerful workers' communism, which is at the same time principled and revolutionary, on a social scale, i.e., as a social force.

During the developments of the 1930s, and onwards, these features of the main current of communism are gradually lost. In Russia itself, along with the consolidation of the process of construction of state monopoly capitalism, the objectives of bourgeois nationalism are put in place of the socialist aims and causes of the workers' class. Instead of the revolutionary, revolutionary Marxism of Lenin, a new revisionism emerges, turning into a world ideological and political bloc. And things don't end here. Today are we not confronted merely with a revisionist pole. Around the Russian modern revisionism there developed various critical currents at various stages. These suffered a number of splits; the splitters themselves broke into further fractions at later stages. In the various branches raised beyond of another kind of distorted, emptied and bourgeois "communism" and "Marxism" around the world. The breaking off of China from Russia provided the premise for the formation of a new revisionist camp. This trend itself rapidly disintegrated, in the course of a few years, into a number of different currents. These are the most right-wing revisionists who support the present leadership in China, and the most left-wing is defender of Albania. In the '70s one of the fractions in western Europe, with parliamentary and reformist tendencies, split from the Russian revisionism to form the Euro-Communist line which is very close to the European Social Democracy. When it comes to the various splits such as the Trotskyists - themselves of many sects - the Italian Left, the New Left, and so on, we see that a peculiar notochord of forces is today speaking in the name of communism. Looking at the views, politics and objectives of these groupings, you will see that of what there is the least trace is the revolutionary communism of Marx and Lenin and revolutionary and reformist tendencies for which the Communist Manifesto and Bolshevism were representative. The history of the last few decades of the "communist movement" is not the history of communism; it is the history of the rise and decline of Russian modern revisionism and of its critics sharing a common tradition. The outcome of this process has been that today revolutionary Marxism forms a very very small minority among the general trends of those laying claims to communism. The workers who were Lenin's and the Bolsheviki's contemporaries have gone. The workers

of today know communism through the mouths and the practice of these people. And this communism is everything but communism. From bourgeois nationalism and reformism to anarchism, and from liberal humanism to petty-bourgeois rebellion, are being presented under the name of Marxism.

Along with this process, "communism" - of whatever version, true or false - has parted from the working class and workers' struggle. The significance of Marxism is that it linked the struggle for the emancipation of mankind to the struggle of a certain class, the working class. Marxism recognised the material force of social revolution and called it to the scene. Today this material force, this working class, evidently is experiencing a destiny separate from the destiny of the "communist movement". In fact it is a long time that on a world scale the history of "communism" and that of "workers" are constantly separating and diverging from one another. For a long time, at least until the middle of the '50s when the internal crisis of the modern revisionist camp came into the open in the world scene, a large section of the working class was still linked with this bloc, despite its ever-deepening deviations. Currents, such as the Trotskyists, the Italian Left, etc. in the '50s and '60s, had broken with this official stream of the "communist movement", i.e., the growing revisionism, from whatever position, had in practice also isolated themselves from the workers' movement and large masses of militant workers. The radical workers' leaders were still under the influence of this official line. But in the '60s and '70s we witness the significance isolation of this official line itself from the working class and the workers' movement. Other critical trends in the '60s and '70s, such as Maoism, Euro-Communism and the New Left, remained equally, and perhaps even more, isolated from the working-class movement; (especially since these trends came to life basically with above-classist outlooks). Perhaps one exception, in having a workers' base were the Chinese Communists, who at the beginning to some degree maintained their workers' base. Today, however, the optimism of the '70s has gone from this trend too and the majority of the Euro-Communist parties have greatly lost their mass base among the workers.

In any case, the product of this historical course, i.e., the development of revisionism and its fragmentation, is that a huge gulf separates today's Marxism from the experience of workers' and revolutionary communism in the beginning of the century. This is a fact with which the present-day Leninist and Leninist party is faced and to which he should provide a material answer, i.e. a real alternative.

This course of regression has had determining consequences which in turn have aggravated the problem. One of the effects of the long-time domination of the various forms of revisionism over communist thought and practice has been that Marxists have generally fallen behind in providing answers to the political problems of their time. Today, for instance, the capitalist crisis has assumed a chronic

character; mass unemployment, running into millions, has become a permanent feature of the situation. The trade-union movement in Europe and USA has proved its incapability and impotence in confronting this situation; and in this predicament, is itself going to lose the remainder of its force. At the height of the wide-spread discontent of the working masses, the Marxists stand incapable of providing even the most elementary alternatives to the organisation and the continuity of the workers' struggles. Large masses of workers have been left at the mercy of the reformists, the Social-Democrats and, at times, even the extreme right. Take the year-long struggle of the British miners and the sorry state of the left in this country. Take the 35-hour movement and the work of the left in it.

We can mention many more such examples. The issue of the nightmare of a nuclear war and the absence of an advanced communist analysis and policy on it has either practically left the anti-war protests in the hands of the reformists, or allowed them to become a means in the propaganda warfare of the imperialist powers; women's movement for equal rights, admit the indifference and phrase-mongering of the quasi-Marxists, has, in the last few decades, altogether succumbed to the hegemony of feminism. Along with the severe-decade development of capitalism and the unravelling of the contradictions of this system, as well as the growth and development of the class struggle, a series of new issues on the economic, political, cultural, international, etc. plane has been posed before the social classes; or the old problems, such as the national struggles, racial discrimination, etc. have emerged with new class-social contents, most of which have not been correctly analysed and solved by the communists.

The other outcome of this situation has been that Marxists have been driven to the fringes of the political and revolutionary struggles of their time. The fate of the struggles of the working class has been wholly entrusted to the reformist parties and the trade-union movement. In the many revolutionary crises which have erupted in the farthest corners of the earth, the working class, submitting to other classes, has mainly played the role of a force in the settling of accounts of the different sections of the ruling classes. And where we see the Marxists, or, at any rate, those who go under this name, in the midst of the political developments of society, this is mainly where they are lacking in the particular communist character of their activity. Communists are either in the fringes of the political events, or, if they are activists then, they have at best been reduced to the position of flaccid democrats and reformists. In any case, we find workers' and radical communist generally unrepresented in the side-lines of the political events.

What all this boils down to is that the rank of communist revolution is in disarray and has suffered a serious political defeat. The official line, as a result of the long domination of revisionism, its falling behind of the issues of its time, and having been driven to the

side-lines of the contemporary struggles, is isolated and ineffective. The working class, in the absence of a clear perspective of struggle and an organised communist vanguard, is putting up isolated defences and carrying out a dispersed defensive struggle and, on the whole, seldom enters the field as a force for socialist and communist struggle. The link between communism and the class and the class's struggles has been weakened; workers' and revolutionary communism lacks that social role, those traditions of struggle, cadres and organs which it had achieved at the first two decades of the century.

To this picture, however, must be added the realities of the recent years, perhaps of the last decade. Today we are faced with the crisis of revisionism. The modern Russian revisionism, Chinese revisionism and Maoism, Trotskyism, supporters of Albania and Stalin, Euro-Communists, and the New Left have all politically, theoretically and practically reached a dead-end. An orientation towards independent Leninist Marxism can be observed in various countries. Clearly the forces involved in this movement have not come out of the blue, but are critical currents within the left wings of the traditional groupings. These are increasingly separating their ways and turning to revolutionary and Marxist ideas and politics. At the same time the working class, facing the burdens of capitalist crisis and the incapability of the traditional Social-Democratic and trade-unionist leadership, is once again rapidly becoming active and politicized. A very favourable ground exists for the linking of revolutionary communism, which is on the rise, with the workers' movement which has been disappointed of its present leadership. A link which no doubt does not happen automatically but which requires conscious work, vigilance, and the adoption of principles, policies and methods by the communists.

With this explanation it should be clear why we put the emphasis on certain trends as ones which are decisive and crucial. The point is as to what changes and developments should take place, from our point of view, in order that the communist rank develops and becomes strong enough to meet its tasks, becomes clear in connection with this point. The first trend which should be driven forward is the trend of reconstruction of Leninist communism as a lively and growing current, having the grasp of the problems of its period. We must go so far that this revolutionary Marxism becomes the main trend and current in the left, so much so that when society and the working class speak of communism they refer to this line. This sign of Leninist revisionism is the supremacy of the various revisionist trends in the intellectual and political life of the left groups. Moreover, this Leninist current must come to grips with the problems of the period. It must provide its political and analytical solutions, and outline its alternative and the path of struggle, with regard to every question. Here, then, it is not enough to re-state the views of Bolshevism. It is necessary to join with and re-interpret the Bolsheviki tradition, but the Bolsheviki and Leninist of today must have the solutions to the issues of the class struggle at the base of the

century.

The second trend which must be advanced is the linking of this revolutionary communism with the working class and the workers' movement. The centre of gravity of communism must once again be placed within the working class. Communism must become a current from within the class itself, the current of conscious workers. We must put an end to the period of Marxism and communism being separate from the working class, and reconstruct workers' communism. Without this, there can be no question of socialism. In this connection, it is vital that communism once again shares a same destiny with the workers and workers' movement in the actual practical struggles, especially in the turning points and logjams of the struggle. The history of communism and of the working class, the life of communism and of the working class and the struggle of communism and of the working class must be turned into a single reality. The necessary condition for this is the communists' interventionism in all the moments of workers' struggles and in particular the identification of communists with those instances of this struggle when the fate of the working class for a certain period is decided. So long as the workers, looking back at the history of struggles of their class, do not see communism and workers' struggles as merged, so long as the state of the workers' movement and of communism is not the product of a single and common experience of struggle, one cannot speak of the emergence of communism as a social class phenomenon of communism becoming a workers' phenomenon on a social scale.

These are the main trends and the objective social processes in whose context the Communist Party and communists' activity in general must be placed and appraised. At every stage we ought to clarify the point as to how our struggle thusfar has influenced these trends and on its basis decide our future objectives and tasks.

Q: The crucial requisites and trends which you mentioned were discussed, as a whole, in a general and international framework. Is this also valid in the specific case of Iran? In what sense, what are the particular features of the conditions in Iran and what other points should be added to this discussion?

A: What I said applies, at a general and basic level, in the case of Iran too. The difference perhaps lies in the practical historical course which the Iranian left and workers' movement has gone through. Apart from the initial efforts of the Communist Party of Iran, over half a century ago, which to some extent was the result of the existence of a lively Communist International, we have to say that Iranian communism in the recent period - the last few decades - emerged essentially as a non-worker and non-Marxist phenomenon. The emergence of radical and revolutionary left in Iran in the recent period goes back essentially to the formation of the guerrilla movement in the late sixties. A current which broke with the tradition of the National Front* and the Tudeh Party**, but with

* The traditional party of the liberal bourgeoisie-BM
** The pro-Russian party-BM

regard to economic localis, class allegiance, and methods of struggles, this left was definitely a long way away from communism, Leninism and the working class. This was in fact the left and radical wing of Iranian bourgeois-democracy which had appeared in the name of Marxism, in opposition to and demarcation with the traditions and forms of struggle of the liberal and reformist opposition in Iran. The "communism" of this current was greatly influenced by the teachings of Kungjani in modern revisionism and, at a later stage, of Maoism and its populist content. The representative forces of this current were the People's Fedaiye Guerrillas and the "Third Line", whose axis was the organisation of Peykar ("struggle"). The political aims and economic programme of these currents demands and economic reforms - as in state capitalism - plus a degree of social welfare. The revisionism of these currents was summed up in the method of struggle against the central government, i.e. in the advocacy of the necessity of violent action for the overthrow of the regime; in a sense, in the advocacy of a "popular revolution". In other words, we were faced with a kind of violent reformism. In the eyes of the workers and workers' movement, the consistent and viable section of the struggle for democracy and nothing more. The social basis of these currents consisted of the petty-bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia. The alienation from the working class had even, to a large degree, been theorized by these currents. For a long time even the expression of the independent interests of the workers' movement was absent in their political and ideological "leftist" deviation, which, according to them, undermined the unity of the "people's" rank against the regime and imperialism. This left was superficially independent of the international camps of revisionism. But neither in its political conceptions, nor in its world outlook and perspective of struggle, nor in its programmatic objectives, did there exist a qualitative and decisive distinction from revisionism. An important part of the history of revisionism, particularly that of Stalin and Maoism, was accepted by the different sections of this trend. On the eve and in the initial stages of the 1979 Revolution we were faced with a quasi-communism, a violent reformism, a quasi-socialist populism, which was the working class, which called the workers forth as the backbone of the "people" in the struggle for democracy, and which, however, occupied a position in the far left of the existing groupings of the Iranian opposition. The vanguards and practical leaders of the working class which could seldom see a clear and explicit expression of workers' interests in the line of the whole, whether they kept their practical distance from this trend - something which got the label of "organisation phobia" of vanguard workers - or reached certain compromises with it, giving their support to it as the only left which anyway existed.

The working class and workers' movement in Iran has also its own specific peculiarities. In the last few decades Iran has witnessed a rapid development of capitalism and the growth of the industrial and urban proletariat. A significant section of the working

class consists of working-class families who only with the recent generation have joined the ranks of the wage-earning working class. Due, on the one hand, to a long period of repression, and, on the other hand, the constant joining of poor peasants to the rank of workers, as well as the historical weakness of the left, traditions of organised struggle are very weak and unsettled among the workers. The economic struggle of the working class has enjoyed very little organisation, partisanship and party affiliation and struggle has been very weak; the practical leaders of workers, have, in the main, carried out their activities, outside the realm of organisations and parties, in the form of workers' circles; and, finally, as I said, up to the 1979 revolution, the working class had been weakly influenced by the course of the left and workers, on the whole, is, such more political than the workers of the metropolitan capitalist countries; he is sensitive about the question of political power, the state and its fate, is much more prepared to accept revolutionary forms of struggle, and, historically, has been less influenced by reformist and revisionist logic. In this connection, for a correct understanding of the present situation we ought to deal with the effects of the '79 revolution on the workers' and communist movement. Particularly because this revolution has had very positive effects on the shaping of revolutionary and workers' communism. The analysis of the state of the Communist Party is not possible without taking into account these effects.

Q: So let us combine these two questions into one, namely the analysis of the effects of the Revolution on the communist and workers' movement and the state and prospect of the Communist Party. What was the assessment of the report of the place of the Party in this course of development of the workers' and communist movement, whether in the past and in the future?

A: As I said, the 1979 revolution had a vital effect on the course of development of the Iranian left towards Marxism and the acquiring of a workers' character, as well as the emergence of a revolutionary communism in distinction to the petty-bourgeois socialism and populism dominant over the left. The Communist Party has been the product, but not anything less, of a certain course of development of the '79 revolution. Principled and revolutionary Marxism grew rapidly in this revolution, impressing the stamp of its views and programme even on the most backward sections of the petty-bourgeois left. Things which today have become self-evident facts in the thinking of the Iranian left, were, once, regarded as leftist innovations. You do recall the 1979 critique of the concept of national bourgeoisie, declaring that the Islamic regime is a bourgeois-imperialist regime, insisting that communists should not dissolve workers' interests in empty slogans about "people and people's interests", and so on, were branded as "leftist deviations". You remember how the slogan of "our programme must be used to be inspired on the charge of having gone too far in workers' welfare and economic

demands and that it is not possible to grant them. Today the then views of the Marxists have become self-evident truths. The rapid advance of revolutionary Marxism was the result, on the one hand, of the international crisis and deadend of the various forms of revisionism, and on the other hand, of the revealing of the antagonistic class interests and the objective presence of the working class in the scene of the political struggle, which was discrediting the populism and petty-bourgeois socialism dominant on the revolutionary left. The direct representatives of the international revisionist tendencies did not find a place in the revolutionary process. We all know the state of the Tudehness and later, the Fedaieness, they became the main axis of the regime and then auxiliaries in its apparatus of oppression. The entire practice of these currents was hostility to the radicalism of the working class and the oppressed strata. Maoism, which internationally rose and declined over a few years, was, in Iran, so to say, nipped in the bud; the Maoist organisations ended up in Bahi-Sadr's and bourgeois-liberals' camp. The Trotskyists and bourgeois-leftists, after a considerable organisational presence, and, with regard to their political stands, they mainly turned out to be something like the Tudeh Party. No serious pro-Albanian current developed. And those which built an organisation on this line, I doubt if their existence went back beyond a paper existence. The development of the revolutionary left became chiefly tied to the fate of the current called the "Third-Line". The latter was the last revolutionary manifestation of the left wing of the anti-dictatorial opposition. The populism and petty-bourgeois socialism dominant over this line was a nondurable phenomenon which, under the pressure of the class struggle, rapidly split from right and left. From the heart of the left wing of the current, the crisis of the theoretical and practical foundations of this line radical Marxist groupings and splits took shape which gradually approached Leninism. The chief characteristics of this critical current were that, firstly, for a historical and ideological point of reference, it essentially turned to Leninism, Bolshevism and the Marxist classics and not to what had been spread, under the cover of communism, in the Stalinist post-Stalin era in Russia, and later in the form of Chinese revisionism; secondly, it displayed a strong orientation towards the working class, both in its objectives and programmes, and in its practical work. This orientation was initially an idealistic one which step by step became more concrete, taking on specific practical dimensions. In the actual political struggles, this current defended tactical positions which also the more expressed the political independence of the working class from the various factions of the bourgeoisie, whether in power or in opposition; and fourthly, this current was interventionist and practical; it stood for resorting to revolutionary action and linking up with the practical struggles of the masses. In the actual feature which, particularly after the practical deadlock of the populist organisations and the plunge of a large section of their activists into political passivity and ideological confusion and uncertainty, turned into

one of the aspects of the main distinction of revolutionary Marxists. This Leninist, or near-Leninist, trend took shape, objectively and materially, in the Iranian left. This was not merely the result of the plan of this or that group or current, but to a much greater extent the result of the general radicalization of the Iranian left and the actual presence of the working class in the political scene, in a revolutionary atmosphere. The CPI was formed in the context and on the ground of this polarization.

So far as it concerns the second factor, namely, communism becoming a workers' phenomenon, I must say that, firstly, over the last 20 years the Iranian working class has had a substantial growth both as regards its numbers and its economic position. This, in point of fact, gives a serious material basis in society for communism, workers' communism becomes an objective necessity and its development becomes possible. Secondly, in the course of the revolution a very favourable ground was created for the dissemination of communist ideas, and even for communist organisation. In the working class. Many practical leaders of workers became communist and even took up organisational activity. It was in fact the result of the times, and of the workers' struggle, which were the main reasons for the Marxist ideas in their search for a better understanding of the way to emancipation and victory. In other words, once again, independently of a prior plan of anybody, a large stratum of communist workers was formed which opened up a very clear horizon before Iranian communism. And even today, whatever the degree of repression and suppression this fundamental change in the self-consciousness and fighting horizon of the Iranian working class cannot be reversed. The existence of this stratum of communist workers and the establishment of communism - not the communism of this or that current but the general ideas of communism - among a very large section of militant workers, was another one of the premises which made the formation of the Communist Party of Iran possible.

And, finally, I should refer to the question of the linking of communists with the mass struggles. In this regard the record of the Iranian left on the national scale is not very glaring. The radical left was active and hard-working in the revolution, but was not able to take a leading role in the real sense of the term - in the struggle of the workers and the toiling masses. The relation between organisation and class remained limited to one between organisations and the individuals and circles of the class. Here there was one exception, which played a fundamental role in the constitution of the Communist Party, and that was Komala. Komala was one of the few revolutionary communist organisations, not only within Iran but, one can even say, at the world level, which had been able to place itself at the head of the movement of the toiling masses and practically turn into the organisational and political expression of their interests - the same point of forging of the experience and history of the toiling masses and the revolutionary party, of which I spoke earlier. This happened in Kurdistan during the '79 revolution. Communism was a

social force in Kurdistan in the shape of Komala. This deep fighting link with the toiling masses was another factor which made the forming of the Communist Party possible.

I have said these to explain the point that the Communist Party is an objective product of the history of class struggle at a specific period. But in proportion as this product is achieved it itself should consciously act upon this history. It is here that we are at appraising the Party in the specific sense. If I wanted to state the general result of the Party's performance in a few words, I should say that the CPI has had relative success in driving these trends ahead. I.e., it has continued the path without having finished the work. It has continued the advancing movement of workers' communism, without having been able to turn this current into the predominant form of organisation and political expression of the vanguards and practical leaders of the working class. It has tried and won results in elaborating the theoretical, programmatic and political fundamentals of this communism, without having yet been able to isolate definitively the various forms of revisionism from the Iranian left and the working class. In some areas the achievements are more glaring, while in some others they are limited. Let me not go into the details of these and just mention some main points regarding both the achievements and the shortcomings.

One of the most important results of the building of the CPI was the continuation of the course of growth and development of Iran's revolutionary communism, under one of the most hazardous conditions. The formation of the CPI made sure that the bourgeoisie and its Islamic regime was not able to smash the revolutionary left in its offensive against it. The offensive of 20th June 1981 and onwards created serious perils in the way of the growth of communism in Iran. Many of the radical left organisations, beset by internal political-theoretical crisis, unfortunately could not withstand this attack. Under such conditions the Communist Party became a stronghold of resistance for communism and a focus for the safeguarding and re-organisation of communist cadres and the continuity of communist work. This meant protecting a most significant gain of the 1979 revolution. The formation of the Communist Party and its activities, under the same conditions, allowed the continuation of the left, the revival of Marxist principles and their application to the questions of the class struggle, and the course of proletarianization of communism to continue under the unfavourable conditions after June 20th, 1981. Further significant gains were also achieved in this field. The CPI was able to maintain the pressure of the radical programme and demands of the working class on the whole bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeois opposition. It was the existence of this revolutionary-proletarian pole in the opposition which permitted the slowing-down or even the halting of the course of degeneration of the petty-bourgeois socialist organisations, whether in drawing closer to the main and international poles of revisionism or in making political coalition with the

parties of the right wing of the bourgeoisie. In times of the retreat and decline of the revolution, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties give up their presentation to radicalism, which they made in the revolutionary era, and each, for formulating its position, draws inspiration from and relies upon the parties to its right. The Communist Party did not allow this to take place in the case of Iran. The formation of a radical communist pole put the non-proletarian parties of the left under such pressure that the possibility of their cooperating with the right became restricted. Today a large part of the workers' and democratic demands of the Communist Party has practically been imposed upon the various parties and fractions in the petty-bourgeois left.

With a serious work on the principles of communist activity inside the working class, by the critique of the methods prevalent in the traditional left, and by following a principled organisational policy, the Communist Party succeeded in taking serious steps for the linking of revolutionary communism with the working class. These measures have had repercussions much wider than the Party's own field. On the one hand, they have aroused the interest of a significant section of the Iranian bourgeoisie, the Islamic bourgeoisie and the Communist Party, and seriously drawn their attention to the fate of the Party. On the other hand, they have had a general influence on the mentality of the Iranian left regarding work inside the working class. In Kurdistan, the Communist Party was able, under the most severe conditions, to maintain its link with vast masses of the toilers and at decisive turning points nullify the influence of the defeatist and passivist policies of the bourgeoisie over the movement in Kurdistan. Thanks to the consistent struggle and the sacrifices of Komala's communist fighters, today communism has spread widely among the Kurdish toilers. This communism has shown that it has come to stay and that no plot, no degree of pressure by the central and local bourgeoisie, will make it retreat from the struggle of the defence of workers' and toilers' interests and revolutionary democracy. The Islamic Republic's military pressure over the revolutionary movement in Kurdistan can only mechanically and temporarily restrict the scale of practical contact and link of the Party with the masses of its class in Kurdistan. But let the balance of forces between the toilers and the bourgeoisie slightly to the advantage of toilers, so that the bourgeoisie finds out, with extreme horror, the dimensions and depth of penetration of communist ideas among the workers and toilers of Kurdistan and the vast base of Komala among them.

All these, I.e., the Communist Party, is a valuable gain of the workers' and communist movement of Iran. This is a means for advancing the cause of workers' revolution which should be protected by all right. I have said before, that our Party has many defects and shortcomings, and it would be surprising if it did not. But despite all its deficiencies it is a bright point in the experience of Iranian communism. Not only for workers and revolutionaries who are in the ranks

of the Party, but for whoever is concerned with the fate of communism in Iran, for whoever whose heart beats for the workers' revolution, the safeguarding of the Party, reinforcing it and supporting it, so that the Party overcomes the same shortcomings, is a fundamental duty.

But none of this means that the Party's cadres can be satisfied with what has been gained and consider the work done. On the contrary, the call of the Congress was that what has been done so far is still very little, compared to what should be done. Either the load will be carried to the end, or the present gains will be of less value on a wider historical scale. If we are not able, in the finite time existing for the Iranian communists, to make the foundations of a workers' communism so strong that the record of the era of supremacy of non-proletarian socialisms over the communist movement is closed once and for all, if we are not able to seriously convert Iranian communism into a workers' phenomenon, if we are not able to turn this workers' communism into the main and official line of communism in Iran, and, finally, if we are not able to change this communism, this movement of communist workers, into a powerful social force which puts an end to the supremacy of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties in the political scene, then what we have accomplished is, at most, nothing more than the organisation of a radical wing in the opposition, from one specific date to another. Our aim cannot merely be "to exist", to be a large organisation, to be the left wing in the opposition, to be active, etc. If the communists of this decade have any task to perform it is to carry Iranian communism across a vital turning point, a decisive transitional period. Our period is the period of setting up an independent and revolutionary communism, the era of transferring the centre of gravity of this communism from among the intelligentsia into the workers, I.e., the class from whom this communism draws its strength and to whom it belongs. Either we do this or we remain merely a bright point in a dark page; revolutionaries about whom and about whose efforts the working class will speak, in future, in the past participle tense.

Q: The Congress held a relatively long discussion about turning the Party into a workers' Party. This is an old discussion, however, so which was discussed in the Constituent Congress and also taken up in the editorial of the 2nd issue of *Komunist*. What progress has been made in the discussions of the 2nd Congress compared to our previous debates?

A: As you say the point about becoming a workers' phenomenon is not a new question for us. What was significant in the 2nd Congress was the new way in which we look into the problem, before the question of becoming a workers' phenomenon was mainly pointed out as turning the Party into a workers' phenomenon, and that was taken in the limited sense of proletarianizing the composition of the Party or of attracting advanced workers to the Party. Today we see this question in a different manner. The question is about forming the workers' communist and revolutionary organisation, the communist tendency inside the working class.

TROTSKY & THE CRITIQUE OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND STATE IN SOVIET UNION

DEBATES ON THE RUSSIAN QUESTION

The following is the translation of an article originally published in the first issue of the CPI bulletin "Marxism & the Question of Soviet Union". This bulletin is published as a supplement to the theoretical organ of the CPI, "Theory & Socialism", and contains articles and documents on the Russian question which is an ongoing discussion in our Party. So far, the following articles from the two issues of the bulletin have been translated and published in Bolshevik Message: "Introduction: Theses on the Question of Soviet Union", by Manlio Tappavea (BM no. 8), "Notes on Socialism and the Analysis of Soviet Union", by Iraj Azarín (BM no. 9), and "Marginal Notes on the Recent Sweezy-Bettelheim Debates", by Mansour Hekmat (BM no. 10). Further articles from the bulletin will be published in the future issues of Bolshevik Message - BM.

INTRODUCTION

The present work is an attempt to bring to light the methodology and essential factors of Trotsky's (and naturally Trotskyists') approach to the October revolution and the process of its subsequent evolution (especially after the suppression of the Left Opposition). It is also an effort to propound the basis of the Marxist criticism of this school of criticism of S.U.

This article is the written form of my speech to a Party research group. Its condensed and brief reasonings, (which were interesting for such a group of party comrades) ought, therefore, to be presented, in future, in greater detail and elaboration, in the form of an article for the general public. Nevertheless, due to the importance that the criticism of Trotsky's school of critique of S.U. (as well as other schools) possesses in the general attempts of our Party for developing a comprehensive Marxist study of the Russian question, the external publication of this article might be useful.

Moreover, this article demonstrates some aspects of the fundamental difference which exists between our critique of Trotsky's methodology and foundations of thought, and the superficial and bourgeois criticism of the same school of thought made by the Mensheviks, Stalin and the ruling party in S.U. (and its assorted international satellites).

THE QUESTION OF METHODOLOGY AND THE MAIN DEVIATION OF TROTSKY IN THIS FIELD

The most fundamental deviation of Trotsky from Marxism lies in his legalistic critique of capital and

capitalist relations. In Trotsky's way of thinking, capital and capitalism are the private property, in the means of production and distribution, of the capitalists and the bourgeoisie, and not a social relation. In this view, if the capitalists were dispossessed, and the means of production and distribution put under state ownership, the capitalist relations and system would cease to exist. Trotsky recognises capital in its personified appearance and that only in the form of the individual capitalist. In Trotsky's critique of capital and capitalism the question of who controls the means of production and distribution (and not merely their legal institution) as well as the question of who or what institution appropriates the surplus product produced in the labour process, gain a secondary and subordinate place. For this reason he cannot recognise capitalism and bourgeois exploitation of the workers under the form of state capitalism; the case where the bourgeoisie, through the mechanism of state ownership and control of the means of production and distribution, exploits the workers, accumulates capital, reproduces it and benefits from the total social production.

Trotsky wrote in 1934:

All kinds of democratic, idealistic, ultraleft and anarchistic theories, ignoring the character of Soviet property relations, which is socialistic in its tendencies, and denying or glossing over class contradiction between the USSR and the bourgeois state, must lead inevitably, and especially in case of war, to counter-revolutionary political conclusions. (War and Fourth International; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1933-34, p.304; our emphasis)

And in 1936 explained this more clearly:

Classes are characterized by their position in the social system of economy, and not primarily by their relation to the means of production. In civilized societies, property relations are validated by laws. The nationalization of the land, the means of industrial production, transport and exchange, together with the monopoly of foreign trade, constitute the basis of the Soviet structure. Through these relations, established by the proletarian revolution, the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state is for us basically defined. (Revolution Betrayed, p. 248; our emphasis)

This point, i.e., the juridical aspect of the state ownership of the means of production and distribution in S.U., is a central and, in full sense, determining

factor in all the writings of Trotsky about S.U. Below we shall show the decisive role this deviated view of Trotsky plays in the assessment of the October revolution, the character of the Soviet state after the 1924-1928 developments, the achievements of Stalin's government, the laws of motion of Soviet society, and the determining of the communists' tactics in the WWII and the defence of S.U. in this war. A view which has led him to take up non-proletarian and bourgeois positions over these issues.

The statification of the ownership of the means of production and distribution and the absence of big private and individual capital, disarms Trotsky in the struggle against the Russian bourgeoisie and the state monopoly capitalism in this country.

1- ASSESSMENT OF THE GAINS OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

In October 1932 Trotsky wrote:

After the organisational defeat of the Left Opposition, the official policy became definitively a policy of empirical manoeuvre between the classes. The dependence of the bureaucracy upon the proletariat meanwhile expressed itself in the fact that, in spite of a series of blows, it did not dare or was not able to overthrow the essential achievements of the October Revolution: nationalization of the land, nationalization of industry, the monopoly of foreign trade. (The International Left Opposition, Its Tasks and Methods; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1932-33, p. 49; our emphasis)

And in 1933 he wrote:

The reference to the first period of the October Revolution is not any more fortunate. Not only up to the Brest-Litovsk peace but even up to autumn of 1918, the social content of the revolution was restricted to a petty-bourgeois agrarian overturn and workers' control over production. This means that the revolution in its actions had not yet passed the boundaries of bourgeois society. During this first period, soldiers' soviets ruled side by side with workers' soviets, and often followed them aside. Only toward the autumn of 1918 did the petty-bourgeois soldier-agrarian elements have passed a little to the left, and the workers went forward with the nationalization of the means of production. Only from this time can one speak of the inception of a real dictatorship of the proletariat. (The Class Nature of the Soviet State; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1933-34, p. 106; our emphasis)

In Trotsky's writings, wherever the fundamental gains of the October revolution are referred to, the nationalization of the land and industries and the

monopoly of foreign trade [by the state] are merited as the central and determining points. For Trotsky, the overthrow of the political power of the bourgeoisie, proletariat's accession to political power creation of proletarian democracy, the building of the International Relations taken by the proletarian state emerging from the October Revolution, acquire lesser importance. He criticizes and blames Stalin and the Soviet state on numerous occasions for destroying proletarian democracy and for their nationalism and disregard for internationalism. But for him none of these are counted as the fundamental achievements of the October revolution. As long as the state ownership is maintained and protected, the fundamental achievements of the revolution continue to exist and the state is thus also a workers' and proletarian state - one which must in any case be defended. In Feb. 1935 (i.e., 17 years after the October revolution and many years after the end of the civil war and imperialist war, when the revolutionary period in the specific sense of the term had elapsed and the proletarian state should, by definition, have assumed its regular form as the proletariat organised in the legislative and executive councils) Trotsky wrote:

There is no doubt that the USSR today bears very little resemblance to that type of Soviet republic that Lenin depicted in 1917 (no permanent bureaucracy or permanent army, the right of recalling all elected officials at any time and active control over them by the masses "regardless of who the individual may be," etc.). (The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism; Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1934-35, p. 169)

In numerous writings, Trotsky condenses, with substantiated arguments, the Soviet state and Stalin for the physical annihilation of the best Bolshevik leaders; for the extension of police repression and the suppressing of any worker and communist critic. But, for Trotsky none of these signify the revoking of the fundamental gains of the October revolution. The ownership has remained in the hands of the state, and in his view, the basic conquests of the October have been protected. This assessment of Trotsky of the fundamental gains of the October revolution does not differ radically from the official assessment of the Soviet state in Stalin's time or even now.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS IN THE S.U. AND THE COURSE OF ITS EVOLUTION

In Trotsky's opinion, if the state ownership of the means of production, and distribution, the monopoly of foreign trade by the state, and planned production result in the growth of production (especially industrial production), one can conclude that the capitalist economic relations have been uprooted and the society is on the road to socialism. In fact, the society is so, but he explained the principal role that the concept statification of the means of production and distribution plays in Trotsky's outlook in regard

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to the destruction of capitalist relations.

He writes:

Russia took the road of proletarian revolution, not because her economy was the first to become ripe for a socialist change, but because she should not develop further on a capitalist basis. Socialization of the means of production had become a necessary condition for bringing the country out of barbarism.

(Revolution Betrayed, p. 5)

In substantiating the economic achievements of the S.U. on a "non-capitalist" basis, he writes the following:

[The USSR's] industrial production has increased during this same period approximately 34 times, or 250 per cent. The heavy industries have increased their production during the last decade (1925 to 1935) more than 10 times. In the first year of the five-year plan (1928-1929), capital investments amounted to 5.4 billion rubles; for 1936, 32 billions are indicated. ...

Gigantic achievements in industry, enormously surpassing beginnings in agriculture, an extraordinary growth of the old industrial cities and a building of new ones, a rapid increase of the number of workers, a rise in cultural level and cultural demands - such are the indubitable results of the October revolution, in which the prophets of the old world tried to see the grave of human civilization. With the bourgeois economists we have no larger anything to quarrel over. Socialism has demonstrated its right to victory, not on the pages of Das Kapital, but in an industrial arena comprising a sixth part of the earth's surface - not in the language of dialectics, but in the language of steel, cement and electricity.

(Revolution Betrayed, pp. 7 & 8. Our emphasis)

In a situation that, according to Trotsky himself, the workers did not have any right to protest and exercise control over the state functions (not only in the field of politics but also in economy and production), the mere existence of the state ownership of the means of production and distribution is enough to prevent Trotsky from tracing the source of this colossal industrial growth and accumulation to the sphere of production. Trotsky recognises the dispossession of the peasantry, the rapid increase in the number of workers and the continuation of the wage relations, the gigantic expansion of the industrial cities and the earlier cited statistics of the growth in production and industry in S.U. He admits that in 1936, 20 per cent of S.U.'s population (Trotsky calls them a bureaucratic caste or stratum which is not engaged in work and only plays the part of administration and leadership in the society) benefited as much from the social production as the other 80 per cent (i.e., the workers and toilers who only produce and play no role in the running and leadership of the society). Trotsky

knows about the disenfranchisement of workers and about their suppression. But all these do not collapse him to look for the origins of such an immense industrial and productive growth, in the brutal exploitation of the labour power of workers and toilers by the state monopoly capital, in the field of production. State ownership and planned economy yield all these fruits. The only criticism of Trotsky of the economic relations in S.U. concerns the sphere of distribution. He writes:

The justification for the existence of a Soviet state as an apparatus of compulsion lies in the fact that the present transitional structure is still full of social contradictions, which in the sphere of consumption - most close and sensitively felt by all - are extremely tense, and therefore threaten to break over into the sphere of production. The triumph of socialism cannot be called either final or irrevocable. (Ibid, pp. 111 & 112; double-line indicates the emphasis in the original.)

Of course, in Trotsky's view, the "contradictions" of this "transitional structure" (from capitalism to socialism) have not yet spread to the "sphere of production" (the contradictions exist only in the field of distribution):

Two opposite tendencies are growing up out of the death of the Soviet regime. To the extent that, in contrast to a decaying capitalism, it develops the productive forces, it is preparing the economic basis of socialism. To the extent that, for the benefit of an upper stratum, it carries to more and more extreme expression bourgeois norms of distribution, it is preparing a capitalist restoration. This contrast between forms of property and norms of distribution cannot grow indefinitely. Either the bourgeois norm must in one form or another break up into the means of production, or the norms of distribution must be brought into correspondence with the socialist property system. (Ibid, p. 244)

In one word, despite all this, Trotsky in 1936 (and until his assassination in 1940) did not conceive that the workers in S.U. were exploited by capital. In 1940 he writes:

To be sure, the nationalization of the means of production in one country, and a backward one at that, still does not insure the building of socialism. But it is capable of furthering the primary prerequisite of socialism, namely, the planned development of the productive forces. (Manifesto of the Fourth International on the imperialist war and the Proletarian World Revolution; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1939-40, p. 199)

There is a "small" difference between Trotsky and Lenin in issuing such a statement. Lenin regards all of these as "help" for developing the initial prerequisites for socialism provided that first the

dictatorship of the proletariat and political rule of the workers is in force. But Trotsky deduces the existence of the proletarian rule from the state ownership of the means of production and distribution. In this respect Trotsky's methodology of approach is totally opposite to that of Lenin and communists. Instead, Trotsky emphatically attacks those who believe that in S.U. capitalist relations have been established in their state form. For him it is absurd to speak of state capitalism if the means of production have been concentrated in the hands of the state through a social revolution, by the proletariat - even if, like S.U. in 1936, and as Trotsky himself says, the content of the existing dictatorship has become one of dictatorship over the proletariat. Here, once again, the pivotal point which matters to Trotsky is confinement from the capitalist class and individual capitalist - and the legal aspect of the state ownership of the means of production, and not the question of by which class and people and under what relations these means [of production] are controlled and used in production. On this point Trotsky writes:

"If desired", boasts Mussolini, 'to establish in Italy which class has not happened - state capitalism or state socialism, I should possess today all the necessary and adequate objective conditions'. All except one: the expropriation of the class of capitalists. In order to realize this condition, fascism would have to go over to the other side of the barricades - 'which really has not happened' to quote the hasty assurance of Mussolini, and, of course, will not happen. To expropriate the capitalists would require other forces, other cadres and other leaders.

The first concentration of the means of production in the hands of the state to occur in history was achieved by the proletariat with the method of social revolution, and not by capitalists with the method of state nationalization, and not by capitalists with the method of state usufructification. Our brief analysis is sufficient to show how absurd are the attempts to identify capitalist state-ism with the Soviet system. (Revolution Betrayed, pp. 247 & 248, emphasis in the original)

No doubt, for Trotsky, who regards the state ownership of the means of production and distribution as every thing, this statement of himself that:

The sword of the dictatorship, which used to fell those who wanted to restore the privileges of the bourgeoisie, is now directed against those who revolt against the privileges of the bureaucracy. The blows fall not upon the class enemies of the proletariat, but upon the proletarian vanguard. (Ibid, p. 202; our emphasis)

"Does not introduce any contradiction" into the sphere of production. For him, the disenfranchisement of workers, their suppression, and the exercise of dictatorship over the vanguards of this class are

political matters of little significance; and as long as the state (i.e., the same agent and instrument of suppression of the workers and their vanguards) is the owner of the means of production, these would not tarnish its image in the main sphere of economy and production.

Trotsky believes that there is no such class as a bourgeoisie in S.U. and one can only speak of a bureaucratic caste or stratum. In 1939 he writes:

In the land that has gone through the proletarian revolution, it is impossible to foster inequality, create an aristocracy, and accumulate privileges save by bringing down upon the masses floods of lies and ever more monstrous repressions.

Embezzlement and theft, the bureaucracy's main sources of income, do not constitute a system of exploitation in the scientific sense of the term. But from the standpoint of the interests and position of the popular masses it is infinitely worse than any "organical" exploitation. The bureaucracy is not a possessing class, in the scientific sense of the term. But it contains within itself to a tenfold degree all the vices of a possessing class. It is precisely the absence of crystallized class relations and their very impossibility on the social foundation of the October Revolution that invest the working workings of the state machine with such a conclusive character.

(The Bureaucratic Philosophy of the State; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1938-39, p. 325; our emphasis)

But the statistical characterization of the Soviet system - which lacks "class relations" - and of this "bureaucratic stratum", that Trotsky provides explain many things:

This whole stratum, which does not engage directly in productive labour, but administers, orders, commands, pardons and punishes - teachers and students we are leaving aside - must be numbered at five or six million ... Hypothetically, we may assume that the labour collectivized peasant aristocracy, the Stakhanovists, the nonparty "active", trusted personages, their relatives-in-law, approximate the same figure that we adopted for the bureaucracy, that is, five to six million. With their families, these two interpreting strata constitute as many as twenty to twentyfive million ... Twelve per cent, or perhaps 15 per cent, of the population - that is the authentic social basis of the autocratic ruling circles. (Revolution Betrayed, pp. 136 & 139)

And about the share of this "stratum" in the total social production Trotsky writes:

If you count not only salaries and all forms of service in kind, and every type of material supplementary source of income, but also the share of the bureaucracy and the Soviet aristocracy in the theaters, rest places, hospitals, sanator-

luns, summer resorts, museums, clubs, athletic institutions, etc., etc. It would probably be necessary to restrict to 15 per cent, or, say, 20 per cent, of the population enjoys not much less of the wealth than is enjoyed by the remaining 80 to 85 per cent.

(Ibid, p. 142)

The above-mentioned "estate or stratum" uses the Party and state for protecting these relations and privileges in the Soviet society, holds the means of production and distribution under its own control and exercises dictatorial measures, not against the enemies of the proletariat but against the proletarian vanguard. But since the ownership of the means of production, from the legal point of view, does not rest in the hands of the individual elements of this caste, one may not call this 20 to 25 million-strong "stratum" the bourgeois class of S.U.

TROTSKY AND HIS ECONOMIC PROGRAMME

Few people may have written or spoken against the theory of "socialism in one country" as much as Trotsky himself did. This theory formed the main axis of the ideological and theoretical struggle within the Bolshevik Party, in the years 1924-1928, and had various reflections in the fields of internal and foreign policy. One of the instances that this dispute became intense in the sphere of economy, is portrayed by Trotsky in this way:

In April 1926, at a Plenum of the Central Committee, the following amendment to the theory of the tortoise tempo was introduced by the Left Opposition: "It would be a fundamental error to think that in a capitalist environment we can go towards socialism at an arbitrary tempo. Our further approach to socialism will depend on the distance separating our industry from the advanced capitalist industry shall not increase, but clearly and palpably decrease." Stalin with good reason declared this amendment a "nosked" attack upon the theory of socialism in one country, and categorically rejected the very inclination to link up the tempo of domestic construction with the conditions of international development. Here is what he said verbatim, according to the stenographic report of the Plenum: "Whoever drags in here an international factor does not understand the very form of the question. He is either confused in the matter because he does not understand it, or he is consciously trying to cause the question." The amendment of the Opposition was rejected.

(Ibid, p. 296)

The fact that the theory of "socialism in one country", from the mid '20s onwards, represented the nationalisation of Russian bourgeois and became a cover for the development of capitalism at the expense of the brutal exploitation of the workers and toilers, and a pretext for betraying the cause of the world proletariat, is a matter for an extensive discussion

and not the concern of this article. What concerns us here is the fact that, by Trotsky's own account and on the basis of undeniable facts, in the field of domestic economic policy Stalin and Soviet government, after suppressing the Left Opposition (of which Trotsky was one of the theoreticians and leaders) as well as the Right Opposition (Bakharin's faction, who advocated the continuation of the NEP and the building of socialism at small's pace), practically implemented the same Left Opposition's programme of rapid industrialization, i.e., the programme proposed by Trotsky! Trotsky states, time and again - and correctly - that Stalin stole the economic programme of the Left Opposition and put it into practice. His criticism of Stalin in this regard is that he accomplished the five-year plan in 4 years and 3 months! But in glorifying the industrial achievements and the accumulation realized for Russian capitalism by the implementation of this programme - at the expense of the severe exploitation of Russian workers and toilers - Trotsky does not fall short of Stalin:

The Centrists, among themselves with the ideas of the Left Opposition who they had smashed conjointly with the Rights, found their support among the workers, routed the Rights and took to the road of industrialization and, subsequently, collectivization. The basic social consequences of the October Revolution were saved in the end at the cost of countless unnecessary sacrifices.

The prognosis of the Bolshevik-Leninists (more correctly the "optimum variant" of their prognosis) was confirmed completely. Today there can be no controversy on this point. Development of the productive forces proceeded not by way of restoration of private property but on the basis of socialization, by way of planned management. The world-historical significance of this fact can hardly be hidden only to the politically blinded. (The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1934-35, pp. 167 & 168)

Here the essential content of the programme of Stalin - the advocate of "world revolution" - and Trotsky - the advocate of "socialism in one country" - are the same, as far as the economic policy and exploitation of workers and toilers of S.U. is concerned. Both regard the state ownership as equivalent to the destruction of capitalist and class relations; both consider the development of productive forces and industry as the main determinant of the move towards socialism and "overtaking" the developed capitalist countries; and both underline the same programme in this field. Stalin's regime puts this programme into practice and Trotsky, in the opposition, regards the statistics of industrial growth - resulting from the realization of the same programme - as the sign of victory of socialism, and that "not on the sages of Das Kapital, but in an industrial arena comprising a sixth part of the earth's surface - not in the language of dialectics, but in the language of steel, cement and electricity."

TROTSKY AND SOVIET STATE

In Dec. 1932 Trotsky wrote:

Unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against world imperialism is such an elementary task of every revolutionary worker that the Left Opposition tolerates no vacillations or doubts on this question in its ranks.

and with this position the third point in the "Fundamental Principles of the left Opposition" was formulated as follows:

Recognition of the Soviet state as a workers' state in spite of the growing degeneration of the bureaucratic regime; the unconditional obligation of every worker to defend the Soviet state against imperialism as well as against internal counter-revolution.

(The International Left Opposition, Its Tasks and Methods; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1932-33, pp. 50 and 52 respectively; original emphasis)

It is clear that in Trotsky's opinion any attempt, on workers' and communists' side, to overthrow the Soviet state was considered as a counter-revolutionary act. Here, once again, the goddess of "state ownership of the means of production and distribution and the monopoly of foreign trade" places Trotsky next to Stalin and both of them against the interests of the proletariat in S.U.

Classes are characterized by their position in the social system of economy, and primarily by their relation to the means of production. In civilized societies, property relations are validated by laws. The nationalization of the land, the means of industrial production, transport and exchange, together with the monopoly of foreign trade, constitute the basis of the Soviet social structure. Through these relations, established by the proletarian revolution, the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state is for us basically defined.

(Revolution Betrayed, p. 248; our emphasis)

Marxists believe that the central question in any proletarian revolution, in the first place, is the question of political power, and that the establishment of the political rule of the working class is the precondition for taking any economic measures. Trotsky, in a situation that, according to himself, the workers and their vanguards were suppressed by the existing state, accuses the proletarian character of the Soviet state from the state ownership of the means of production and distribution and the monopoly of foreign trade.

As a conscious political force the bureaucracy has betrayed the revolution. But a victorious revolution is fortunately not only a program and a battle, not only political institutions but also a system of social relations. To betray it is not

enough. You have to overthrow it. . . The October revolution has been betrayed by the ruling stratum, but not yet overthrown. It has a great power of resistance, coinciding with the established property relations, with the living force of the proletariat, the consciousness of its best elements, the impasse of world capitalism, and the inevitability of world revolution.

(Ibid, pp. 251 & 252)

And to question as to what extent this "ruling stratum" has betrayed the proletariat and the revolution, Trotsky replies:

There is no doubt that USSR today bears very little resemblance to that type of Soviet republic that Lenin depicted in 1917 (no permanent bureaucracy or permanent army, the right of recalling all elected officials at any time and the active control over them by the masses 'regardless of who the individual may be', etc.). (The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1934-35, p. 169)

And in 1936 he writes about the new Soviet constitution:

In the political sphere, the distinction of the new constitution from the old is its return from the Soviet system of election according to class and industrial groups, to the system of bourgeois democracy based upon the so called "universal, equal and direct" vote of an atomized population. This is a matter, to put it briefly, of juridically liquidating the dictatorship of the proletariat. (Revolution Betrayed, pp. 260 & 261; our emphasis)

As far as the practical liquidation of the governing mechanism of the state of proletarian dictatorship is concerned, Trotsky has made some remarks (i.e., the abolition of the direct participation of workers in the state through legislative and executive soviets). Now he admits that this issue has acquired even legal and juridical aspects. For Marxists this means that the liquidation of the proletarian dictatorship has been consolidated in S.U. But for Trotsky the "fundamental gains of the October revolution" (state ownership, etc.) provide enough reasons to regard the Soviet state, despite all this, as a workers' state. A degenerated one of course!

Trotsky, better than anybody else, is familiar with the consolidation of the professional army and the oppressive organs detached from the people, the reintroduction of the bourgeois hierarchy in the army and the extensive police apparatus in the S.U., in 1936:

In September 1935, civilized humanity, friends and enemies alike, learned with surprise that the Red Army would now be crowned with an officers' hierarchy, leading to the liquidation of any ending with marshal. According to Tukhachevsky, the actual head of the War Department, "the introduction by the government of military titles will create a more

stable basis for the development of commanding and technical cadres."

(Ibid, pp. 222 & 223)

But, having said all this, Trotsky regards Soviet state as a workers' state which every worker and revolutionary must defend!

From the standpoint that interests us, the difference in the social basis of the two Bonapartism, of Jacobin and of Soviet origin, is much more important. In the former case, the question involved was the consolidation of the bourgeois revolution through the liquidation of its principles and political institutions. In the latter case, the question involved is the consolidation of the worker-peasant revolution through the smashing of its international program, its leading party, its soviets.

(The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1934-35, p. 181)

Here is the completely inverted statement by Trotsky of the tasks of the proletarian dictatorship. "The consolidation of the worker-peasant revolution through the smashing of its international program, its leading party, its soviets" can be expressed not by a revolutionary Marxist, but by Trotsky, for whom the state ownership of the means of production, monopoly of foreign trade and growth of industry are regarded as the fundamental conquests of the October revolution.

In 1939 Trotsky recalls the following statement, made by Stalin and Molotov in the Seventeenth Congress of the Party in 1934, about the need for a police state:

"Stalin and Molotov explained that the police state was needed for the struggle against the 'remnants' of old ruling classes and especially against the 'splinters' of Trotskyism.

(The Bonapartist Philosophy of the State; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1938-39, p. 319)

In this article he refers to Stalin's speech in the Eighteenth Party Congress about the necessity of the state combating the external enemy, and states that:

This time, Stalin replies: 'The need of the state arises from the capitalist encirclement and the dangers following there from to the land of socialism.'

(Ibid, p. 320)

and finally, he does not fail to notice the contradiction in Stalin's report to the 16th congress who by stating:

'Instead of the function of coercion there has manifested itself in the state the function of safe-guarding socialist property against thieves and embezzlers of national wealth.'

(Ibid, p. 322)

assigns domestic tasks as well to the existing state.

Trotsky covers 3 pages to criticise these official definitions of the necessity of existence of the state. But since he too, like Stalin, believes that capitalism in S.U. has been abolished and class relations no longer exists, he does not produce any better definition of the state in S.U. than Stalin's bourgeois definitions:

The Bonapartist apparatus of the state is thus an organ for defending the bureaucratic thieves and plunderers of national wealth.

(Ibid, p. 324)

Both these definitions of the state in S.U. are in clear contrast to the Marxian methodology of defining the proletarian state - both in revolutionary periods and in the period of stability. (For further explanation of this point see comrade Kewant's article entitled "State in Revolutionary Periods".) Both definitions reduce the necessity of the Soviet state from the existence of thieves and plunderers of national wealth. The only difference lies in the fact that while one looks for the thieves (who are to be suppressed) outside the government, the other identifies them within the ruling stratum whose interests are protected by the state. This criticism by Trotsky of the official concept of the necessity of the state in S.U. is more similar to a criticism by bourgeois parties and individuals in the opposition in relation to the ruling bourgeois party and government, than to a Marxist and proletarian criticism of it. As we have explained before and will explain further, later on in the article, when it comes to safe-guarding the basis of the state, Trotsky, no less than Stalin, calls upon the workers in S.U. and the world to defend it. For example the manifesto "War and the 4th International", which was written by Trotsky in 1934, states:

Defense of the Soviet Union from the blows of the capitalist enemies, irrespective of the circumstances and immediate causes of the conflict, is the elementary and imperative duty of every honest labour organisation.

(War & the 4th International; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1933-34, p. 304; original emphasis)

Similar statements were made on different occasions in the later years.

TROTSKY AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

In 1936 Trotsky explained the situation in S.U. and the possible course of the future socio-political developments there as follows:

The Soviet Union is a contradictory society half-way between capitalism and socialism in which: (a) the productive forces are still far from adequate to give the state property a socialist character;

(b) the tendency toward primitive accumulation created by want breaks out through innumerable pores of the planned economy; (c) norms of distribution preserving a bourgeois character lie at the basis of a new differentiation of society; (d) the economic growth, while slowly bettering the situation of the toilers, promotes a swift formation of privileged strata; (e) exploiting the social antagonism, a bureaucracy has converted itself into an uncontrolled class alien to socialism; (f) the social revolution, betrayed by the ruling party, still exists in property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses; (g) a further development of the accumulating contradictions can as well lead to socialism as back to capitalism; (h) on the road to capitalism the counterrevolution would have to break the resistance of the workers; (i) on the road to socialism the workers would have to overthrow the bureaucracy. In the last analysis, the question will be decided by a struggle of living social forces, both on the national and the world arena.

(Revolution Betrayed, p. 255)

As one can see, according to Trotsky, despite all the wrongdoings of the "bureaucracy", "the social revolution, betrayed by the ruling party, still exists in property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses", and thereby the Russian socialists are in the process of transition from capitalism to socialism. Of course, in Trotsky's view, the task of the workers for advancing towards socialism, i.e., overthrowing the "bureaucracy" (note the overthrow of the bureaucracy and not the ruling state), is not an immediate and political task, he writes:

Will the bureaucracy devour the workers' state, or will the working class clean up the bureaucracy? Thus stands the question upon whose solution hangs the fate of the Soviet Union. The vast majority of the Soviet workers are even now hostile to the bureaucracy. The peasant masses hate them with their healthy peasant hatred. If in contrast to the peasants the workers have almost never come out on the road of the open struggle, thus condemning the protesting villages to confusion and impotence, this is not only because of the repressions. The workers fear lest, in throwing out the bureaucracy, they will open the way for a capitalist restoration. The mutual relations between state and class are much more complicated than they are represented by the vulgar "democrats". Without a planned economy the Soviet Union would be thrown back for decades. In that sense the bureaucracy continues to fulfill its necessary function. But it fulfills it in such a way as to prepare an explosion of the whole system which may completely sweep out the results of the revolution. The workers are realists. Without deceiving themselves with regard to the ruling caste - at least with regard to its lower tiers which stand near them - they see in it the bourgeoisie for the time being of a certain part of their own conquests.

(Ibid, pp. 263 & 266; our emphases)

Hence, in Trotsky's opinion, the realist workers do not have the "overthrow of the bureaucracy" on their agenda, since they are afraid that "in throwing out the bureaucracy, they will open the way for a capitalist restoration." What remains, until another possibility arises, is a critical defence of the state in S.U. - as well as of the bureaucracy - in whom they see the watchmen for the time being of a certain part of their own conquests."

With this same view and methodology Trotsky replies to those who believed that capitalist relations, in their stratified form, were dominant in S.U. and that nothing was left of the achievements of the October revolution except the name of the republic, as follows:

Can one say that the policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy have led directly to the liquidation of the workers' state? That is the question now.

Against the assertion that the workers' state is apparently already liquidated there arises, first and foremost, the important methodological position of Marxism. The dictatorship of the proletariat was established by means of a political overthrow and a civil war of three years. The class theory of society and historical experience equally testify to the impossibility of the victory of the proletariat through peaceful method, that is, without grandiose class battles, weapons in hand. Now, in that case, is the imperceptible, 'gradual', bourgeois counter-revolution conceivable? Until now, in any case, feudal as well as bourgeois counter-revolutions have never taken place 'organically', but they have invariably required the intervention of military surgery. In the last analysis, the theories of reformism, in so far as reformism generally has attained to this, are always based upon the inability to understand that class antagonisms are profound and irreconcilable; ... He who asserts that the Soviet government has been gradually changed from proletarian to bourgeois is only, so to speak, running backwards the film of reformism ... Critics who consider themselves Marxists must demonstrate in what manner the bourgeoisie that had lost power in a three-years' struggle could resume this power without any battles.

(The Class Nature of the Soviet State; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1933-34, pp. 102 & 103; double-line indicates the emphasis in the original.)

The stereotyped linking and formalist methodology of Trotsky in tackling this problem is quite clear. He, to whom the property relations are the fundamental achievements of the October revolution and the workers' political power a secondary or less important one (we have already shown how Trotsky reduces the existence of the workers' state in S.U. from state ownership and planned economy to the mere existence or non-existence of the essential components of such a state itself), in his attempts to protect this "achievement", and thereby the Soviet state, from

the attacks of the critics, falls, repeatedly, into superficial methodological formalism. Because the revolution took the form of an armed insurrection and in 1918 put the ownership of the means of production into the hands of the state, hence, and distribution in the hands of the state, the counter-revolution too must according to Trotsky, the counter-revolution too must act in an armed insurrectionary form and thus organise the immediate restoration of private property. He does not regard the suppression and killing of the oppositionists (mainly the best communists and Bolshevik workers), the emptying of the soviets of their real content, the abolishing of workers' control, over production, universal dismissing, the continuation and consolidation of the professional army based on conscription of the professional army based on expansion of the bureaucratic and police role, and finally the abandoning of the Bolshevik internationalist programme, as the return of the counter-revolution and the results of the liquidation of the workers' state. Even the violent form of the suppression of his opposition and workers, the executions and exiles (including Trotsky's own exile) are not considered by him as sufficient proof, since these did not take the form of an armed insurrection and frontal battle(1), and since state ownership still continues to prevail in S.U.**. And if on any day the Russian proletariat were to move to overthrow the "bureaucracy", the scenario, in Trotsky's view, would look like this:

When the proletariat springs into action, the Stalinist apparatus will remain suspended in midair. Should it still attempt to resist, it will then be necessary to apply against it not the measures of civil war but rather the measures of police character. In any case, what will be involved is not an armed insurrection against the dictatorship of the proletariat but the removal of a malignant growth upon it. (The Class Nature of the Soviet State; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1933-34, p. 118)

Furthermore, as we mentioned before, Trotsky writes:

The Centerists, among themselves with the ideas of the Left Opposition which they had smothered within by win the Rights, found their support among the workers, routed the Rights and took to the road of industrialization and, subsequently, collectivization. The basic social conquests of the October Revolution were saved in the end at the cost of countless unnecessary sacrifices.

The progress of the Bolshevik-Leninists (more correctly, the "optimum variant" of their prognosis) was confined completely. Today there can be no controversy on this point. Development of the productive forces proceeded not by way of restoration of private property but on the basis of socialization by way of planned management. The world-historical significance of this fact can remain hidden only to the politically blind. (The Workers' State; Herndon and Bonapartism; Writings of L. Trotsky, 1934-35, pp. 167 & 168)

When one adds such statements to Trotsky's high-sounding praises for the growth statistics for industrial production (steel, etc.) in S.U. (refer to page 16 in the present article), the image one gets of Trotsky is not that of a Marxist critic of the achievements and defeat of a proletarian revolution, but rather the image of a staunch defender of the industrial development of the backward Russia. Trotsky's portrait of the possible course of events and the future evolution of the Russian revolution is as follows:

The revolution which the bureaucracy is preparing against itself will not be social, like the October revolution of 1917. It is not a question this time of changing the economic foundations of society, of replacing certain forms of property with other forms. The overthrow of the Bonapartist caste will, of course, have deep social consequences, but in itself it will be confined within the limits of political revolution. More than ever before the fate of the October revolution is bound up now with the fate of Europe and of the whole world. The problems of the Soviet Union are now being decided on the Spanish peninsula, in France, in Belgium. At the moment when this book appears the situation will be incomparably more clear than today, when civil war is in progress under the walls of Madrid. If the Soviet bureaucracy succeeds, with its treacherous policy of "people's fronts", in ensuring the victory of reaction in Spain and France - and the Communist International is doing all it can in that direction - the Soviet Union will be first itself on the edge of ruin. A bourgeois counter-revolution rather than an insurrection of the workers against the bureaucracy will be on the order of the day. If, in spite of the united sabotage of reformists and "Communist" leaders, the proletariat of western Europe finds the road to power, a new chapter will open in the history of the Soviet Union. The first victory of a revolution in Europe would pass like an electric shock through the Soviet masses, straighten them up, raise their spirit of independence, awaken the traditions of 1905 and 1917, undermine the position of the Bonapartist bureaucracy, and acquire for the Fourth International no less significance than the October revolution possessed for the Third. Only in this way can the first Workers' State be saved for the socialist future. (Revolution Betrayed, pp. 288 & 290)

This apprehension of Trotsky of the emergence of a "bourgeois counter-revolution" in S.U., and hence his defensive measure in the form of critically defending the economic relations and the state in S.U., plays a central part in all his tactical positions on the national and international issues.

Until the monopoly of foreign trade is broken and the rights of capital restored, the Soviet Union, in spite of all the services of its ruling stratum, remains in the eyes of the bourgeoisie of the whole world an irreconcilable enemy, and German National

Socialism a friend, if not of today, at least of tomorrow. (Ibid, p. 197)

In 1940, after repeating similar statements, he warns the world proletariat and communists of the perspective of a possible defeat of S.U. in the Second world war:

[USRA] defeat in the world war would signify not merely the overthrow of the totalitarian bureaucracy but the liquidation of the new forms of property, the collapse of the first experiment in planned economy, and the transformation of the entire country into a colony, that is, the handing over to imperialism of colossal natural resources which would give it a respite until the third world war. (Manifesto of the 4th International on Imperialist War, Writings of L. Trotsky, 1939-40, pp. 197 & 198)

The tasks of communists and workers in the S.U. and the world are thus determined:

The class conscious worker knows that a successful struggle for complete emancipation is unthinkable without the defence of conquests already gained, however modest these may be. All the more obligatory therefore is the defence of so colossal a conquest as planned economy against the restoration of capitalist relations. (Ibid, p. 199, our emphasis)

The alliance between U.S.A., Britain, France and S.U. in the Second world war against Germany demonstrated that the monopoly of foreign trade by the Soviet state had not created any problems for the western imperialists in the way of forcing a tie with her in an imperialist war. The Soviet "bureaucracy" did not fall as a result of the 2nd world war; her "new property relations" did not suffer, and the S.U. did not become a colony.

The Soviet state, having preserved the same "new property relations" and the "monopoly of foreign trade", emerged from the second imperialist war on the victorious side and through the Yalta, Potsdam and Tehran agreements, side by side with the other victorious imperialist states, took part in the revision of the world.

Trotsky was assassinated in 1940 and did not live to see that his essential predictions about S.U. and world revolution proved to be wrong. Although Trotsky's persistence on the international character of the proletariat's struggle distinguishes him, in some respects, from the bourgeois-nationalist ideological-political frame-work which was prevailing in the years after 1926 over the ruling state and party in S.U., the foundations of his system of thinking, his legalistic and formal criticism of capital, his industrialist and economistic vision of the workers' revolution, and his defence of and support for the Soviet state and its essential programmes, certainly do not

place him in the position of the revolutionary Marxists.

Farhad Besharat

Feb. 1985

** It is not strange that wherever the Trotskyists are faced with governments which promote state ownership, they are just too eager to offer their support. (in a critical way, of course!) They support that the 4th International and Iranian Trotskyists (Socialist Workers Party of Mr. Babak Zaheri) gave to the Islamic Republic regime of Iran is only one manifestation - perhaps the most disgusting - of the political implication of this formal criticism by Trotsky of capital as a social relation. It is with such methodology that most of the Trotskyists still regard China as a degenerated workers' state and the dominant economic relations in this country as traditional and non-capitalist.

From P3

working class. Seven years of war and official destitution nearly a decade of Islamic regime's rule, and the violation of the most basic human rights, are all signs of a deep-rooted crisis which has engulfed the bourgeoisie and capitalist system. Against this savagery and bankruptcy of the exploiters, the advance of the working class cannot have a victorious conclusion except by setting up a workers' state. The present situation will be the establishment of a workers' state and the expropriation of the exploiters and oppressors. This is the goal which the working class will make all efforts to approach by its own power through every future development.

Naser Javid
August 1987

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FROM THE WORKERS' BANKS!

COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRAN - THE COMMITTEE ARMED

Letter to the OMLWP

"Workers' Truth", No. 7, paper of the "Organisation for a Marxist-Leninist Workers' Party" (U.S.A.) has published a report of a seminar in which it has referred to the Communist Party of Iran. The following letter was sent by the CPI to the OMLWP in this connection. For the information of those who may have read the WT report we hereby publish the CPI letter.

BM.

OMLWP

Boxholder, P.O. Box 5830,
Chicago, IL 60680
U.S.A.

July, 1st, '87

Dear OMLWP,

I am writing in protest to your report in WORKERS' TRUTH No. 7 (March '87) of the seminar in winter '86-87 in which the CPI also took part.

There are many points in your report that make us protest to you. We do not wish to dwell on minor ones. It is enough to mention that there are inaccuracies in reporting the discussions and especially in reporting the positions put forward by the CPI; there are quotations from (two) CPI papers as if they were the resolutions of a conference, while in reality those papers put forward the CPI views; a CPI paper has been supplemented to your report which, incidentally, you were informed that it was not for general publication; ...

But, above all, you sum up the seminar as an experience which "should prove to be a big aid in unifying and organizing revolutionary Marxist-Leninists internationally" and you talk of the organizations in this seminar as belonging to an international trend or tendency. As your delegates to the seminar are well aware, in the final session of the seminar we explicitly stated that we consider this seminar as a seminar of discussion on certain theoretical problems. We argued (against the argument of the OMLWP delegation) that any measure which gives the impression that a new trend is being formed or that the organizations involved are forming a tendency would be far from the truth, hence the cause of real communist militants, and therefore would be strongly opposed by us. Our argument was apparently accepted by the seminar.

In view of all the above, we wonder what sectarian reasons may have motivated such a measure on your part, but we consider the publication of such a report by the OMLWP as unprincipled and opportunistic.

We demand your serious attention to this question and your explicit and public self-criticism in this regard. We consider this as the assurance for a principled relationship between us. Otherwise, and as long as, you do not act in this direction, we shall use all available methods would not be repeated, we see no point in continuing any relation with your organi-

zation.

For the benefit of your readers, I request that you publish this letter in the next issue of WT.

for the Political Bureau of
the Communist Party of Iran

Iraj Azarzin

☐

From, P. 13

Itself and turning communism into the banner of a tendency inside the class itself. The question is not merely how to proletarianize "our own" Party; it is how to turn Iranian communism into a workers' phenomenon. Here, then, one should concentrate on this process, which I mentioned before. This means resorting to measures whose breadth goes much further than organisational work with workers, and contacts with the vanguards of the class. We should discredit the pseudo-socialism which degenerates the economic struggles of workers, and show to workers that this is not communism. We should smash the bases of the sectarian organisational thinking of the traditional left which sought not the unity of workers but the leadership of its own sect over the scattered elements of the working class. We should brush aside the pseudo-socialism which did not have the slightest acquaintance with the working class, with its way of life, with its needs, with the problems facing it in the actual struggle and the mechanisms of its class struggle; and in its place we should form a communism which is the real expression of the life and interests of a social class distinct from the rest of the disconnected Iranians. We should erase from the minds of Iran's communist activists the legacy of years of petty-bourgeois misanthropes. What we have done so far has been in this direction. But this attempt should be taken much further. Iran's traditional left was a trend alien to the real life, politico-social interests and the conditions and requirements of the workers' struggle. We can still see here and there the signs of this restrictiveness of the left in ourselves. To acquire a workers' characteristic is impossible without breaking up all the non-workers traditions of this left. Any way, I leave further explanation about the question of becoming a workers' phenomenon to discussions on workers' organisation which are to be presented in the *Komunist*.

Q: How optimistic are you about our real capacity in realizing the perspective which has been outlined in the report?

A: We are very optimistic. This is because firstly this "we" is not limited to me or you but embraces a large trend of communist revolutionaries and advanced workers who have emerged out of the heart of a revolutionary experience. The problem I talked about is not merely the problem of the CPI, but an objective

social need which is making itself felt for the vanguard section of the working class as a whole. The CPI, for its part, has demonstrated its steadfastness in this path. Clearly, this optimism does not mean believing in the inevitability and of this success. The whole thing rests upon the efforts, insight, perseverance and concern of communist cadres and revolutionary workers who have today organised in and around the Party. The work they are to do is nothing strange. We have before us a collection of tasks in the fields of theory, propaganda, agitation, organisation and the day-to-day struggle. Before anything else, one should understand the significance of accomplishing these tasks and of hastening their realization. We should rapidly develop ourselves to facing up to these tasks. We should not lose ourselves in the momentary problems, temporary pressures and the unfavourable tendencies and trends. We should not lose the general horizon in the current and daily work. In short, we should recognize the goal and get moving. The Second Congress tried to open up this horizon before the activists of the Communist Party and the workers' movement and call them to a united and concerted effort in this direction.

To be continued.

☐

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REPORT: Biweekly newsletter of the CPI - the Committee Abroad in English

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