

BOLSHEVIK MESSAGE



No.13

PAPER OF THE
COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRAN—THE COMMITTEE ABROAD

Sep. 1988

STATEMENT OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRAN ABOUT THE CEASEFIRE IN THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

The Islamic Republic has finally submitted to the defeat of its war goals and policies. The Islamic Republic regime finally accepted Resolution 598 of the Security Council for an end to the war, one year after it was issued, after the regime had within this year made it possible for, and contributed to, a new round of war, surrounding the life of the masses in an inferno of fire, destruction, and killing. On July 18, when the propaganda machine of the Islamic rulers had muffled the cry for "war, war", it was suddenly announced that the Islamic Republic has unconditionally accepted Resolution 598, and is prepared to implement the ceasefire.

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THE TENTH PLENUM OF THE CC OF THE CPI

The tenth plenum of the central committee of the CPI was held in November 1987. In this plenum a number of resolutions were passed on the military presence of the U.S.A. in the Gulf, the mass organisation of workers, Islamic Councils, and certain aspects of the activities at the international level. These resolutions were first published in Komonist No. 35, central organ of the CPI. Also three interviews with the party comrades elaborating on these resolutions have been translated from Komonist for publication in this issue—BM

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WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE !

The eight-year war has been recorded as one of the longest, bloodiest, and undoubtedly most inhuman wars in contemporary history. The dimensions of the atrocities, massacre, and the intensity of destruction in this war has turned into a byword. Nearly one million killed, more than one million disabled, nearly 3 million refugees; these are the figures concerning the direct victims of this anti-human war. But these figures can not describe the real dimensions of the atrocities and suffering caused by this war. The eight-year war has forced a mountain of pain and misery on the people. Millions of families who are each mourning the loss of a loved one, the empty tables of millions of working men and women, whose meagre livelihood has been plundered by the rulers at the service of the war, the unhappy look on the face of mothers who daily face the lack of treatment, food, books, and stationary for their children, hundreds of thousands of young people who go through the wakeful nightmare of death and unemployment, overall destitution, the destruction of means of subsistence, the backbreaking effort of obtaining a livelihood for one on each and every working day, this mountain of misery left behind by the war, by far surpasses the official atrocities of the war itself...

Every one is, and should be, asking why these atrocities and the heap of suffering were inflicted on us? The answer is clear to us Iranian workers. The Islamic regime sacrificed people's lives in this country to force the Islamic reaction, to which we were subjected, upon the political and social life of the rest of the people in the region. The Islamic regime razes the life of the people in this country to force the other governments with which it was competing into accepting the model of the Islamic type of government. The Islamic Republic drove the children of the people into battlefields and inflicted a heap of suffering on the people in this country in order to place itself in the leadership of anti-worker reaction in the entire region.

The Islamic Republic has now experienced defeat in its anti-people goals and policies. Its apparently omnipotent image is completely broken down. Its weakness has become official and it has submitted to defeat and helplessness. The war of the Islamic Republic ends with its submission to the ceasefire. But this end to the war of the Islamic Republic is only a beginning for the workers and the suffering masses of Iran. For the workers and the suffering people who still bear the brunt of the atrocities and the weight of the miseries of the war of the Islamic Republic, the end of the war of the Islamic regime is only a beginning of a more serious, expansive and powerful struggle to wrench war compensation from this regime. The Islamic Republic should pay for the war and for all its crimes to the workers and the toiling people of Iran. The rights of the people, trampled under the war, should be extracted from the Islamic Republic and the poverty and destitution, which the regime has surpassed beyond all limits with its war, should be ended. The workers, the oppressed and toiling people should take part, with their demands, in a broader and more comprehensive struggle against the Islamic Republic. We have no doubt, and no one should doubt that the workers and the oppressed people of Iran in their struggle can and must sound the death knell of the Islamic Republic and with their power break down its foundation along with handing over the heads and agents of the Islamic Republic, these war criminals who chanted "war, war" up till recent days, to their own revolutionary tribunals for punishment.

Workers! Oppressed people of Iran!

Rise to take indemnity for the war and for all the injustices and crimes from the Islamic Republic. Declare clearly your demands against poverty, destitution, and disenfranchisement, and enter the scene in an expansive struggle against the Islamic Republic to change the unbearable situation forced on your living conditions. Weakness and instability in the lines of your enemies is all too obvious. The heads of the Islamic Republic themselves admit this in your presence in so many words. Take advantage of the present weakness and helplessness of your enemies to consolidate your ranks and dictate your demands. Conditions are ready to broaden the struggle. The Islamic rulers whose weakness has forced them into accepting the ceasefire, are now doing their best to maintain the state of war mobilisation, and to rebuild and revive their confidence of suppression, this time directly against you. The Islamic Republic can not and should not be allowed to carry out this effort. Try first and foremost to break down completely the war mobilisation of the Islamic Republic. The war mobilisation of the Islamic Republic should be dismantled immediately and completely:

- * All soldiers, the children of the people, should immediately be returned from the fronts; no one can and should, prevent the desertion from the garrisons and military centres.
- * Conscription and mobilisation should stop immediately and completely and related laws and regulations should be nullified.
- * Units for mobilisation and military training in factories, schools, and other centres of work and social activity should immediately be dissolved. All forms of militarisation, presence of the military and Pasdaran in centres of work and social activity should come to an immediate end.
- * Workers transferred to military industry and services should immediately be returned to their previous work, and all such transference should totally be stopped.
- * All those arrested for resisting and opposing war-time rules and regulations should immediately be released.
- * Damages inflicted on the toiling people as a result of bombardments should immediately be made up by the Islamic Republic and the government should immediately make the necessary arrangements for the refugees and pay them compensation.
- * All workers who have been made redundant during the war under excuses such as the shortage of foreign currency and so on, should immediately be returned to their previous work, and all the deducted payment of the workers under the pretext of war conditions should be repaid ...

Raise the voice of your militancy and protest high. The difficult conditions dominating the life of the masses can only be changed in the interest of the workers and toilers in achieving freedom and welfare only through their own power. This struggle can not be completed successfully without the overthrow of the Islamic Republic; the establishment of the workers' state and the real sovereignty of the toiling people over the conditions of their social life. We call on you for a broad struggle to overthrow the Islamic Republic!

Revolutionary people of Kurdistan!

The Islamic Republic intensified its militarism in Kurdistan under the pretext of war to disguise your revolutionary struggle against it. The Islamic Republic would certainly try to maintain and consolidate this militarism. Intensify your protest and revolutionary struggle. Unify and strengthen your ranks round Komala. All oppressive forces of the Islamic Republic should immediately leave Kurdistan, and the militarism of the Islamic Republic should be ended. The expansion and the escalation of your protest-struggle, and the widening of your resistance to the laws and regulations of the Islamic Republic alongside the struggle of armed and conscious workers - the Komala Peshmargas - would put a complete end to the militarism and the might of the Islamic Republic in Kurdistan.

**DOWN WITH THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC!
LONG LIVE FREEDOM, EQUALITY, WORKERS' RULE!**

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Iran
July 20, 1988

(Translated from the original Persian)

Resolution about: THE MILITARY PRESENCE OF THE U.S.A IN THE GULF

Considering that,

1- the dispatching of the American warships to the Persian Gulf, under whatever covers that it may be justified, essentially follows the objective of consolidating U.S. imperialism's domination and giving it supremacy in the region; tightening the bonds of imperialist subjugation; and confronting the danger of revolutionary crises and revolts against the existing order. The target of this action is, above all, the working class and the oppressed people of the region;

2- the Islamic Republic regime which from the outset has served the fundamental interests of capitalism and imperialism, and all along has been engaged in open and secret wheeling and dealing with the Reagan administration and the Israeli and European capitalist states, and which without their financial and military backing would not have survived and kept up the reactionary Iran-Iraq war, has now, with this operation, found another chance to deceptively put on the mask of "anti-imperialism";

3- the counter-revolutionary nature and practice of the Islamic regime and its hypocritical manoeuvres are fully known to the working class and toiling masses in Iran; even the opportunist currents, facing the revolutionary radicalism of the masses, have for long taken up the slogan of the Islamic regime's overthrow; but the dispatching of the warships by the U.S.A. and by other imperialist states to the region has allowed the opportunist currents - particularly in Europe - under the pretext of supporting "anti-imperialist" struggles, to denigrate the deep antagonism of the working masses with the Islamic regime, and their class struggle against it; to defend the reactionary and anti-workers rule of the Islamic regime and its war efforts; and thus spread illusions among the workers of these countries.

Hence the Communist Party of Iran states:

1- It emphatically condemns the dispatching of the American navy to the Gulf, which was followed by the navies of other imperialist countries. This action is part of U.S. imperialism's policy of open bullying and aggression which has been particularly taken up under the Reagan administration. It is aimed at restoring the U.S.A.'s military and political supremacy, and consolidating the ties of imperialist subjugation which have been severely

shaken by the outbreak of revolutions in different countries. This action, just like the military intervention in Central America, aggressions against the Nicaraguan people and revolution, and undisguised recourse to state terrorism and gunboat diplomacy throughout the world, should be challenged and fought by workers and revolutionary masses everywhere.

2- The CPI considers as unquestionably opportunist and condemns any policy of support for the Islamic Republic, even a limited one, under the pretext of the U.S. military presence in the Gulf and the existence of certain differences between the U.S.A. and the Iranian regime.

From the standpoint of the Iranian working class the overthrow of the Islamic Republic is an urgent and vital need; it is a primary task and the condition to any fundamental improvement [in the situation] of the working class and its future advance. The record of the Islamic regime during the past eight years consists of the imposition of unprecedented poverty, disfranchisement and medieval repression upon the working masses; the organisation of a huge machinery of dictatorship and suppression; the wholesale massacre of workers and communists; the crushing of the workers' movement and any legitimate protests by the oppressed people; the enforcement of the most disgraceful and discriminatory laws on women; and the launching of big military expeditions to Kurdistan for the suppression of the Kurdish people. Thus, the only revolutionary policy in this regard, for the workers and communists in various countries, is to render their unsparring and unconditional support to the working class and oppressed masses of Iran in overthrowing the Islamic Republic regime.

3- Under these conditions, the Iranian communists abroad must step up the efforts to expose the Islamic regime in the eyes of the workers and the public opinion; they should discredit any opportunist attempt to defend the Islamic regime of capital or the war, and increase their efforts to draw ever greater international support to the struggle of the working class for overthrowing the Islamic Republic.

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DOWN WITH THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC REGIME!

Resolution about: WORKERS' MASS ORGANISATION (councils, general assembly, union)

Considering that:

1- workers' mass organisations are, alongside the party organisations of the class, a fundamental basis of workers' class struggle, and that progress and victory in this struggle is not possible without the formation and consolidation of these organisations and achieving, through them, the broad unity of working-class masses;

2- historically the Iranian working class has lacked effective public-mass organisations and their absence is still today a fundamental weakness of the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie; in order to make an effective intervention in the future social and political events and to perform its historic mission, the Iranian proletariat must overcome this weakness;

3- an essential condition for the advance, deepening and victory of the current workers' struggles - which have been in progress on an unprecedented scale and uninterruptedly during the past few years - is to set up workers' mass organisations;

4- tendency for organisation is a general demand and inclination among the working masses, and the struggle to build these organisations has itself been a permanent feature of the workers' movement in the recent period. The Islamic Republic has continuously suppressed these struggles, attacking and destroying workers' independent mass organisations which developed in the course of the revolution and in the years after;

5- against this background, the Islamic Republic is trying to distort the workers' demands and restrain the workers' movement by calling for and establishing yellow, reactionary organisations in the factories;

6- the pressure on the workers' movement by the Islamic regime has intensified conservative and syndicalist tendencies in some workers' circles, and particularly within the populist-left organisations. Moreover, idealist and unrealizable plans and ideas known as "clandestine trade-unions" which not only ignore the real capacities and needs of the workers' movement but basically refrain from meeting the need of Iranian workers for open mass organisations, have been proposed by some groups. These ideas have not been welcomed widely by workers. However, any degree of their spread and influence among the workers will lead to confusion and act as an obstacle to the mass organisation of the working class;

With respect to the above points, communists are faced with the urgent task of clearly stating their concrete views and plan for the mass organisation of workers.

A: The main points of our policy

The policy of communists regarding the mass organisation of workers must be based on the following points:

1- Workers' economic struggle in Iran possesses, in general, an above-trade and generalized character. At the most basic level, such factors as the merging of the capitals in various production branches, the ownership by the state of the chief part of industrial capital, the state's economic role and policies in regulating the general relation between labour and capital, and the increasing organic convergence between the demands of the various sections of the working class, have resulted in the workers' struggles and demands in every factory acquiring a general and above-trade character and significance.

2- under such conditions, workers' organisations for waging the economic struggle must be based on factory-, regional, and not on trade-branch, organisations.

3- A working-class mass organisation must ensure the wider and ever more active intervention of the working masses in the struggle, and should be based on workers' direct democracy and exercise of authority. Otherwise, the growth of bureaucracy and of decision-making centres which are detached from the rank-and-file would be inevitable, and [these organisations] themselves would turn into obstacles to workers' struggles.

4- The prevailing conditions of repression, and the inevitable confrontation of workers' strikes and protests with the state, drive the workers' movement in Iran into political struggles. The workers' movement does not for any long period of time remain confined to the economic level and within the framework of the present system and laws. Hence the mass organisations of the class should have the ability to mobilize workers on a mass scale under all conditions. These organisations should not remain confined to a struggle within the framework of bourgeois law and legality.

5- The experience of the workers' movement in the recent period has confirmed the above facts and provided the organisational form suited to these

realities. This organisational form is the council organisation of the working class. In the course of the [1979] revolution a large number of activists and vanguards of the workers' movement turned to the council movement. In many production centres there emerged factory councils and in some areas workers' district councils. With the 20th June 1981 (clashed down by the Islamic Republic) and the repression which ensued, this movement continued, on the more limited scale, in the form of a general-assembly movement. Today the demand for setting up councils is a wide-spread and general tendency among the working-class masses.

With respect to the above points, we declare that:

- 1- The main slogan and the general policy of the Communist Party of Iran regarding the mass organisation of workers is propaganda for and the building of workers' councils, and the organisation of the working class on the basis of these organs.
- 2- We regard the organising of the working class on the basis of councils to be the axis of class's mass organisation. This also represents a point of reliance for other workers' mass organisations, which we shall endeavour to unite around the council organisation of the working class.
- 3- The council organisation is the most advanced form of workers' mass association, based on the organisation of the centralised and vanguard section of the working class in big industries and workplaces. Hence we endeavour to build an all-embracing and extensive council movement of the working class. Nevertheless, in small workshops and generally in those branches where due to the economic situation of the production unit the number and concentration of workers is limited, and where unification on the basis of trade provides the workers with a stronger position against the capitalists than a workplace-based unity, we call the workers to form trade-unions, and will ourselves struggle for their formation. We shall endeavour to make sure that the union organisations in these branches come into close contact with the general council-movement of the working class.

B: The characteristics of workers' councils

The chief features of councils and the perspective of workers getting organised on a council basis, which should be considered in our agitations, are the following:

- 1- Councils are formed from below; their essential feature is democratic and the direct exercise of authority of working-class masses.
- 2- Council is the regular and organised general assembly of workers. In every production unit all

workers are members of the council of the unit, and workers' general assembly is the main body and the decision-making organ of the council. The general assembly elects a number of persons (as the executive-committee or under any other name) for the implementation of its decisions. These persons may be revoked or re-instated in every session of the general assembly.

3- In large factories, where it is not possible to convene the general assembly of all workers, the factory council is formed of the representatives of several general assemblies, for example the general assembly of departments.

4- The councils' national organisation is a hierarchical structure whose basic units are the factory councils; at a higher level, the councils of factory councils' deputies are formed; (and likewise at still higher levels).

5- The council system does not exclude the existence of trade-unions and their unity in these councils. Professions whose suitable form of organisation is the trade-union, can, at certain levels, send delegates to the representative councils, thus declaring their affiliation to the councils' national organisation.

6- The council system has the capacity to organise working-class masses in other contexts and other social forms. Rural councils and soldiers' councils can, at certain levels, join this movement. Workers' cooperatives movement, etc, can also be connected to the council network.

C: The general-assembly movement

As the first step in the council organisation of workers and as an immediate and realisable solution to filling the vacuum of the absence of mass workers' organisations, the CPI stands for the development and extension of the workers' general-assembly movement. The aim of this movement is to build a wide network of workers' general assemblies in various factories and economic-production units, to make them convene on a regular basis, to join them together, and, through them, create as rapidly as possible an effective organisational means and a more or less nationwide practical leadership for workers' current struggles.

The general-assembly movement, which must be set up by the conscious activity of communist workers, has the essential merit that while it represents the first step in the organisation of workers' councils, it already has the capacity of rapidly realising its objectives, owing to the existence of very favourable material grounds in the workers' movement. The realities of the Iranian workers' movement confirm the correctness and legitimacy of this policy.

- 1- The realities of the recent period of the workers' struggles clearly demonstrate that the idea and demand of general assembly has already been established in

the workers' movement, and the general assembly is a familiar phenomenon among the working-class masses. In this period, workers repeatedly made use of the general assembly, in defiance of the yellow organisations, to carry out their struggles and protest actions.

2- Any plan for the public-mass organisation of workers will have the potential of mass mobilisation and feasibility only if it can meet the needs and requirement of the current struggles of the class, both today, and at every step of the progress of the movement. The general-assembly movement, in its present form, has shown that it possesses this capacity.

3- The socio-political situation in Iran and the features of the workers' movement demand that any mass organising of the working class firstly begins from the local level; secondly, relies on the local leaders of the workers' movement; and thirdly, is from the outset a mass organisation. The general assembly meets these requirements quite well.

The CPI, and communist and militant workers generally, should, on the basis of this favourable situation and relying on the existing tendency among workers to use the general assembly, organise and spread the general-assembly movement as a conscious, purposeful and broad movement among workers. Communist workers and the activists of the general-assembly movement have the following tasks:

- 1- To agitate and establish among workers both the idea of general assembly - as an effective organ of struggle and the basis of workers' councils - and the wider perspective of general-assembly movement; to encourage workers to become the activists of this movement.
- 2- To call on workers in every production unit to hold general assemblies.

3- To work continuously to make the convening of general assemblies regular (independently of whether or not there are protests or strikes in any particular unit).

4- To win recognition for the general assemblies as workers' true voice.

5- To endeavour to link the general assemblies together in a persistent and organised fashion.

6- To make the general assemblies more involved in such areas as collective contracts' arbitration, commenting and deciding on the state's plans and measures.

D: On trade-unions

Due to a multitude of factors such as the unions'

historical and practical limitations in creating broad class unity and in leading workers' struggles; the historical link between the union movement and social-democratic policies; the union's tendency to depart from direct democracy, and instead, the arising of a bureaucratic above workers; and finally the absence of material grounds for the formation of trade-unions in Iran today, the CPI does not place the policy of building trade-unions at the centre of its struggle to form mass organisations. The Party's general policy is to set up workers' councils. At the same time we state that:

- 1- The unconditional freedom to set up workers' unions is part of workers' indisputable right to form any trade or political organisation. We categorically defend this right.
- 2- We defend, and give our assistance to, workers' efforts to build unions.
- 3- We shall take part in independent workers' unions, try to strengthen the communist workers' leadership in them, and unite the communist line inside every union.
- 4- We endeavour to make the unions take up, as far as possible, a non-bureaucratic form and, particularly, base themselves locally on workers' general assemblies.
- 5- The degree to which our policy to build workers' councils and, as the first step, to extend the general-assembly movement coincides with the efforts of workers' circles and militant currents advocating trade-unions (such as the holding of general assemblies which is upheld by some union advocates), we are ready to have joint actions with these circles and currents.

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OUT WITH SUPPORTERS OF
"TUDEH PARTY" AND "ORGANISATION
OF THE IRANIAN PEOPLE'S FADEAES"
FROM THE WORKERS' RANKS!

COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRAN - THE COUNCILIST ALIB

Resolution about: CERTAIN IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CPI AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

To advance in the realization of the aims of the Communist Party requires, among other things, carrying out consistent work at the international level. To elucidate the general framework of these activities and some of the most important aspects of the party's work internationally, namely, relations with non-Iranian groups, our attitude towards working-class organisations, and our tasks with regard to immigrant Iranians, the central committee of the Communist Party of Iran stresses the following points:

1- The bases of the party's activities at the international level

The party's international work covers various aspects within the following general framework:

- a) helping the formation and consolidation of a revolutionary and working-class communist rank at the international level, distinct from all the revisionist and opportunist camps and poles, and also from the sectarian groupings of the non-proletarian radical-left.
- b) serving the cause of the international unity of the working class, and active participation in the struggle of the various sections of the world proletariat against the capitalist system and the hardships which capital imposes on the workers of different countries.
- c) solidarity with the legitimate struggles of oppressed and toiling strata against discriminations and oppression by capital and imperialism in various countries, and helping to strengthen the communist politics and rank in these struggles.
- d) mobilization of maximum possible forces internationally, particularly by drawing the solidarity of the world proletariat, for the realization of the Communist Party's strategy in Iran, namely overthrowing the Islamic Republic and setting up workers' rule.

2- Concerning the relations of the CPI with political groups and organisations at the international level

International work necessitates the establishment of contacts and relations with different groups and organisations which work in the name of communism. The CPI desires the orientation of the militant wings of the radical-left tendency in various countries towards principled Marxist-Leninist positions, and their joining the rank of struggle to build a principled

communist pole in opposition to the international revisionist currents. While welcoming contacts and exchanges of views with all radical-left parties and organisations, the CPI can establish close relationship only with those currents whose practice, views and stands correspond with the principles of such a communist rank. The basic principles [distinguishing] such a rank are as follows:

a) orientation towards the working class and the workers' movement, and striving to turn the revolutionary communist movement into the movement of communist workers; giving priority to the task of uniting the various sections of the working class, continuously disseminating the independent socialist ideals and socialist struggle of the class, strengthening the workers' movement in various fronts, and fighting to free this movement from the politics of the different sections of the bourgeoisie.

b) believing in and commitment to the cause of the social revolution of the working class aimed at abolishing bourgeois property, establishing the common ownership of the means of production and exchange, and doing away with wage-labour and class exploitation.

c) basic and principled demarcation with the "socialism" of the existing camps and poles (the Soviet Union, China and Albania) and international trends such as Trotskyism and Euro-communism; endeavouring to form a workers' communist international.

d) being principled in tactical stands and having complete tactical independence from the various factions of the bourgeoisie under all conditions; defending the independent interests of the working class, the socialist ideal and the cause of emancipation from the oppression and despotism of the capitalism of the imperialist epoch.

e) active interventionism, recognising the significance of workers' current struggles as well as the struggles of oppressed and discriminated strata in capitalist societies, even where these struggles break out over demands for reform; endeavouring to play an interventionist and active part in these struggles, in the interest of the workers' revolution, and disseminating communist politics.

3- Work in connection with workers' mass organisations at the international level

Today the greater part of the workers' movement and

the workers' current struggles against capital lies outside the realm of communist influence (and even, increasingly, outside the influence of revisionist and reformist parties). Under these conditions having contacts and relations with the proletariat of other countries necessitates for the CPI going beyond contacts with left political parties and organisations, and forming direct relations with workers' mass organisations and centres of working-class struggles in these countries.

The relation of the CPI with workers' mass organisations (unions, workers' committees, workers' campaigns, etc.) should be expanded as far as possible, independently of ideological considerations. Therefore:

a) the CPI tries to establish contacts with trade-unions and workers' organisations, wherever they have not become tools of bourgeois states and reaction; in these contacts we seek, in particular, closer relations with the rank-and-file of these organisations and the radical-revolutionary wings among the local and national leaders.

b) the CPI will, within its possibilities, and in principle take part in workers' protest actions in various countries (strikes, demonstrations, picketings, etc.)

c) the CPI is at the same time duty-bound, while making ever closer practical solidarity with the workers' struggles against the employers and states, to voice and agitate its independent views and policies, as well as its criticisms of the policies of unions and workers' organisations.

4- Concerning immigrant Iranians

The establishment of bourgeois-Islamic counter-revolution in Iran has given rise to a great wave of Iranian refugees and exiles, especially in the neighbouring states and in western Europe. Educational and organisational work among these refugees and immigrants and mobilizing their energy for the fight against the Islamic Republic is a continuous duty of the CPI. But this massive immigration also places new internationalist tasks on the agenda of the Party. The CPI is duty-bound to try to prevent the Iranian refugee and immigrant community from turning into a prop in bourgeoisie's economic pressure on the working class in other countries, and into a means in its nationalist, chauvinist and racist efforts of division. It should make sure that the work, instead, becomes a factor helping to strengthen the working-class and progressive movements in those countries.

Resolution about: THE ISLAMIC COUNCILS IN FACTORIES

Considering that,

1- the Islamic Councils are institutions which defend capitalism, support the Islamic Republic regime, and advocate this regime's policies among the workers; i.e., they are fully and openly reactionary institutions;

2- the continuation of workers' struggles, in spite of the bloodiest suppression and ferocious terror, has forced the Islamic Republic, in its efforts to confront the workers' movement, to take up the policy of distorting and restraining the economic demands and struggles of the workers, along with direct suppression; the Islamic Councils are the regime's chief instruments for pushing through this policy;

3- more specifically, by giving recognition to, spreading, and consolidating the Islamic Councils in factories, the Islamic Republic aims to: derail and defeat the struggles of workers; bring these struggles, as far as possible, under its own control; spread illusions among working masses as to the function of law and state facilities and institutions; create a wait-and-see mentality and lack of self-confidence among them; hinder the workers from organising independently; make the conservative and reformist trends in the workers' movement compromise and come to terms with it; and, by extending the Islamic Councils' domination over other institutions such as certain cooperatives, form an intermediate link between itself and the working class;

4- the role and operation of the Islamic Councils in factories (i.e., creating divisions among the workers, hostility with communist workers, confronting the radical-socialist tendency in the workers' movement, resorting to intimidation and harassment, presenting defective and backward demands wrapped up in the most anti-workers and reactionary political propaganda in order to restrict and distort workers' genuine demands and slogans, preventing the spread and deepening of workers' struggles, and trying to use workers in the service of the regime's internal rivalries, all these have clearly revealed to the working-class masses the reactionary and anti-workers nature of the Islamic Councils, both politically and in the field of economic struggles;

5- all the above factors have given rise to the legitimate hatred of large masses of workers towards this reactionary institution. But the fact that the Islamic Councils operate legally and rely on state and legal facilities, creates the tendency for the conservative and reformist currents to support and cooperate with them. Apart from the Tudeh Party and Fedaiien (Majority) which from the very outset have followed the policy of compromise and cooperation with

THE MILITARY PRESENCE OF THE U.S.A IN THE GULF

Interview with comrade Abdollah Mohtadi

The following interview has been translated from **Komunist** (central organ of the CPI), No. 36, Feb. '88.

* * *

Q: What were in general terms the reasons behind the recent resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Iran on "the military presence of the U.S.A. in the Gulf"? Could you also highlight the important aspects of this resolution and what made it necessary?

A: First of all, the U.S.A.'s move to dispatch her task force to the Gulf, followed by the rest of the western countries, and their war manoeuvres have not been minor issues. The CPI must declare its political position on this question and condemn the intervention and aggression of U.S. imperialism. There were also specific factors and reasons which necessitated the declaration of our party's position:

Firstly, the U.S. imperialism's very show of power could have allowed the Islamic Republic to present herself to the workers and people of the world as a revolutionary state, and pan-Islamism as a revolutionary and anti-imperialist movement. This has been

the Islamic Councils, certain reformist currents, too, consider the Islamic Councils a means for the realisation of workers' demands through public and legal channels. The whole of this tendency thus aids an objective of the regime, i.e., breeding illusions among the workers;

With regard to the above points, we re-assess the policy of the CPI so far in relation to the Islamic Councils. Our standpoint and policy with regard to the Islamic Councils is boycotting these reactionary institutions, working for their dissolution, and building independent workers' organisations and institutions against them. On the basis of this policy, the CPI calls on the communist and militant workers to set themselves the following tasks:

- 1- constantly agitating and calling on workers not to participate in Islamic Council elections and to boycott them fully;
- 2- constantly agitating the slogan "Dissolve the Islamic Councils!" and dispelling the illusion that the Islamic Councils may be useful instruments in workers' struggles;
- 3- the explanation and exposure of the place of Islamic Councils in the anti-workers policies of the

especially the case after the disgraceful revelation of the Iran-Contra affair which exposed the dealings and collusion of the Islamic regime with the Reagan Administration and the Israeli state. The propaganda aspect of this event acted in favour of the Islamic regime, who tried very hard to use this situation to boost its own image. We wanted to clearly declare that this move by American imperialism - which must be condemned - must not give rise to any excuse for supporting the Islamic Republic.

Secondly, the whole event was causing confusion about the Islamic regime of Iran amongst some of the left currents in the imperialist countries, leading to vacillations in supporting the struggles of the Iranian working class and toilers to overthrow the regime, under the pretext that the Iranian state is standing up to American aggression. This was another factor which made it essential for the CPI to declare its clear position in defence of the legitimacy of the struggle of Iranian working class for the overthrow of the Islamic regime, and also to clear this confusion as well as exposing those opportunist tactics.

Q: You only mentioned the left in the imperialist countries. Are we not faced with any

Islamic Republic and the aims the regime is following through them;

- 4- the exposure of the anti-working-class and divisive character of the Islamic Councils, the political reaction they serve, and their blocking effect in the economic struggles;
- 5- the condemnation of any form of state intervention in workers' organisations, and the advocacy of and struggle to create workers' organisations independent from the state;
- 6- calling on workers to establish general assemblies in the workplaces as the only genuine and independent working-class alternative to the Islamic Councils;
- 7- the exposure of currents which in one way or another invite workers to reconcile and to come to terms with the Islamic Councils, and which follow a vacillating policy towards these organs;
- 8- putting forward and agitating the radical economic demands of the working class, and calling workers to an independent and self-reliant struggle for the realisation of these demands; resisting the distortion and reduction of these demands by the Islamic Councils.

opportunism amongst the Iranian left on this matter?

A: Because of its nationalist and populist beliefs, the traditional petit-bourgeois left in Iran has always shown its talent to tail bourgeoisie's actions. In the recent period, it demonstrated its inability in understanding the independent politics and interests of workers and the true meaning of anti-imperialist struggle, for a long time the real course of the class struggle in Iran, however, has left no room for any support of the Islamic Republic.

Even a current like the Tudeh Party was criticised by another section of the same trend when it condemned the military presence of the U.S.A. in the Gulf, without calling for the overthrow of the Islamic Republic.

Q: Some say that dispatching the U.S. warships was an attempt intended to end the Iran-Iraq war, secure the international waterways, and strengthen the position of U.S. imperialism in the Gulf region. It has even been suggested that America's move was a consequence of Kuwait's decision to ask Soviet Union to protect her ships against any attack by the Islamic regime. What objectives are, in your opinion, being pursued by the U.S. military presence in the Gulf?

A: In general terms, dispatching the warships to the Persian Gulf is part of a general policy that U.S. imperialism is pursuing in the Gulf area.

The aim of this policy is to make up for all the defeats and retreats forced on it as a result of different revolutions in the world, from Vietnam to date; to revive the world domination and supremacy of U.S. imperialism which has been severely damaged; and to establish a worldwide dictatorship and suppression essential for the profitable operation of imperialist capital. Many examples of such an operation can be seen in various places:

- Organising and maintaining the armed counter-revolutionaries known as Contras (who are directly financed and run with the money and orders of the CIA) on the Nicaraguan borders to threaten the people and revolution in Nicaragua and to defeat or force them to compromise; mining the Nicaraguan ports and imposing an economic siege.
- Occupation of Granada
- Armed invasion and bombing of Libya
- Dispatching warships and marines to Lebanon - who left the country some time later
- Aircraft hijackings
- etc.

Interestingly enough the unbridled and arbitrary - but state - terrorism of U.S. imperialism is taking place under the banner of anti-terrorism! This diplomacy of aggression - that does not enjoy any legal excuses usually given by imperialists in order to justify

their invasions and aggression - makes up U.S.A.'s new policy of world hegemony and, as usual, has two aspects:

One is against revolution and working class and for strengthening imperialist subjugation in different countries; it is for maintaining and protecting Fascist systems and regimes, dictatorships and military rulers serving capital everywhere. The other aspect, which has always formed a fixed part of the U.S. foreign policy, is to counter the Soviet Union.

This is the policy that is being pursued in the Reagan era despite its recent ill-results and often counter-effects. The dispatching of the U.S. navy should, in my opinion, be seen in the context of such a general policy of the U.S.A.

Naturally such an explanation is not sufficient, and only shows in the context of which general policy and world strategy of U.S. imperialism this action is being done. The specific reasons and objectives of this move must also be considered.

Undoubtedly one of America's objectives in sending her warships to the Gulf is to counter the Soviet influence. As you said yourself, it was Kuwait who first asked the U.S.S.R. to protect her ships. It was obvious that this action would more seriously bring the Soviets into the Gulf and consequently increase their role in settling the Iran-Iraq war as well as their influence in the Arab countries of the region.

As we saw the U.S. reacted rapidly and took Kuwaiti ships completely under its own protection. Whether Kuwait really wanted to use the protection of her ships under the Soviet flag and Soviet navy, or intended to benefit from the U.S. rivalry, is a secondary matter. What did happen was that America quickly moved to make use of the situation.

But this question of imperialistic rivalry of the U.S. and Soviet Union in the region is itself particularly connected with another factor known as the crisis in the 'American-Arab trust', brought about after the disclosure of the Iran-gate affair. The exposure of America's and Israel's long-term secret relations with the Islamic regime and their major role in providing arms for Iran, and that this had been the official policy of the Reagan Administration, could not only exacerbate the anti-American feelings amongst the Arab masses, but also damage America's relationship with the bourgeois Arab states. This would in turn make these states - who are usually relied upon by the U.S. to oppose revolution and the Soviet Union - move away from the U.S. and get closer to the U.S.S.R.

Therefore, America needed to re-strengthen her relationship with them and regain their trust due to its world rivalry with the Soviet Union in the Persian Gulf region and the middleast, and also because of the role that these states play in protecting the present situation and the economical and political conditions favourable to the imperialist capital.

Dispatching the task force to the Gulf and mobilising European Imperialist powers behind it was

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intended to prevent the Soviet Union from finding influence in the region, and also to give assurance to the Arab states about the American strength and support.

You also asked about the objectives that these actors pursue in relation to the Iran-Iraq war. Here, I am not going to talk about the war itself or of the phases it has gone through. I'll just mention the point that, as you know, this war reached a complete dead-end last year. It is still militarily in a dead-end despite the recent events which have merely had temporary results, and cannot affect the fate of the war.

The following factors, however, made the political and diplomatic solution to end the Iran-Iraq war favourable to the imperialists: the war being in a stalemate and the inevitable inability of the Islamic Republic to create a serious change in the fronts and to show a perspective for victory; the gravity of the country's financial and economical situation; the threatening intensification of people's dissatisfaction and hatred toward the continuation of this war, and the realisation of this fact by the Islamic Republic and the imperialists; the compulsory break in the dealing with the Reagan administration; the further extension of the war to the gulf waters, endangering the oil installations and the transport of oil and generally international trade; the increasing hostility of the local Arab states towards the Islamic Republic, increasing the possibility of collision and break up of the existing status-quo.

The issuing of the U.N. Security Council resolution and the diplomatic actions by the General Secretary of the U.N. took place under these conditions. In their own words, the policy of western imperialists, with which the Soviets seem to be in general agreement, is that this war must not have a definite winner or loser; since the defeat of one side and the victory of the other would create a situation which is not in accordance with the economic and political interests of imperialists.

The defeat of the Islamic regime can lead to a revolutionary crisis and a revolutionary uprising of the workers and oppressed classes, considering the grave economic and political conditions that have been imposed upon them, their deep hatred of this regime, the experience of the last revolution in Iran, and the regime's internal disagreements. Such an uprising is what the imperialists have been most fearful of for years.

Iran's defeat, on the other hand, can unleash a wave of pan-Islamism in the region and the Middleast. It can also act against the present status quo in the region and weaken the stable and powerful hold of the Arab bourgeoisie and existing Arab states. Moreover, Iran's defeat can lead to the disintegration of the country, or fan the revolution due to the internal differences, contradictory tendencies, and national

tensions in Iraq. In any case the outcome of this defeat would endanger the interests of the imperialists from different aspects. Imperialists do not want a serious disturbance in the existing situation in Iraq. They prefer to seek their interests through reforms and internal governmental changes in Iran and Iraq. They do not consider the downfall of the existing states in either country beneficial.

Therefore in relation to the Iran-Iraq war, the dispatching of the American warships was intended not to let the war take on such dimensions that it gets out of imperialists' control and results in any serious damage to their interests.

Another main objective for the military presence of the U.S. and Western imperialist powers is the oil, and economic ends in general.

A major part of the world oil is produced and exported from this region which cannot be easily ignored by Western imperialist countries. Although Gulf's oil flows only a small part of U.S. needs, it is very important to Europe and vital for Japan. It is therefore not without any reason that Japan sponsors the American warships.

Undoubtedly one factor that European countries seek diplomatic solution to end the war and rally behind the U.S. in the region, is the fear of the Iran-Iraq war spreading to the Gulf and seriously endangering the export of oil, and international trade in general. To them a drop of oil is more important than the blood of hundreds of thousands of human beings which spills in vain, for the sake of bourgeois rivalries.

Q: Do you think that after the revelation of the Iran-Contra disgrace and following the military presence of the U.S. in the Persian Gulf, the relation between the Islamic regime and U.S. imperialism has entered a new phase - one of encounter and confrontation?

A: If we compare the methods employed during the period of secret diplomacy with the methods used when with the U.S. warships were sent to the Gulf, we will undoubtedly detect different phases in the relations between the Islamic regime of Iran and the Reagan administration. But, if we look at the strategy of the U.S. and generally western imperialists towards the Islamic Republic, to my mind we shall see no changes whatsoever during this period.

In my opinion, imperialists began to recognise the Islamic Republic as the existing regime in Iran after June 1981, when the regime had inflicted severe blows on the Iranian revolution, had rid itself of its contradictory fractions, defeated the opposition, and stood on its own two feet. Since then, they have also tried to influence the regime's direction in bringing about a future suitable for imperialism; to eliminate and/or reform those aspects of pan-Islamism which de-stabilise the status quo in the region, and are thus harmful to imperialism; to create changes in the regime's methods; and ultimately, to make the regime a component of their general system in the region.

Naturally for reasons beyond the limits of this interview, the imperialists' adopted strategy towards the Islamic Republic has not been uniform nor without contradictions, but the above has been the dominant strategy in the mentioned period.

The American policy during the period of secret diplomacy and sale of arms to Iran was intended to channel the Islamic regime in a direction favourable to the U.S.A. This so called policy of "secretly disclosed approval" of the side of both the Islamic regime and the Reagan Administration and due to factors out of their control, and inevitably could not continue despite the reluctance of both sides. This policy was therefore replaced with a policy of show of strength towards the Islamic regime which again served exactly the same objectives, but in a different manner and by different means. The essence of American imperialism's general policy towards the Islamic Republic has not changed.

You asked if the present period could be called one of hostile encounters; although the possibility of a confrontation cannot be ruled out, it is certain that preventing the collapse of the Islamic regime has been a fixed policy of the imperialists during the last few years. They have simultaneously tried to make the Islamic regime accept certain "reforms". This policy is still being pursued.

Apart from the extensive trade of all western countries with Iran, there have also been many illegal dealings between the Islamic regime and scores of European arms manufacturing companies. These contracts have been carried out and are still being carried out under the rose of their respective governments and in some cases even with the partnership and cooperation of these governments. Would all this be possible if a revolutionary state was in power in Iran, when relations are truly hostile?

Had the imperialists wished the regime's collapse, or even wanted to put it under serious pressure, they could easily have boycotted the purchase of oil as they did once before when they were not satisfied with the political situation in Iran. Considering the country's grave economic and financial conditions coupled with the continuation of the war, the Islamic regime is in such a state that a boycott of oil would finish it off in weeks rather than months.

For the imperialists it is very easy to temporarily suspend their immediate economic interests in favour of their long-term, political interests. They have adopted this attitude against revolutions many times in the past. But, why should they do so now?

The Islamic regime, too, has understood this situation very well, and deceitfully uses anti-American slogans and expressions. For imperialists, however, what counts is real deeds rather than words.

Q: The question of banning the sale of arms to Iran was raised in the UN Security Council after the rejection of the UN resolution by Iran, and when at least a period of diplomatic attempts reached a dead-end. The Soviet Union

and to an extent China disagreed with the issuing of a resolution in this regard. The Soviet's condition to accepting the resolution was that the U.S. and the West's warships leave the Gulf and be replaced by a multinational force under UN command. Putting the technical aspects of this question aside, it has been said that the Americans are considering this proposal and might even accept it. If the U.S. accepts this proposal, then how can it achieve those objectives for which it had sent its navy to the Gulf? And what form would the whole matter take then?

A: First of all, in my opinion U.S. imperialism has already achieved part of its objectives. And in any case, it is quite obvious that the UN does not have a task force of its own, and only different countries can provide for such an international force, of whom the U.S. will certainly be the major contributor.

Such a proposal from the Soviet side clearly indicates that they too want to have a share in the whole affair. America's acceptance of this offer could therefore mean the recognition of a certain degree of Soviet influence and intervention which the U.S. considers to be necessary or favourable; i.e., with respect to their general relationships, agreements and strategy towards each other - not limited to the Persian Gulf. This of course will weaken the sole lead of the U.S.

But if the U.S. is to accept this proposal, it would practically mean that there will be a simultaneous presence of the warships of all the major countries: the U.S., Soviet and European. A multinational force is a form and cover allowing the joint intervention of all the imperialist powers. That the imperialists are carrying out their policies and interests under the banner of the UN is no a new thing; nor is their deals and agreements or the degree of their individual intervention and influence.

I would also like to mention that the Soviet policy on this issue has demonstrated a typical political deceitfulness and opportunism for imperialistic interests. Initially the Soviet state repeatedly held Iran responsible for the continuation of the war, and was preparing to protect the Kuwaiti ships against Iranian threats. But as soon as the U.S. got moving and entered the scene, the USSR swiftly slid into opposition, began condemning the U.S. intervention, and recommended patience rather than a military boycott of Iran. Eventually, considering the needs of the USA and the West, on the one hand, and the Islamic regime on the other, the Soviets set on gaining political concessions from the West and economic concessions from Iran, but naturally this time on the other side of the fence in the region!

Q: Do you think the presence of the U.S. warships in the Gulf could cause new illusions among the masses towards the Islamic regime?

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At Iranian workers and toilers have had bitter experiences and suffered many sacrifices. For years they have felt the bitter taste of living under the rule of the Islamic regime with their own flesh and blood. They have felt poverty, lack of rights, unemployment, and homelessness as a consequence of its rule. They have witnessed many stage-shows put on by the Islamic Republic, and to them nothing can justify the ugly reality of this regime. They are longing for the regime's overthrow. Therefore creating illusions amongst the Iranian workers and toilers is hardly the question, but the USA's presence does give the Islamic Republic an excuse to step up its war recruitments, and increase the pressures imposed by the war, etc. The situation, from this aspect, is also against the workers and oppressed people.

Q: Earlier on you mentioned the background to the confusion and opportunist position of some of the left groups in the imperialist countries. How do these opportunist policies manifest and justify themselves? Can you explain a bit more about these groups and their positions.

At Before anything else, I must say that by left groups I do not mean the official and traditional parties who practice under the name of communist parties. In all European countries these are thoroughly bourgeois currents and their policies have always, and not only in this particular case, been opportunistic.

They are left nationalist parties who support their own bourgeoisie and national interests; they are parliamentary and reformist. It is hardly surprising to see them take opportunist positions. Iranian workers and communists should know these parties and settle matters with them.

Here by the left we mean those groups and currents who, in any case, are to the left of official parties and call the latter reformist. These groups are generally associated with Trotskyism, and are mostly intellectual groups without much influence within the working class.

In order to show a typical example of their method of reasoning on this matter, I take the current known as the Socialist Workers Party in Britain. The SWP, which usually follows a liberal line on particular policies and political tactics, believes that no support should be given to the workers' strikes in Iran since the Islamic regime is presently in conflict with the U.S. imperialism; and that the Iranian workers should avoid for example strikes which harm the war efforts of the Islamic Republic directed against the

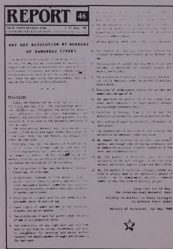
imperialists. They say that the imperialists are imposing peace, and that such an imposed peace should be opposed, but of course, according to them, without supporting the war efforts of the Islamic regime!

Naturally the real meaning of these senseless and opportunist positions is nothing but an attempt to rehabilitate the Islamic Republic and to conceal the regime's fundamental common interests with imperialism and the fact that they both belong to a counter-revolutionary and anti-workers' camp. It is to cover up the shameless dealings of the Islamic regime with the Reagan Administration and Israel and to justify and whitewash the Iran-Iraq war as an "anti-imperialist struggle". It is to ignore the sufferings and loss of lives that this war has imposed upon the people of both Iran and Iraq, and to advise the Iranian working class to put aside its independent class interests and serve its "own" bourgeoisie instead.

Naturally the Iranian communists should oppose these opportunist tendencies, not let the disgraceful image of the capitalist Islamic regime be depicted in rosy colours, and explain the standpoint of revolutionary and communist workers of Iran.

But this is not the duty of Iranian communists alone. The revolutionary communist currents should also, by practicing their internationalist duty, show that it is not enough to oppose their imperialist states. Whoever believes in the working class and its revolution should not only condemn the dispatching of the warships and the imperialists' intervention, but must also support the struggle of the Iranian working class against the war, against the Islamic Republic and for workers' revolution.

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

MASS ORGANISATION OF THE WORKING CLASS

Interview with comrade Mansoor Hekmat

The following interview has been translated from *Komunist* (Central organ of the CPI), No. 37, March '88.

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Q: In the first part of the resolution it is stated that the Iranian working class has historically been deprived of its open, mass organisations. What are the main causes of this? And taking these factors into account, why should the council form of organisation be able to develop widely and on a consistent basis? Is the difference between the council form of organisation and other models of mass organisation so great as to let it overcome these hindrances in reality? Has the council organisation in itself a greater resistance to bourgeoisie's encroachments?

At Let me say this first that the "historical deprivation" of the Iranian working class of mass organisations is not something absolute. There have been periods in the history of the workers' movement in Iran where there have emerged and developed various forms of workers' mass organisations; for instance in the period before the Reza Khan* dictatorship, in the post-WWI era until the 19 August coup d'état**, and finally, during the 1979 revolution. Nevertheless, if we take the past 20 to 30 years (that is, the experience of the last one to two generations of workers), as our reference period, we notice big differences in the degree of mass organisation of workers in Iran and that of other countries. This is the case in comparison not only with the more advanced capitalist countries but also with many of the dominated.

The reasons for this situation are several and we can talk about them at different levels. The first factors which come to mind are these: firstly, the rapid change in the composition of the working class after the land reforms of the 1960s and the consequential entry of a large part of the rural population into the labour market in towns. This phenomenon both intensified the competition among workers (which subsided only in the mid-seventies with the rise in oil prices and in job availability), and affected the self-consciousness of the working class as a class. The experience of the past trade-union struggles was limited to particular trades and professions, for example textiles and printing, which in the '60s and '70s lost their status both in production and, to a

large extent, in the number of workers they employed. The new generation of Iran's wage-workers grew along with new industries, various technologies, and new branches of production. The organisational traditions of the past decades - which were of very significant anyway - were undermined in the new conditions. A young working class, a large section of which had not been schooled in the tradition of organised workers' struggles and which had not been greatly influenced by the history of organised workers' struggles, arrived at the scene. The other factor is the more or less permanent existence of severe political repression and the rule of suppressive police regimes in Iran in the 20th century which only at certain periods - periods of political crises - has declined. The efforts of the workers' movement in Iran to get organised and remain organised has always been met with the most aggressive police suppressions. The leaders and activists of the workers' movement have been persecuted most severely.

These are the general factors which have made the emergence and persistence of workers' organisations in Iran difficult. But they still do not precisely answer the question. We may still ask why the workers' movement has not been able to overcome these limitations? Here then we should speak more specifically about "mass organisations". And this is related to the second part of your question. You talked of councils and unions as "models" of mass organisation, but the truth is that councils, unions, factory committees, etc. are not just "models" of mass organisation. They are not schemes which supposedly meet a single requirement and of which workers can choose the more suitable one. Unions and councils are the alternatives of different social movements and different tendencies in the class movement. In other words, they should not

be seen as abstract organisational models and plans, outside of time and place, and lacking a definite history and a socio-historical content. The trade-union movement, the council movement, the factory-committee movement, etc. are distinct movements inside the working class. They represent different political contents and practical horizons. Even their support in various layers of the working class is not the same. So the question should be put more concretely. Why has the syndicalist and trade-unionist movement not succeeded in Iran? Or, why has the council movement not been able to meet the needs of the mass organisation of workers? Here then we should go beyond the discussion of general obstacles and difficulties. We should examine the dynamism and the problems of these movements themselves.

If we look at the question in this way, we see at once that actual movements for the mass organisation of workers are parts of larger social movements which

* The previous shah's father-EM

** The coup in Aug. 19, 1953 by which the Shah came to power-EM

FREEDOM, EQUALITY, WORKERS' RULE !

MASS ORGANISATION OF THE WORKING CLASS

Interview with comrade Masoor Bekmat

have their particular alternatives not only regarding the form of working-class organisation but also on the entire economic and political situation in the society. The trade-unionist and council movements are parts of wider movements for making changes in the whole of society in definite directions. We should discard the traditional naive view common in the Left, that supposedly political parties represent the conscious political struggle, whereas workers' organisations express the "spontaneous" activity of workers for improvements in their conditions. The truth is that even if trade-unionism and the trade-unionist movement was, at its infancy in the last century, a "spontaneous" movement (which it was not), it is decades since it has become an integral part of a general social policy, i.e., of reformism and social-democracy. Trade-unionism is the particular alternative of reformism and social-democracy, as a definite, well-defined politico-class current, for the organisation of workers. This alternative goes much further than the workers' and trade-union sphere. With it also comes a definite perspective on the whole state form, on the forms and methods of economic decision-making, on even particular economic theories and plans. If you delete the other parts of this reformist and social-democratic social alternative, then trade-unionism comes by itself into turn into a large movement. The trade-unionist movement is the working-class wing of a political-social movement which requires other components: political leaders and parties, economic alternatives for the entire society, its own particular administrative system, etc. The deprivation of Iranian workers of trade-unions is not only because the bourgeoisie has prevented their formation. It is essentially due to the fact that - at least since after the 19 August coup d'état - reformism in Iran has reached the end of a decisive period in its political life and does not, after that time, occupy a significant place in the Iranian political scene.

This holds true in the case of the council movement too. The council movement is not a model either. It is the alternative of a particular social current and a particular tendency within the working class for the organisation of workers. Although, historically, councils have largely been the centre of attention of bourgeois times that they have increasingly become identified and linked with communism. Events such as the Paris Commune and the October Revolution have linked the idea of councils, and of workers' organising on a council basis, with communist theory and politics. Thus the council movement, too, is part of a distinct social movement with its own particular political, economic, and administrative perspective.

The state of affairs of the council movement is also precisely related to the state of affairs of communism in Iran. The fact that in the 1979 Revolution the council idea triumphed over the idea of trade-unions,

reflects the looseness and weakness of reformism and social-democracy and the overall prevalence (under revolutionary conditions) of general communist ideas and radical politics among workers. The fact that this council movement could not obtain the necessary vigour and scale was due to the particular theoretical and practical limitations of communism in Iran at that specific period.

In short, the discussion about unions and councils is not over choosing one or other "model" of workers' mass organisation. It is, rather, the reflection of the struggle of the alternatives of two basic tendencies inside the working class: the communist and radical tendency, on the one hand, and the reformist and social-democratic tendency, on the other. If, in our view, councils (compared to unions) have a much more favourable material basis for growth and development in Iran, this is not merely due to the suitability of that particular organisational model. The greater suitability of the council form is due to the prevalence of radical tendencies among vanguard workers and workers' practical need for the more favourable material conditions which exist for the spread of communist politics inside the working class, as against social-democratic and reformist politics. This is not just our claim. This is proved by the experience of the 1979 Revolution, the practice of vanguard workers, the state of trade-unionist movements compared with that of council movements, and, today, by the increasing role of workers' general assemblies in workers' current struggles.

Let us say that this does not mean that communists have no place for trade-unions in their politics or that they should not be (or have not historically been) activists of the trade-union movement. The point I'm trying to make is that communists have always seen trade-unions and acknowledged their existence as objective realities in the workers' movement, as the product of the practice of non-communist social tendencies among workers. That is why in communist literature we are always faced with the question of communists' "attitude" to the trade-unionist movement, and rarely with the setting up of trade-unionist movements by communists. (The experience of Comintern's Red Syndicates too was precisely an attempt to form a radical alternative against the actually existing trade-unionism which was under the influence of social-democracy.) The truth is that trade-unionism is not the special alternative of communism for workers' organisation. The special alternative of communism is the council movement. Nevertheless, on many occasions and under certain social conditions, communists have been faced with the task of active participation in workers' unions and even of attempting to create unions. They have always been the active elements of the trade-union movement; but the history of the workers' movement shows that wherever communist politics has become the overriding politics of the workers' movement, councils have emerged and developed.

So, our defence of the council is not merely

because there exists a stronger argument in its favour concerning its practicability or because it withstands the bourgeoisie's attacks more effectively. Even if this was not the case we should try to make it so. We are, as communists, once again putting forward our alternative of our movement for the organisation of the class. I say "once again", because the history of the labour movement has always been the scene of confrontation of the communist and the reformist alternatives in the field of workers' organisation and workers' action. The fact that trade-unions in advanced capitalist countries have become more efficient [organisational] forms for unifying the workers (of course, with trade-unionist perspectives and narrowness), this has not been because workers have first pondered over the features of these "models" and then thought the trade-union to be the more suitable form. Rather, with regard to capitalist stability after WWII, with regard to the support the left wing of the bourgeoisie has given to reformism in these countries, and with regard to the formation of successive social-democratic governments in European countries, radical politics as a whole has retreated before reformist politics. We can see this conflict between these two lines better in conditions of revolution and crisis. After the October revolution, the confrontation between the trade-unions and the Soviets and factory-committees heightened. Likewise, today, we see how along with the weakening of the trade-union movement in Western Europe, attempts for creating workers' alternatives for mass organisation outside the union structure have increased.

We are again advancing our particular alternative, without turning our backs to the trade-union movement (if one exists) or denying its desirability (with regard to the present situation of Iranian workers). No doubt, if trade-unions existed in the present-day Iran - even reformist ones - this would count as a significant advantage for the Iranian working class. Communists would certainly intervene widely in these unions. The workers' conditions would no doubt be better than now. But the whole point is over this "if". The trade-union movement is even less likely to turn into a material entity than the council movement. Under such conditions there is no reason for the radical-socialist worker not directly advancing his own alternative; the alternative which owing to the specific conditions in Iran, mentioned in the resolution, enjoys even greater sympathy among the workers, and for the formation of which such material has already been created. We say councils provide more class-oriented methods for workers' organisations; they express workers' direct will better; they create a firmer unity; they do not increase the splits among workers due to trade and craft; they allow less opportunity for the influence of bourgeois politics; they are better forms for the expression of working-class radicalism; they have historically been advanced by communists; they enjoy better conditions for development in Iran, and so on. We therefore consider ourselves the activists of the council movement in Iran and call on the workers to

struggle for the formation of councils.

Q: Experience has shown that even when workers' organisations impose themselves on the bourgeoisie, and the state is compelled to acknowledge their existence, systematic efforts are made to restrain them from within so that they would no longer function as independent organs of workers' struggle. Is it not possible that workers' council organisation meets the same end, as some unions in Europe and the USA have done?

A: We have experienced this in the case of unions. But there are few examples of councils which, having become restrained from "within", have still continued to exist. Councils, as we expect them to be, i.e., as organs of workers' direct action and direct democracy, would, as a rule, be disbanded and shut down, with the supremacy of the bourgeoisie. It is of course possible to conceive of a situation where the councils gradually lose their real content. But since for the bourgeoisie, too, the council is not just an organisational form but a real radical movement which should be suppressed, the weakness of the councils and the supremacy of reaction has usually led to the crushing and banning of councils and the appearance of more conservative and manageable forms of workers' organisation.

Q: So a logical continuation of this discussion would be the question of whether councils can retain their existence and militancy as workers' mass organisations in non-revolutionary periods, too. In non-revolutionary times and when political repression is the order of the day, workers' conscious representatives and radical leaders practically cannot show up in workers' general assemblies - or do so on a consistent basis. This leaves the field open to compromising and conservative leaders to drag the working masses, even if they are organised in councils, behind the bourgeoisie. Can it really be possible that under a dark repression there can exist mass organisations which by their own definition, "do not want to remain within the framework of the existing laws"?

A: Whether a mass organisation remains militant under non-reactionary conditions depends on many factors. We should see how the social balance of forces is; to what extent the legal framework for struggle has been constrained; how deeply rooted the traditions of workers' struggles are; what policies the leaders of workers at that period of time are following; and, generally, what the meaning and dimension of militancy under those conditions is. Nevertheless, as the experience of the trade-union movements shows - generally in a negative sense - the continuity and militancy of a mass organisation

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entirely depends on how long it can keep the working masses in the arena of struggle, how long it can remain an instrument of broad, mass struggle, and how far it can involve the workers in making decisions and policies and in implementing them. Thus the council is still the best suited organisational form, since, unlike the experience of many trade-unions, it's raison d'être is the organisation of workers' mass action and their existence as a mass force.

Anyway, this is a very abstract and hypothetical way of putting the question. The Communist Party of Iran is calling the workers to the general-assembly and council movement at a particular time and place, in a particular country, and at a particular juncture of the class struggles in Iran. That dark reaction and non-revolutionary situation already exists. Workers' current struggles are already being waged not by trade-unions which have accepted bourgeois legality, but by workers who are prepared to exceed the limitation of legal possibilities (which are insignificant in Iran). They are prepared to hold general assemblies illegally, in defiance of state orders, and under the nose of its henchmen; they are prepared to strike, demonstrate, etc. illegally. If someone comes along and forms a union in any other way, i.e., in a "legal" way, which, by state approval, has the right to strike legally, reject the labour-law and mobilize the workers against it, shut down all Islamic Societies and Islamic Councils and give the workers' leaders a free hand, we shall be the first people to welcome him on that point.

But the point is that the existing trade-union must be enforced on the state. The existing repression is so tight and severe that any protest by workers is illegal. Under such circumstances, that movement corresponds with reality that is able to lead, organise, and unify the existing, illegal, workers' struggles. A movement which can impose workers' basic rights on the bourgeoisie and its laws. This is a council movement, the general-assembly movement, and not a movement which first presupposes legal recognition by the existing despotic state. The trade-union movement needs a degree of state bourgeois legality and a degree of legal freedom of action which has seldom existed in Iran and today exists less than any other time. We consider the workers' legal struggles to be of vital significance. But this cannot mean giving priority to trade-union policy over council policy. Let me point out that today no one, save the Tudeh-ist and Fedaiien (Majority) trend, entertains such illusions. Any syndicalist who wants, to any degree, to be realist, and hence radical, would understand that even the building of unions requires a broad "illegal" struggle by workers, with its own "[illegal]" organisation. Thus, some now talk about "clandestine unions", i.e., illegal, secret unions; unions which are not mass organisations. This, of course, is to undermine altogether the initial purpose,

since the discussion on councils and unions was supposed to deal with the question of workers' public and mass organisation. What we are saying is that even under the present bourgeois-Islamic despotism it is possible to build open, mass workers' organisations which force themselves on to the state. Such organisations would no doubt have intimate contacts with secret party organisations and clandestine groupings of vanguard workers.

The solution to the problem is neither legal, nor clandestine unions. The first is illusion-breeding and confusing; it expresses the illusions of the defeat reformism in Iran. The second is another confirmation of the incapability of Iranian popular socialism in understanding the needs of the workers' struggle in its mass-public dimension. It is an idealist and intellectualist alternative, irrelevant to the question under discussion. The true path, the communist alternative, is the general-assembly movement and - as it develops - the workers' councils movement. To discuss what would happen to such a movement in the wake of a defeated revolution is not something that helps clarify the point at issue here.

Q: In the introduction to the resolution, syndicalist tendencies have been equated with conservative tendencies and mentioned in a negative sense. Independently of the role which syndicalism can play in various historical periods and indifferent conditions of the workers' movement, is it a negative tendency in the workers' movement?

A: The preamble to the general section of the resolution makes no direct reference to trade-unions. Perhaps you mean the introduction to the last part of the resolution (section "D" on trade-unions). But even there syndicalism as a whole has not been mentioned as a negative tendency. It is a question of observing an already experienced course where the weak points of the trade-unions stand out. The experience of trade-unions to date, i.e., the syndicalist history, is not the history of the intentions of trade-unionists. It is the history of the trade-unions themselves. Such facts as: the inability to create a broad class unity; drawing close to, as far as an intimate relationship with reformist, social-democratic parties and politics; abandoning direct democracy; the creation of a bureaucratic administrative system (as far as appointing life-long bosses in some unions, and the powerlessness of rank-and-file meetings and sessions), etc. which have been briefly mentioned in the resolution, are characteristic features of trade-unionism as it has practically been up to now. But none of these is enough to justify the claim that syndicalism as a whole is a "negative tendency". The role of trade-unions should be assessed in a particular social and historical setting. Most often trade-unions have been the workers' only instruments of struggle. Today the British miner in effect has no other means than the NUM to defend his rights. In South Africa unions play

a much more advanced role than unions in Western Europe. Whatever their faults may be, these organisations at certain junctures are workers' instruments of struggle. The question, however, is how are we assessing the trade-unionist form of organisation? In comparison with which alternative? In what context? After the October revolution the trade-unions in Russia became, for a certain time, a refuge for compromising and reformist tendencies. For Iranian workers today the existence of one effective union - even if it defends the rights of only one section of workers - is a positive and valuable gain. But if we are talking at a time when such unions do not exist, when the general-assembly and council movement provides more realistic alternatives, we cannot any longer orientate the axis of the policy of a workers' party to building unions, with the argument that "after all, union is better than nothing".

Q: The trade-union supporters' attempts to build unions in circumstances where workers lack any form of mass organisation, does not necessarily mean that they want to remain within the limits of capitalist society. Their argument may be: "If organising workers on a mass basis is the chief issue then we ought to choose this known form of organisation, for it is easier to make the state accept its existence. This can be done, and we have many examples which show that it is practical. The existence, when society and the working class turn to revolution, the union too will assume a non-standard function, a function which corresponds with the new circumstances." What do you say in response to this argument?

A: Let us first settle one question. Is the union a "known form of organisation", or is it an organisation which changes by the whim of its founders?

I think the first is true. Union is a known form of workers' organisation. Thus, there is little practical value in the promises of the ad hoc committee of our hypothetical trade-union that its method of work would change in revolutionary times; that it would become, for instance, more radical or work in other capacities and in other ways. Just as we cannot build a reformist party today, on the grounds that there is repression, and promise that we would in time, on the eve of the revolution, convert it into a communist party, so the trade-union advocates cannot form a legal union (i.e., one which may be enforced on the state) today and promise that the day after the political crisis they would turn it into an organ of direct mass power and action. The course of the class struggle does not accept such scenarios. It is not the founders of unions who determine the union's future. It is, rather, the features of the union movement itself and the union's capacities as a "known form of organisation" which condition the scale of its future political action and struggle, and determine its

leaders and the workers organised in it. The trade-union movement, to the extent that it is anyway capable of contributing to the development of workers' political consciousness, trains workers in a trade-unionist spirit and perspective. It is the trade-union's own definition of itself and its social position which brings to the foreground and trains the people and activists appropriate to it. I don't know if any group has actually advanced the hypothetical argument in defence of the union which you mentioned, but, anyway, my reply would be that such an argument is based on a subjective and voluntarist conception of the characteristics of social movements in general, and of the workers' movement, in particular.

However, the main point I'm making is that such a reasoning basically does not solve the problem, since, in my view, the suitability of a mass organisation in Iran today is not judged by whether on the morrow of revolution it would definitely function as workers' organ of revolutionary action. Even a workers' cooperative and a workers' fund has its value for us. So this is not the issue. The issue is whether this alternative is realistic and serious with respect to the existing level of workers' struggles and their demands and the social-political situation; and how valuable it is, compared with the radical socialist alternative, even for the current situation. We have not become advocates of councils because "tomorrow" they will act revolutionarily, while unions will not; but because already the council and general-assembly movement has the capacity to organise workers for the defence of their rights and interests. Of course, I should again point out that the syndicalists who really want to act in a revolutionary way tomorrow, today speak, unlike the example you mentioned, not of legal mass unions, but of clandestine unions. And as I said, this means going against the original purpose and avoiding the question of Iranian workers' need for mass organisations with capacity for extensive and effective legal struggle; something which we think the general-assembly movement can meet.

Q: With regard to what you have said, please elaborate a little more, in the practical aspect, on the point in the resolution which says that we support workers' attempts to build unions. Does not the simultaneous attempt to form council organisation, and active support to workers who want to build unions, pose practical problems?

A: We support workers' efforts to build unions since the mere expression of support by the party to the council form of organisation, and the mere orientation of radical and communist workers to the general-assembly movement and the council-movement's alternative, would not result in all workers rallying behind us. Our class will continue to build strongholds against the bourgeoisie in different forms. One such form is the attempt to build unions, whether secret or public, etc. We support and endeavour to strengthen all such attempts by the working class. We will not

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undo the slightest organisational advance by workers in the course of struggle. Rather, by our intervention, by our support, and by our sacrifice in the ranks of every class battle, we shall endeavour to push these efforts in a direction in which we believe workers' genuine interests are realized. Our objective is to make the workers' movement as strong as possible against the bourgeoisie. We are sure that the day our politics becomes the main tendency inside the working class, the workers' power will find its greatest manifestation. But as long as, alongside us other militant tendencies inside the class movement are engaged in creating other forms of unity, we shall offer them our help. At the same time we will try to make the council and general-assembly movement win even greater influence and following among the workers; for, we believe, that in this way workers will attain their real power in the current struggles and in the struggle over political power. If today some workers decide to form unions, we shall certainly draw their attention to the advantages in working to form councils through stepping up the general-assembly movement. But if some people have already made progress in this direction and have really taken a step forward towards building the union they want, then they can count on communist workers as their defenders and supporters. Of course, even in such a situation, as it has been stated in the resolution, we shall try to make sure that the union movement is not overwhelmed by the traditional weakness of the unions; we shall encourage them to use the positive experiences of the council movement, such as relying on direct democracy and workers' will, avoiding bureaucratism, keeping off the reformist currents, etc.

Furthermore, it is stated in the resolution that in special cases we shall ourselves directly work to build unions, but we shall make sure that such unions become in future intimately linked to the council movement, on the basis of defined rules.

Q: In the section of the resolution entitled "the main points of our policy" it has been said that the incorporation of capitalists and the existence of state ownership result in the fact that a better organisation of workers would be one which is based on factory-regional organisation. Now the point is that in the economic struggle the worker is not directly faced with the owner, since the capital of an enterprise may belong to many

share-holders who may not even have met their employees. ... The daily economic struggle takes place against such an apparatus. For example the oil worker is faced with the oil company, the electrician with the electricity board. An organisation which wants to place the workers against these opponents, in a unified and direct way, of course cannot be a trade or craft organisation. But it cannot be a regional

organisation either. If the workers in Tehran and Shiraz oil refineries were joined immediately in a single organisation, then they would have a sharper weapon in their economic struggles, than if they were unified by the medium of regional organisations. Does the council form of organisation correspond with this type of economic struggle? Take this as an example and, generally, explain how the general-assembly movement described in the resolution meets the different and diverse problems involved in the struggle of the working class, apparently without needing to modify its structure.

A: What the resolution is saying is that with the concentration of production and the development of large state and monopoly ownerships, and also with the emergence of the state as the chief organ with which the workers are faced directly, the problems which affect workers' living and working conditions, as well as the means by which they attempt to improve their standard of living and freedom of political action, increasingly assume a general character, outside of craft limitations. If you look at the struggle of the Iranian working class in the past several years, you will plainly see this reality. The labour law, the plan of job classification, working hours, unemployment benefit, etc, were the main issues during this period. In Iran every workers' protest, even in a small private workshop, immediately involves the state as the protector and guardian of the employer. Here, there has seldom existed private employers' federations in particular branches; instead, the state chiefly performs this function for the private sector. The Iranian worker is rapidly confronted with the state, the labour ministry, and state rules and regulations.

However, what you are saying puts the finger on a correct point. There are and there will be many instances where workers in a particular branch of production are faced with common issues which cannot be immediately generalized to other branches. Every mass organisation of workers must be able to provide the leadership of the struggle in these cases. The trade unions - of course in their more familiar forms - traditionally take care of this job. But they do it at the expense of isolating the struggle at a particular branch from other branches. The experience of the miners' or the printworkers' struggles in Britain during the past few years is a classic example of this weakness of the unions. To save their jobs, the miners heroically went on strike for a whole year, tens of thousands of families and, at times, even whole mining communities experienced unprecedented poverty, but the transport union, the electricians' union, etc., since they did not find themselves immediately endangered - at by idly; even worse, they served to break the strike. Putting too much stress on the specific trade or craft identity of workers undermines their struggles.

The council movement does not have this weakness. It bases itself on workers' class identity and local-

regional concentration. One may be worried, however, that it may not show the same sensitivity which the specific unions do towards the particular problems of workers in a specific branch or trade. Something should be done about this. We think the council movement and system has the capacity to adapt to this situation. The main structure and the backbone of the council system is the local, regional structure. But this does not prevent it from accumulating other patterns which coordinate and lead the struggle of workers' councils in a particular branch. The national or district councils can have special commissions and committees to focus on the affairs of workers in different branches of production within the sphere of their activity. The district or national council can define the powers of these commissions and committees in such a way that they meet the needs of the leadership of the struggle in these cases. At any rate, we should define the point of reference and the chief structure, and base ourselves upon realities. The trade-union movement takes as its base the workers' identity and position as determined by the division of labour. It then tries - usually with little success - to give a kind of unitary leadership for all workers through alliances and combined formations between different unions. For this reason, achieving class solidarity, beyond trades or crafts, is a constant problem of the trade-union movement. In contrast, the council movement relies on the common position of workers as exploited wage-labourers against capital. I.e., it begins from workers' class identity, and tries to meet workers' specific needs in different branches and sectors of production. Both forms have their difficulties. But in our view this second one is the more class-based and principled method.

Q: If the idea of councils is to become a reality, then all its aspects should be given practical, tangible expressions, as it is the case with the trade-unions where there exist fully-defined plans of union organisation, of its various institutions, of the rules for working in these organisations, and even of their internal regulations and statutes. Will the Party elaborate the council idea in its practical and administrative aspects, or has it left this to the movement itself?

A: Let me point out once again that in my view "fully-defined" plans of union organisation, institutions, rules, codes of practice, statutes, etc., are not only not a point of strength of the union movement any more, but an important obstacle to its relating to workers' militant struggles. Any trade-unionist today who wants to identify with radical, militant workers' struggles has to declare a part of these "fully-defined" schemes, rules and codes as void. This is particularly true in the case of Iran. "Fully-defined" schemes and rules for unions are the very schemes of legal unions in capitalist Europe and U.S.A. To rely on these in Iran certainly does not bring one even

a step closer to any kind of union. For this reason, today the more militant elements of the trade-union movement start not from these "defined" codes but from their own revisions of them. For instance, the notion of a general-assembly with far-reaching powers is not part of the defined standards of unions. The more radical advocates of unions in Iran are prepared to base their plans on general assemblies. Accepting to limit oneself to an economic struggle within the existing laws is one of these "defined and recognized" standards which no militant unionist is prepared to follow. Therefore defining the necessary schemes and codes is also an issue for the trade-union movement itself. The Iranian trade-unionist at the end of the 20th century and under the Islamic regime can make very little use of the legacy of the trade-unionist movement in the field of union standards, rules, and regulations. He himself has to come up with new definitions of the union and its codes of practice. In fact if we look at it more carefully we see that the views of present-day trade-unionists are much more ambiguous than the ideas of the council advocates. From the Fedleian (Majority) and the Tudeh Party down to the left wing of popular socialists, they are all supporters of forming unions, but their schemes - if such basically exist - bear very little resemblance to each other.

But does the party have a better defined plan regarding councils? Yes it does. Up to now we have talked a lot about councils and their characteristics. We can emphasize the following points about the structure of the workers' council system:

- 1- The base-council is the general-assembly of the workers of a unit or of sections of a (large) economic production unit. Every worker is a direct and full member of the council, not on account of paying dues and/or receiving a membership card, but on account of being a worker.
- 2- The council follows a regional structure, not a trade or craft one. I.e., the higher council is one comprised of the representatives of the base-councils of a defined region. This hierarchical structure is followed as far as the formation of the national council.
- 3- Council representatives in higher councils may be revoked and recalled whenever their electors decide.
- 4- The general assembly, at all levels, from the base-council to the council of representatives, is the highest decision-making body of every council. The general-assembly selects its executive units and officers for the period between its sessions. These authorities too will at all times be revocable and changeable by the general assembly.
- 5- The rules and codes of the councils do not limit them to an economic struggle. The councils regard themselves as having the right to intervene in any social, political and administrative issue within their domain and resort to protest measures concerning any issue they find necessary.

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6-Workers' councils may affiliate other workers' organisations to themselves, whether locally or nationally. The councils themselves will determine the criteria for such affiliations, depending on the case.

These points give a general picture of the structure of a council system. But the more practical and concrete aspects will be defined by the movements itself, in the course of its development. The actual field of action of the councils will in the last resort be determined by the balance of class forces. No advance regulations or statutes should restrict this field of action.

I should add another point about councils and the council movement which is necessary in order to explain the basis of party's position. In capitalist society the worker must be able to defend his immediate rights and improve his position as the seller of labour-power; he should also organise his revolution against capitalism, prepare himself for the conquest of power for workers' rule and for despoiling the basis of power of the exploiting classes. To the extent that the left basically acknowledges any function for workers' mass organisations, it has usually entrusted the first task to the unions and the second to councils. This conception is certainly connected with the course of events so far in the workers' movement; in non-revolutionary periods we have seen union activity and the absence of councils, and in revolutionary periods councils have assumed a prominent role. But this is not a pre-ordained law, unions and councils are not models to either of which workers resort, according to a predetermined decision and plan, depending on whether we are in a time of revolution or a time of depression. As I said, councils and unions represent two different political and fighting perspectives which are either reinforced or weakened in different periods. Otherwise, as a rule, unions ought to withdraw in favour of councils in revolutionary periods, and the councils should officially dissolve themselves in favour of unions in conditions of revolutionary reflux. But the truth is that such laws and arrangements do not exist. In revolutionary conditions, too, unions remain and try to maintain and extend their influence. As much as the history of revolutions bears witness, under such conditions rivalry between the council movement - or factory committees - and the unions, over the leadership of the workers' movement, heightens. And when the counter-revolution gains the upper hand, the councils for their part, resist attempts at their dissolution and burning. Therefore the relation between unions/councils and the political stages in society is not a theoretical one; it does not have a fixed recipe. The question then is: if by the council movement and councils can adjust themselves to the needs of workers' struggle in a non-revolutionary period - just as the unions try to come to terms with

the new realities in a revolutionary time. We think this is possible. Councils are not doomed to activity only in revolutionary periods. Workers can make use of councils as a means of defending their interests [even] as sellers of labour-power. We believe that in the case of Iran this is not only feasible, but that the absence of social and political grounds favourable to trade-unionise obliges the council movement to fill in this gap. This movement enjoys suitable material conditions in order to carry out this task. There is no doubt that under the present conditions the council movement will not fulfil the whole of its perspective of struggle. No doubt in its early stages the council movement will suffer from many limitations. For this reason, at the beginning and as a first step, we are speaking of a movement of general-assemblies. This is a movement for giving shape to base-councils and establishing a kind of immediate, unofficial relationship among them which would in later stages make the creation of higher councils possible.

Thus the general-assembly movement is both a reply - in its own right and independent - to the needs of the current struggles, and a fundamental cornerstone for the council movement as a whole. The supporters of other forms of workers' mass organisation - for instance the advocates of militant trade-unions - can and are justified to regard the general-assembly movement the basis of their future advance for building trade-unions. We not only do not see anything wrong in this, but think that if there exists such a degree of contiguity [of view] between the militant sections of the workers' movement, independent of their longer-term perspectives, the general-assembly movement and, consequently, the workers' current struggles will develop at a faster rate. But for our part we are sure that the general-assembly movement will be more suited to the future formation of a network of workers' councils than trade-unions; it will be a guarantee for the greater reliance of future mass organisations of workers, of whatever kind, on direct workers' democracy.

Q: We used to talk about councils as a type of organisation, while in the resolution we are clearly talking about a "general-assembly movement". What is meant by this movement? What features characterise this movement? What other objectives does it follow apart from giving rise to a particular form of organisation? Where is it supposed to lead?

A: Our propaganda on the general assembly took now has been focused on explaining the desirability and efficacy of the general assembly as an organ of struggle for workers. What we are saying today is that we should speak of a general-assembly movement. In the history of workers' struggles there are periods which are defined by the appearance of particular movements. For example, the factory-committees' movement in Russia, the trade-union movement in Iran at the beginning of the century, the council movement during the 1979 Revolution, the movement for workers'

control, etc. The difference between agitating for general assembly as a useful organ, and the effort to create a general-assembly movement is that in the latter case we want the struggle for assemblies to become an orientation and a distinguishing feature of a period of workers' struggles. These struggles should be fused with the general-assembly movement; these organs should be formed in ever-increasing numbers; they should strengthen and should assume central roles in working-class protests. The general-assembly movement is our immediate and practical answer to the organisation of workers' mass protests in the present juncture. Councils and a genuine council movement can only be the result of a certain degree of progress of the general-assembly movement.

We put forward the idea of general assembly a long time ago. Then the whole intellectualist and phrase-mongering populist left called this idea on idealist and foreign one. A few years of workers' struggles in Iran demonstrated that what was idealist and foreign was the conception of the popular socialism of Iran of workers' mass movement. Not only did workers set up these assemblies on an increasing scale, using them in their struggles, but the very idea and slogan of general assembly became part of the mentality of Iran's vanguard and conscious worker. Today, fortunately, many have accepted the correctness of this idea, or have submitted to it. We say that communist workers must be the activists of the general-assembly movement, since this is the only real way of organising workers on a large scale and for filling the vacuum of organised, working-class public-mass activity. The populist and intellectual left can do without this problem, it can call this preoccupation of ours Economism, it can leave the settlement of everything to when the Islamic regime has been overthrown. The likes of Fedaiien (Majority) and Tudeh Party can enter the Islamic Councils; they can send their self-appointed representative of Iranian workers to the 18th Congress of trade-unions of the USSR. The traditional trade-unionists can wait for the arrival of a situation where the Islamic state would grant them permission to build unions. The "clandestine" syndicalists can for the time being resign from the idea of organising workers' mass action. But we see the question differently. We believe that both communism and the essential ideas of the council movement, as well as the present experience of Iranian workers from the recent years of struggle, have shown us the method of mass working-class struggle under the existing repressive conditions. One should just open one's eyes to see it. This method is to set up a workers' general-assemblies' movement. The mass struggle of hundreds of thousands workers can under no circumstances be a secret one. Workers' central leadership may be secret, but the manifestation by working-class masses - which calls for a continuous intervention by workers' immediate/public leaders and the holding of many kind of meetings - cannot but be a public one. The workers' party must show the real, practical path of organising the action of working-

class masses. The general-assembly movement is this real path.

Q: In the resolution, only a few tasks have been outlined for the activists of the general-assembly movement. Can you give us a more concrete and comprehensive picture of the activist of this movement? And to train competent and tireless leaders for this movement, what other subjects and issues should be agitated and taught, apart from the immediate objectives of the movement itself?

A: We should talk about this point a great deal and repeatedly. I take the opportunity here to touch on a number of points. The activist of the general-assembly movement is one who starts not from an abstract ideal about general assembly but from the workers' ongoing struggles. Whatever the discussion on councils and trade-unions amongst the left may be, workers' protests are already in progress and demand suitable organisation and leadership, and a perspective for immediate advance. If instead of seeing ourselves as the "council faithful", we regard ourselves as advanced workers who are to solve the problem of organising specific protest actions in specific workplaces, then we shall better grasp the value of striving to hold general assemblies and of the role of these organs. A general-assembly activist is he who calls the workers to make use of the general assembly as an effective organ of struggle in the current protests; who tries to make sure that it is implemented in other workplaces too; who endeavours so that these assemblies acquire greater continuity, join up with one another, and give rise to executive leaderships. The activist of the general-assembly is less pre-occupied with the problem of adjusting the assemblies to a previously worked-out scheme, than with building and expanding them. The activist of the general-assembly is he who continually makes use of his influence as an advanced worker to convince other workers and practical/immediate workers' leaders to rely on this organ; who shows them the merits of the general-assembly and tries to win ever greater number of militant workers and workers' circles to a coordinated action to set up these assemblies. To train the activists of the general-assembly movement, the party must more than anything else emphasize the relation between this movement and the current struggles. In my opinion the leaders and activists of this movement will essentially emerge from amongst the practical leaders of the existing protest movement.

An inseparable part of our agitations should be the explanation of the fact that even under repression it is possible to organise open and mass working-class activity. The clandestine relations among advanced workers, the secret, party relations among communist workers are not, on their own, enough to organise the current struggles. They are vital, but not enough. Once you deprive workers of the possibility of collective protest, nothing is left of the workers' movement.

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Interview with comrade Masood Ishaq

The shop-keepers can, in response to the secret calls of a particular authority, all close down their shops on a specific day [as a gesture of protest]. Workers, however, need physical concentration and collective exertion of power in their struggles. Only in this way do they feel strong. And only in this way can advanced workers perform their role at the head of workers' ranks. Therefore ideas about mysterious centres leading isolated individual workers should be discarded. We should create the possibility for workers' collective, united struggle. He who claims repression does not let us do that, should go home and rest. We say that the general-assembly is the tested and tried instrument of this struggle. Our agitations should increase the confidence in general-assemblies and their effectiveness.

Q: And finally, can you say a few words about the relation between the party and party activists and these mass organisations, and the practical problems they may face.

A: A full answer to this question can be provided only in the future and by the practical course of our activity. Many practical questions have not yet really presented themselves. Therefore I'll here only touch upon some of the general aspects of the problem. The issues we are really faced with are these: the consolidation and education of the idea of councils, setting up a genuine general-assembly movement, and establishing a sound and creative relationship with the advocates of these forms of mass organisations.

There is no ambiguity in the first case. We must continually explain the correctness and soundness of the council idea and the council movement with a vivid reference to the essential features of the council, such as the ability to organise the maximum mass energy of workers, give scope to the work of experienced and known practical leaders of workers, apply direct democracy, and prepare workers for the seizure of power. I have already talked about the second point, the general-assembly movement: we should break the purely agitational shell and begin to actually build these assemblies, extend them and link them together. But I would add and emphasize another point; as I have said, the general-assembly movement is a movement to make the workers' broad mass action possible. This does not mean that this movement is totally based on a public and mass activity. Communist workers and the movement's activists should organise their own intimate and - for the purpose of the executive work - secret contacts so as to direct this movement. Behind the general-assembly movement stand the inter-connected networks of workers' centres and circles and the party

organisation of advanced workers. We have previously talked about the various aspects of the question of organising secret work with open, mass activity (for instance, the articles in the *Komunist* on public agitators, our policy of organisation among workers, etc.) I just want to stress that such secret activity is vital for the success of the general-assembly movement and for leading workers' protests through general-assemblies.

With regard to the final point - our relations with the advocates of other forms of mass organisation, such as trade-unions, etc. - I must refer the comrades to the previous discussion in the party on the critique of sectarianism. We belong to the trend of communist and radical workers. We are the organising and active element of this trend. The internal relations of this trend and its relationship with other tendencies inside the working class are based on an understanding of the fundamental interests of the whole of our class, at the centre of which stands the unity and strengthening of workers' rank in the struggle against the bourgeoisie. We agitate our views, our policies and alternatives with all vigour; we try to turn them into the views and policies of ever larger sections of workers, their leaders and their advanced circles. But at the same time wherever there is an activity in progress which serves as a tool for workers' struggles, which increases their unity - even if in one section - which reclaims any one of workers' denied rights, ... we ourselves will be the first ones to take part in this action. There is no working-class effort to whose fate we are indifferent. We build up our alternative with the participation of ever greater number of advanced and militant workers. We explain constantly and under all circumstances the preference of our practical policy. But at the same time we shall be the active elements of every genuine action by workers. The important point is to distinguish between workers' true actions to unite and to struggle (in whatever form) and those which are unreal, imaginary, and harmful to the cause of workers' struggles. To make such distinctions in every specific case is not hard for a communist and advanced worker who is in close touch with workers' activity and who has the interests of the whole class in mind; provided, of course, that our activists study and analyse each specific case with the necessary sensitivity and sympathy.

Our policy is to step up the general-assembly and council movement. Our policy is not to weaken the efforts of other tendencies to build unions and other mass organisations. We hope that with our efforts the general-assembly and council movement will attract ever greater sections of working-class forces towards itself for organisation and unity.

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CERTAIN IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CPI AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Interview with comrade Hamid Taghvae

The following interview has been translated from *Komunist* (central organ of the CPI), Nos. 36 & 39, April and May '88.

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Q: In the first part, the resolution lays stress upon a drive to form a workers' communist rank, and to promote the international unity of the working class. To achieve these, what routine duties and appropriate activities are recommended by the Party to be on the agenda of the party activists abroad?

A: Let me first say that the resolution is not intended only for the party organisation abroad, but, as it is obvious from its title, it provides guidelines of certain activities for the Party as a whole, calling upon all party organisations to undertake a share of the work. The reason is clear. The international goals of the Party require, in various fronts, many-sided tasks by the central organs and party organisations, at home and abroad. It is neither practical nor principled to expect the party organisation abroad to accomplish all these tasks. Obviously, our forces abroad are themselves to carry out a number of them, such as taking part in workers' struggles or making contact with the Left movement and working-class organisations of different countries. It is also clear that our comrades abroad, enjoying certain facilities and because of the environment they are active in, may take an active role in all other activities. Yet, we would reach wrong practical conclusions, if we were to confine all international activities of the Party to our members and sympathizers abroad. It would be equally wrong to derive all tasks of the comrades residing abroad from this resolution.

Having said that, let me deal with your question about those activities concerning the formation of a workers' communist rank in the world Left movement and the promotion of the international unity of the working class. These activities can be outlined as follows: First: to conduct a theoretical struggle with organisations, thinkers and trends of the world Left movement, concerning various problems of the class struggle. This is of vital importance for our Party which is to propagate and defend workers' communism, in differentiation to all traditional tendencies in the Left movement. How do we differentiate workers' communism from Soviet, Chinese or Albanian "communism", from the Trotskyist and Euro-communist trends, from the "Left Communist" sects, Bordism, and generally speaking, from the currents representing certain tendencies and certain practical-theoretical tradi-

tions in the world Left movement? This requires, first and foremost, a profound criticism of the stands and attitudes of the said trends towards the crucial problems of the class struggle. Of course, this has to be addressed essentially by the central theoretical organs of the Party. Nevertheless, our comrades abroad are expected to contribute to the central organs of the Party, by keeping it informed of the course of theoretical developments of these currents, and by taking an active part in this theoretical work. For, evidently, these comrades have an easier and faster access to the literature of these currents, are in direct contact with them, and can closely examine their practice and standpoints. In addition, our comrades abroad have the task of spreading our criticism of the Left currents among the workers and the Left movement of each country.

The second task is to get the world Left movement acquainted with the stands of the Communist Party of Iran. This task is to be fully and directly performed by the party organisation abroad, by means of activities such as making the party literature available in other languages, holding seminars and public meetings, etc.

Another work which, in addition to its importance regarding the socialist education of the working class, of the formation of a revolutionary communist rank, is to make a concrete analysis and criticisms of the capitalist system and government in each country. If our comrades could have a correct assessment of the policies of bourgeois states and parties, in particular regarding workers' issues, if they could criticize the Left parties and groups on such a basis, then we would certainly have the most appropriate grounds for the formation of a radical communist trend within the workers' and the Left movements.

Finally, I have to speak about the task of making constant contact, as well as exchanging literature and information, with the revolutionary organisations of the Left, particularly those closer to the CPI. This task is to be conducted by the party organisation abroad in accordance with our relations with other forces and in the framework of the Party politics. These are the most important aspects of our work outside Iran to help the formation of a workers' revolutionary communist rank. The more consistently and comprehensively these tasks are carried out, the more opportunity we shall have to influence the international Left movement, and the greater will be the chances to push forward the formation of a workers' communist pole.

Concerning the second point in your question, i.e., the task of strengthening the international unity of

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the working class which comes as a separate article in the resolution, I do not think there is such ambiguity. We are duty-bound to actively support the struggle of different sections of the working class in any country against the capitalists and their encroachments upon the workers, taking part in these struggles wherever possible. We ought to inform the workers of Iran and other countries of the actual conditions of work, living and struggles of each other. We have to call upon them to support each other in their struggles. We have to establish a lasting contact with the militants and leaders of the workers' movement, Trade Unions and other mass organisations of the working class of each country. These are all part of routine communist work everywhere in the world; they may only be conditioned or limited by our facilities and capabilities. I should, of course, say that building up solidarity between working classes of Iran and other countries is a reciprocal matter which places basic tasks before the party militants in Iran, too.

Q: With regard to the fact that most of our forces abroad are exiled communists, we see that these comrades face certain limitations. For example, the lack of cerebral and verbal fluency in foreign languages needed to take part effectively in theoretical and polemical work. They also need to be integrated into the ranks of the working class in those countries to be able to participate at the forefront of the workers' struggles. Both of these are slow processes. What can be done to get over these problems?

A: I don't think that our comrades have to go through all these. In order to work among the workers of other countries, they should not necessarily be integrated into the working class, or play the role of the practical leaders of workers' struggles. The Communist Party of Iran is not, and cannot be, a party organising or leading the workers' movement of other countries. As pointed out in the resolution, our duty is to support, and take part in, workers' struggles in other countries. We have to do this principally through working-class organisations and through contacts with local and national leaders of the workers' movement. Obviously, in order to build up such connections, our comrades should not wait to be integrated in the working class or to be raised to the position of the leaders of the workers' struggles. What is essential is to be present in all workers' gatherings, to get to know workers' conditions of living and their problems, to pay attention to and be concerned on these problems, and to get acquainted with the institutions and the methods and traditions of struggle of the workers of each country. Such an attitude would no doubt enable our comrades to establish many personal and organisational connections with organisations, activists and vanguard circles of the workers' movement; connections that would in turn provide channels relating the Party with the workers'

struggles. Again, even this process may seem a slow one to our activists abroad. However, this is no longer a problem stemming from the real conditions of our field of activity abroad. Rather it is a product of the non-proletarian methods and traditions handed down by the Iranian Left abroad since the days of the "Confederation of Iranian Students"; traditions and methods which completely isolated the Iranian Left from the working class and its problems, and which had no relevance to the workers' and communist struggles, whether at home or abroad. I shall not go any further on this point, for it has been discussed at length in the article "The Basis of Party's Work Abroad" (Kommunist No.27). I only wanted to stress the point that the obstacles impeding our activities among the workers of other countries are basically induced by non-communist traditions and methods we have inherited from previous periods, and that to overcome them does not call for any extraordinary or complicated work.

The other point in your question, that is the problem of language; this too cannot have such effect on our work abroad. For as it was pointed out earlier, the theoretical struggle with the international currents is essentially a task of the central organs of the Party. This should enable us to do without comrades capable of doing polemical work in foreign languages. If we have in the ranks of the party forces abroad comrades capable of translating the Party literature into the main European languages, then the first step has been taken in the dissemination of our views and the critique of other currents. To be sure, verbal propaganda is also quite needed. But this requires only a certain degree of familiarity with foreign languages, which normally can be acquired after one or two years of residence in any country. Once more I should emphasize that I am talking about an activist who is not a "leftist of the Confederation". In other words, he is supposed to be wholeheartedly concerned with general political and social problems, and particularly with the problems of the workers and the working-class movement. Such a person must try to become familiar with the new circumstances, as well as with workers' organisations and parties. If our comrades abroad have no such motives or orientations, then we would not be able to accomplish many of our tasks; and where we may do this, progress would be slow.

Q: When we speak of practical solidarity with the struggles of working and oppressed masses against the burdens of the capitalist society, the question is raised as to how we should support these struggles without apparently, or in fact, going under the banner of bourgeois-liberals usually leading popular struggles (e.g. women's struggles and the feminists; the anti-apartheid struggle and the humanists, etc.).

A: The question of supporting, and taking part in, non-proletarian movements and popular struggles becomes a problem basically for those "communists" who

are alienated from the working class, its aims and politics, and its day-to-day struggles and practice. The clear examples of such currents are the petty-bourgeois socialist currents in Iran and the "left communism" of Europe. For them, solidarity with, or taking part in, popular movements is always in contradiction with having independent aims and identity. They have tried to resolve this contradiction, with the former assimilating itself in popular movements, and the latter refraining from any real struggle. Their problem is essentially caused by a lack of connection with the workers' movement and the militant practice of the working class itself. Their identity is merely ideological and theoretical. Such identity may easily become distorted by taking any new tactical stand especially towards popular movements. Workers' communism has no such problems. Intervention and participation, from a working-class standpoint, in any revolutionary and progressive movement, serving the working-class goals through such movements, is part of the identity of workers' communism. This makes up, at the most fundamental level, our attitude towards popular movements. However, at a more concrete level, I should say, communists do not and cannot have any universal or previously worked-out formula for approaching such movements. Let the "petty-bourgeois socialist" and "left communist" currents resort to stereotyping and making general tactical formulae and codes. Our general attitude towards revolutionary movements is to defend them, and support, in particular, the most radical and vanguard force involved, while, trying to spread and strengthen proletarian politics and slogans within those movements. Nevertheless, the character of any given movement and the parties involved in it, has to be assessed concretely and not on the basis of general formulae prepared in advance. We should appraise any given movement specifically, and analyse the role and real place of the classes and political forces involved. Only on this basis may we determine how to approach, support (or take part in) a given movement. Movements are created by political forces and parties. They are induced by certain socio-class conditions and problems. If we are to assess the content and character of a movement and understand the position of the parties involved in it, we should know those certain conditions and problems. Particularly, we should define the interests of the working class in a given movement, clarifying the way that movement may contribute to the social revolution of the proletariat.

Starting from such a concrete appraisal, we can determine our attitude towards the movements and struggles of the non-proletarian strata, the manner of our support for revolutionary movements, and our attitude towards the political forces involved in them. Here I should emphasize a point which if not observed usually leads to misunderstanding and leftism; our criterion in the attitude towards the political forces and parties involved in a movement is their actual and practical place in the movement and the concrete politics and slogans which they follow in that struggle, and not their theoretical positions or

the degree of their ideological closeness to us. What I said sums up the basis of the communist attitude towards the popular movements and the struggles of non-proletarian strata. If we follow them in practice, there would be no cause to worry about "going under the banner of other forces".

Q: On the relation between the Party and other political organisations, it has been said that while the CPI welcomes contact and debate with all radical left organisations and parties, it would build up close relationship only with those currents which meet certain conditions. Could you elaborate on this point? What does it mean, in practice, to welcome relations with all, but at the same time condition this relationship?

A: The particular conditions we have in mind are those that depict the framework and general feature of workers' communism. Obviously, we consider those political parties having such characteristics as closer to our Party. This does not contradict our policy of having general relationship with radical left organisations. The resolution has clearly pointed out the objective we pursue through this policy: "The CPI desires the orientation of the militant wings of the radical-left tendency in various countries towards principled Marxist-Leninist positions, and their joining the rank of struggle to build a principled communist pole in opposition to the international revisionist currents." Naturally, we consider ourselves and those forces already belonging to this pole, or being close to it, as one current. Nevertheless, we believe that this pole is yet to be formed, and that we have to carry out a consistent work to achieve it. Part of this work will be done by having relationship and debate with, and influencing those forces who, in a broad sense, are part of the radical left trend, and who are capable of acquiring the characteristics outlined in the resolution. For this reason we welcome contact with these forces and shall try to do our share in this respect.

Q: In the same part of the resolution, the basic conditions required for a close relationship have been put forward. But in practice we seldom encounter a party or group which conforms to all these conditions. How do you see this problem?

A: True, we have rarely come across a current which meets the conditions put forward in the resolution. But the significance of presenting these conditions lies more in characterising and defining the current of workers' communism, and in providing guidelines and a direction for working towards forming this current. We did not take, in defining these conditions, our Party as a model. Our criterion has not been theoretical-programmatic identity with the CPI. We have put forward, as basic principles for an international communist rank, those class-practical characteristics

which may describe the general framework of workers' communism in any country. The Party too, is duty-bound to endeavour to fully acquire such features. At the same time we are duty-bound to work actively to encourage the revolutionary-left forces to take up the same course. This is what our contacts with the left organisations are mainly aimed at under the present circumstances. Today, we are witnessing the fact that the international revisionist currents, and also trends like Euro-Communism and Trotskyism, are, in one way or another, facing crisis and disunity, increasingly losing their place and weight in the workers' movement and in the world Left movement. This situation has provided the grounds for establishing, within the revolutionary left forces, the proletarian alternative to the theoretical and practical traditions of the sold currents. Certainly, our Party can, and must, hasten this process; and our contact with these forces is one of the means for this purpose.

Q: We have similar problems regarding workers' organisations. They are generally under the influence of bourgeois parties and the reformists who in some areas have thorough anti-workers and anti-internationalist positions. It has always been a matter of controversy for the activists abroad whether to establish close relations with these organisations. In this connection, the resolution states that: "The relation of the CPI with workers' mass organisations should be expanded as far as possible, independently of ideological considerations". What is the practical meaning of this statement?

A: The question of the relationship between the Party and workers' organisations in other countries is totally different from the attitude towards the political organisations. Here we are talking about organised masses of workers who, as producers, are united to defend their rights against the employers. So, this question lies within the general framework of the relationship of the Party with the working class in those countries, and not with political parties. Moreover, we have to distinguish the relationship of the Party, as a political organisation, with workers' organisations, from that of the party members, as communist individuals, with the trade unions. It is, in fact, a part of the routine work of any revolutionary communist to build up close and continuous relationship with masses of the workers and their organisations, to join them, and to make all possible efforts to strengthen and radicalize them. This should be the attitude of all our comrades towards workers' organisations. But, as the Communist Party of Iran, we cannot perform our tasks in direct and immediate connection with the working masses of other countries. The mass organisations of workers are, in fact, channels and connecting links between our Party and the masses of workers and the workers' movement in those countries. Our party is duty-bound to support

workers' struggles in other countries; our forces abroad should take part in workers' meetings, pickets and demonstrations and stand by them in their struggles; we have to get the workers of the world to know the conditions of the Iranian working class, drawing their support for the workers' struggles in Iran; etc. It is not possible to do these activities consistently and extensively, without having contact with workers' organisations. Our political-ideological differences, or our criticism of the leadership and politics of these organisations, should not hinder our relationship with them or our activities in this connection. This is the necessity of establishing relations between the Party and workers' organisations in spite of ideological considerations. This, of course, does not imply that we must stop publicizing our independent views and our criticisms of the workers' organisations and unions; this is another component of our tasks which is also pointed out in the resolution. Is this in contradiction with the task of maintaining contacts with working-class organisations? No. On the contrary, the only practical way of expanding and strengthening revolutionary politics in the workers' movement is to maintain the contact with workers' organisations and unions, defending and supporting workers' struggles. If we appear, in approaching workers' organisations, as a workers' current - and not an ideological sect - and see also workers' organisations as such; if we do not condition our support to the struggles of workers' organisations involved in those struggles; finally, if our comrades and activists stand by the workers in their struggles, showing in practice our Party's support for them; then it would be the feasible path to maintain our relationship with the workers' organisations, and confront their weaknesses and deviations, as well as strengthening radical politics among them and in the workers' movement.

Q: When taking part in demonstrations, strikes and pickets, the question of whether one's own banner and slogans should be kept out has always come up. Do you think it is right for the Party forces abroad to take part in workers' actions as a "crowd" with no observable sign of their distinctions? This question always comes up in making practical decisions in such cases.

A: If you are talking about a case in which the leaders and organisers of an action have conditioned our participation upon leaving out our banners and slogans, then they are in fact opposed to our participating in that action as a Party. In such a case the question of participation or non-participation of the Party is no longer a matter of dispute. Then the question is whether our comrades, members or sympathisers, are allowed to take part, as individuals, in that action. Generally speaking, the answer is positive. Our comrades will not lose their communist and party character by appearing in a workers' demon-

stration or strike without the Party banner and placards. They can still remain advocates of radical communist stands and politics while amidst the workers and by their side. One cannot conceive of a situation where communist militants are among the workers and in their struggles but are not able to influence them. The least outcome of the individual participation of every comrade is the chance to speak to workers in person, agitate among them, and consolidate and promote relations with the masses and activists of the workers' movement. These are the least "observable signs" of the participation of our comrades in these actions. Therefore, under no circumstances should our comrades worry about turning into a "crowd" for workers' struggles. Only in the world of movies may "crowd" have a negative meaning; in the real world, it is an effective and decisive force in any struggle.

Q: Being in mind that most of the Trade Unions are, in one way or another, party-affiliated, is it permissible, or do you recommend, that the members of the CPI should join them? How can we make use of the possibility of open work in the Trade Unions? Is it at all right and recommendable to work towards the actual leadership of workers' economic struggles within the same reformist and trade-unionist framework?

A: I already explained that the relation between the Party and Trade-Unions has to be seen as a relationship with the masses of workers and not with political parties. This is also true of members and militants of the Party, as communist individuals. It is everywhere a natural part of the work done by any communist to be with the workers, to be present in their milieu and actions, to defend their struggles, to get to know their leaders and activists, and, in so doing, to do such activities which link a communist militant with the masses and the workers' movement. Therefore, particularly under the present circumstances, it is imperative for a communist militant to join mass workers' organisations wherever possible. We are not in a situation similar to the early years of the Comintern where the attitude towards the trade unions and the question of participation or non-participation in them was a tactical question. That was a valid discussion for an influential workers' current like the Bolsheviks. But for us who are to, and still should, become a workers' current, this is a question of style of work and the method of our activity inside the class. In the present situation, our attitude towards the Trade Unions, and generally speaking, the mass organisations of workers, defines the method of our intervention and presence in the workers' movement. For our comrades in countries which have mass Trade Unions, to have contacts with and, wherever possible, to participate in the unions, is a natural part and precondition of being among the workers and taking part in the workers' movement. For these reasons, we not only consider participation in Trade Unions permissible but strongly recommend it.

But what is the place and significance of the fact that unions are connected with political parties? Here I should first emphasize that basically in our attitude towards the Trade-Unions, whether as a party or as individuals, our criterion is not the degree of our political or theoretical agreement with them. The essential point, in this connection, is the working-class character of the unions, i.e., the extent to which workers are organised in them and the extent to which they act as a means for workers' struggles. In other words, the method of activity of our comrades in the unions and the line that they should follow is a concrete question, to be determined essentially on the basis of the role unions play in workers' struggles and the politics and slogans they adopt - and not on the basis of our differences with political parties. We do not,

therefore, extend our political-theoretical differences with political parties directly to the unions dominated by them. The party-political connection of unions is taken into account in our attitude towards them, only in so far as it practically and specifically affects the place and the role of the unions in the workers' movement. This point should be observed by our comrades in our critical attitude to the unions and their politics. Another point is that in the resolution we have talked about local and national radical leaders and factions are the unions. In fact, such factions and leaders are presently emerging, especially in the workers' movement in Europe. In some cases, such groupings are formed, through the workers' struggles, outside the unions and as their radical alternatives (for instance the Coordination Committees of railway workers in France). We must particularly build up connections with this radical section of the workers' movement, whether inside or outside the unions. We generally have to keep in mind that there are various workers' organisations and priorities to establish relations with, and participate in, the more radical and advanced organisations of the workers' movement.

The second point in your question, that is the way to use the possibilities of work in the unions and the question of practical leadership of workers' economic struggles, is a specific question, to be answered in each case. As a general comment, I have to lay the stress on the necessity of having clear positive and practical politics towards the concrete questions of the workers' movement, and criticizing the compromising trade-unionist politics, on this basis. Nevertheless, it is obvious that our criticism of the Unions should not hinder our participation in, and support to, the economic struggles of workers which are organised and led by the unions. If our comrades base their activities in the Trade Unions and workers' struggles upon what I already said, then it would be not only permissible, but also necessary, to make use of the facilities for open work, at whatever level, and wherever possible. We are permitted, and also duty-bound, to use all possible means to intervene in and influence the economic struggles of workers, from a radical standpoint. This is the only possible and principled way of moving towards the practical

leadership of economic struggles of workers', without confining ourselves to the framework of "reformist and Trade-Unionist struggles".

Q: The first question regarding the immigrant Iranians is, what are the dangers, practically, that the Iranian immigrant community may turn into a burden on the working class of foreign countries?

A: A relatively large section of the Iranian immigrants are working people. They have either come from the Iranian working-class strata, or have now been driven into such positions. Nevertheless, owing to their special position as a refugee minority and also the influence exerted upon them by the Iranian bourgeois opposition, as well as by the local bourgeois parties and states, the grounds may exist for the development of bourgeois tendencies among them. It can be said that a "natural" product of living as a refugee minority is to become a closed community, enclosed by a barrier of national and cultural distinctions, and sunk deeply in nationalist and chauvinist prejudices; particularly, because at the present moment these prejudices are favoured by Iranian bourgeois organisations. On the other hand, the refugees are under pressure from the racist and right-wing parties and even by a section of the public opinion. In addition to their poor economic state, they face unfavourable socio-cultural conditions. Such circumstances could further isolate the refugees from the society they live in, strengthening a reciprocal nationalism and chauvinism among them.

The other point is that a section of the Iranian immigrants, under economic pressure and in order to earn a living, may be pushed into illegal labour markets, thus entering into competition with the workers of the countries they live in. The bourgeoisie and the states of the countries that admit refugees have always used the immigrants as a source of cheap labour power and as a means of exerting pressure on the working class of their own country. Today, the deprived Iranian refugees are a good bait for the bourgeoisie in this regard.

All these factors work together to drive the Iranian refugees, on the one hand, towards turning into a closed community with strong nationalist and chauvinist prejudices, thus aligning with the reactionary forces and tendencies in society, and on the other hand, to be used as a tool for creating disunity among the workers and as a threat to the wages and standard of living of the working class. Obviously such a situation is altogether against the interests of the working class and the workers' movement, and must be overcome.

Q: What can our Party do in this connection?

A: The main direction of our work should be to combat the nationalism among the Iranian immigrants. We have to show them, by consistent propaganda work,

that the hardships they are subjected to, whether as refugees or as workers, are not because they are "Iranian", and that the way to combat them is not to resort to "national identity" or nationalist and chauvinist prejudices. We should offset the nationalist propaganda of the monarchists, the left-liberals and Mojahedin who encourage "national culture and distinctions" in face of "the regime of Mollahs" and against "westernization". On the other hand, we should show them the face of capitalism and bourgeois reaction behind the fascist and racist encroachments of the right-wing parties and forces upon the immigrants, and prevent the intensification of national distinctions and prejudices. Against such propaganda and tendencies, we should educate the immigrants about the political and social problems and their real situation in the society they live in. We should explain to them the class differences and discriminations, showing them their common interests with the workers and other deprived masses, and calling them to support workers' struggles. We have to convince them not to work illegally, explaining to them the negative consequences of this kind of work for themselves as well as for the working class in each country. We have to urge the immigrant workers to join the unions and other workers' mass organisations, and to stand by other workers in the protests and struggles.

These are, in general terms, the outlines of our internationalist duties regarding the Iranian immigrants. Obviously our comrades abroad have to determine how they should carry out these tasks according to the specific conditions of each country.

Q: With this different policy and practice, the party forces are attacked by other Iranian political forces and accused of "generating disunity". What can be done about this? How shall we hold on to an internationalist workers' policy, and, at the same time, defend the dignity and identity of the Iranian refugees?

A: We are not afraid of being accused by the nationalists of "generating disunity". The proletarian internationalism of communists and their defence of the independent interests and goals of the working class have always led the bourgeois parties to resort to the old flag of nationalism and to take up the calls of "national unity", "national interests", "national reconciliation", etc. in order to cover up the class antagonisms. Challenging these deceptions today is part of our struggle against nationalism among the Iranian immigrants. There is nothing more natural and more legitimate than the fact that there should exist "disunity" between those Iranian masses who have been forced to leave the country under the pressure of the war and reaction, and those few rich Iranians who escaped as a result of the revolution of 1979. The latter, whose interests are served by the nationalism, are politically represented by the monarchists, or, generally, the bourgeois-nationalist trend. They take sides with the most right-wing and

reactionary parties of the countries in which they live. The mass of Iranian immigrants does not and cannot have any common interests with them. Those strata have never been deprived of any rights even as a refugee minority. They are neither homeless nor unemployed. Even the racist parties treat them differently from the "wretched immigrants". Our work among the Iranian immigrants is in no way concerned with this section of the refugees. Our activities among the Iranians have three aspects: firstly, our work among them as a refugee minority; that is, we inform them of their rights as immigrants, defend their rights, and help them to get over their problems of housing and livelihood, etc. Secondly, our work among them as a section of the Iranian working masses, aimed at mobilizing them against the Islamic Republic, and for proletarian politics and goals. And thirdly, our internationalist work among them with the aim of hindering disunity in the ranks of workers, and drawing the support of the immigrants for the struggles of the working class in each country.

Our activities are not only not opposed to each other, but follow the same goal and complement one another. Our defence of the refugees' rights is not a defence of their "national identity". We defend them for having a human working and living conditions, and against any hardships exerted upon them in this connection. This is in itself a legitimate and worthy goal. It is also a work which provides the grounds for our internationalist duty of strengthening bonds of unity between the Iranian refugee workers and their class brothers and sisters in each country. Their racial, national and religious differences have always been used to create disunity in the ranks of the workers. Communists, therefore, have always stood for the elimination of hardships and discriminations the bourgeoisie has imposed upon different sections of the working class, on the basis of these differences. Today, we have the same task before us in regard to the Iranian immigrant workers. The less they are subjected to oppression as refugees, the more they will understand their social position as workers; and the less the Iranian refugees are burdened by social and economic pressures caused by their position as a refugee minority, the more prepared they will be for taking the side of workers and for defending their class rights. From this point of view, the defence of the rights of Iranian refugees, is a part of, and serves, our internationalist struggle.

Q: What, in general, will be the indications of our success in all these activities?

A: To answer briefly, I should say that our success will be measured by the extent the revolutionary and workers' communism is established internationally as a social force in various fronts of the class struggle. Clearly, this would not be realized only by the activities of our forces abroad, nor shall we see its results only outside of Iran. Nevertheless, it demonstrates the general direction of our advance.

Our Party is taking the initial steps in defining and introducing a radical, principled and interventionist communism, free from petty-bourgeois and nationalist impurities. For decades, the political currents of other classes have represented and practised politics, methods and traditions, in the name of communism, that have nothing to do with the world-working class and its ideals and interests - workers' communism has to clarify its distinctions from all these currents in every front of the class struggle. It has to turn into a current capable of taking up stands and intervening in the crucial problems of the class struggle internationally. Our Party has to make all possible efforts for the formation of such a current. The resolution, as a whole, in fact specifies some of these efforts. We can mention some objective indicators of our advance in this work: the volume of our literature devoted to theoretical struggle over the most crucial problems of the class struggle at the international level; the degree to which this literature opens its way into the left movement of different countries; the number of left organisations at the international level close to workers' communism; the extent to which workers of Iran and other countries back up each other materially and morally (eg, by declaring solidarity with workers' struggles, practical support, financial contribution, etc); the extent of solidarity between the Iranian refugee workers and the working class and workers' movement in other countries; our contacts with organisations, activists and leaders of the workers' movement; and the degree of our influence on workers' struggles at the international level; and finally the strength of our organisation abroad based on the adoption and consolidation of traditions and methods of communist work. These are the most important criteria of our position and advance in the international front. We have already clearly defined the goals and direction of our movement and taken the initial steps in this direction. No doubt with the efforts and consistency of all the Party forces, including the Party comrades abroad, we shall make greater advances in the fulfillment of our internationalist aims.

Finally, it should be noted that in this interview I tried to explain the general outlines of the goals and activities of the Party in the international field. Naturally the comrades of the CPI organisation abroad, who have a closer and more precise knowledge of the situation and the subject of their work, will have the task of drawing the more concrete practical conclusions, and specifying our tasks and plans of action abroad.

The following article has been translated from the 2nd issue of the bulletin *Marxism & the Question of the Soviet Union* (Nov. 1986), which is a bulletin of views and debates on the Soviet question, published as a supplement to the theoretical organ of the CPI (Besoye-e-Soyuzism). So far, three issues of this bulletin have been published; the following articles have been translated and published from the first two:

"Introductory Theses on the Question of the Soviet Union", by Hamid Taghvaei (BM no.8), "Notes on 'Socialism & the Analysis of the Soviet Union'", by Iraj Azarini (BM no.9), "Marginal Notes on the Recent Sweeny-Bettleheim Debates", by Mansoor Hekmat (BM no. 10), and "Trotsky & the Critique of the Socio-Economic Relations and the State in the Soviet Union", by Farhad Besharat (BM no.11)-BM

The problem of the soviet union and the dead-end of Trotskyism

(A CRITIQUE OF MANDEL'S THESES ON TRANSITIONAL SOCIETIES)

Mandel's theses on societies in transition, is in fact an effort at the theoretical generalization of views expressed by Trotsky on the specific conditions of Soviet society of fifty years ago as a society in transition to socialism, characterized by the predominance of bureaucracy and the degenerate workers' state. Orthodox Trotskyists today who, in spite of the increasing exposure of the capitalist character and practices of the Soviet state and system in the last fifty years - both on the home and on the international fronts - insist on remaining loyal to the Trotskyist interpretation of the Soviet Union, even to extend this interpretation to include Eastern Europe, Cuba, China, and Vietnam(1), find themselves obliged to go beyond the limited and specific temporal and spatial analysis of Trotsky - relying on a critique of "Stalinism" and "bureaucracy" as a social phenomenon unique to the Soviet Union - and to base their views on more comprehensive theoretical ideas on the general laws of society in a state of transition from capitalism to socialism. The main objective of Ernest Mandel's theses, in fact, is resting not to provide a more acceptable and up to date justification of the Trotskyist interpretation of the Soviet problem. It is, however, the dead-end of Trotskyism which is displayed in "Theses on the Social and Economic Laws Governing the Society Transitional Between Capitalism and Socialism."

The issues and ideas put forth in the theses can be summed up as the general definition and explication of a transitional society (or a society in the state of transition) from one social formation into another; the general laws pertaining to a society in the state of transition from capitalism to socialism, characteristics of the Soviet Union as a deformed society in a state of transition and the reasons for this deformation; the prerequisites for the development of a society in the state of transition to a socialist society, and, finally, a challenge to some views of Bettleheim (the Bettleheim of early '70s) and, in general, of those who believe in the revival and dominance of state capitalism in the Soviet Union.

These views combine to build up an inconsistent intellectual system which, while contradictory in itself, contradicts also historical facts, as well as the Marxist analysis of these facts. The present article is an effort to make this clear through a study and a critique of the most basic tenets presented in the theses.

Transitional Society as a Specific Social Formation

Mandel believes that the society in transition is a specific social formation with productive relations of its own - relations of production distinct both from the old productive relations, as well as from those which should replace it. Mandel tries to prove this by using the example of the specific relations of production in societies undergoing the process of transition, and by making a distinction between relations of production in these societies and those in "great historical epochs". But Mandel's argument is shaky and insubstantial.

First, so far as the distinction existing, as Mandel claims, between transitional social formations and other formations, i.e., in the degree of structural stability, or fixity, of the existing relations of production" in these formations (second thesis) is concerned, this can in no way play a decisive role in distinguishing various socio-economic formations. The Marxist concept of "social formations", or the social system determined in terms of the economic, political, and cultural conditions based on a specific mode of production, has a clear and distinct definition, and cannot be arbitrarily related to any historic periodization in terms of various factors. Marx has clearly defined various economic formations and their distinctions in terms of the specific shape that the extraction of surplus product from direct producers assumes in any system of production (2). This means that primarily and at the most basic level, it is the specific form of exploitation in various relations of production which determine and distinguish the corresponding

social and economic formations. If Mandel accepts this criterion (if he does not, he should be able to show by which criterion and definition an economic formation can be regarded as specific and independent, not only as applies to transitional societies, but as it does to any of the formations such as slave-owning society, feudalism, and capitalism) then inevitably he should discover the specific and unique form of exploitation and expropriation of surplus product by owners of the means of production from direct producers, between slave-owning society and feudalism, and feudalism and capitalism (the example of Europe between the 4th and the 7th century, and the 15th and 17th centuries would suffice), and use it as a base for his theory of economic formation (in this case of formations) of transitional periods in each period. To say that "the decisive difference between one of the historically progressive modes of production ... and a transitional society, lies in the different degree of structural stability, or flexibility" (second thesis), might convince the hypothetical opponents who believe that no relations of production existed at all in European societies between the 4th to 7th, and 15th to the 17th centuries (they could of course have been convinced in a less elaborate manner), but as far as the definition of transitional society as a particular social formation is concerned the above statement is no more than a tautology, that relations of production in transitional formations (supposing that they exist) are less stable and flexible, goes without saying. Such they are by definition.

Second: It is true that in the process of the substitution of the system of slave-owning society with feudalism, and of feudalism with capitalism, specific relations of production (such as the expansion of small scale production by free farmers and craftsmen who owned their own means of production) came into being. But this is only one aspect of the truth. The other aspect ignored by Mandel, is that these relations, since they were the inevitable outcome of the disintegration and breakdown of the old system and promoters of the preconditions for the development of the new system, had no self-sustained existence independent from the dominant relations of production in society, and they could not be otherwise. Farmers and manual workers, for all its dimension in the process of the breakdown of feudalism, never, in fact, turned into the dominant relation in society, and social production did not become dependent on it. Rather, it remained a relation of production within the dominant system of feudalism, and was finally substituted with the economic formation of capitalism. In other words, neither in the history of European societies, nor in other societies has a particular social formation (i.e., a society with a specific form of exploitation, state, laws, and political and social institutions of its own) ever existed(3).

To sum up, even though simple commodity relations of production, as distinct both from feudal and capitalist relations of production prevailed in the period of breakdown, they never developed into a

social formation between these two modes, and thus historical facts do not substantiate Mandel's "exceptional formations". Indeed, what Mandel calls "social formation with its own specific relations of production in transition between "great historical formations" is simply nothing more than a particular period in the process of the development of these very formations - the stage of their disintegration.

2-Laws Governing a Society in a State of Transition From Capitalism to Socialism

Having explained the general characteristics of transitional societies in previous historical epochs, Mandel deals in his fourth thesis with the general laws of transitional societies from capitalism to socialism. These laws he deduces from existing societies which, even though in a state of transition to socialism, are nonetheless "characterized by extreme bureaucratic deformation or degeneration". He cautions, however, that "it is possible ... that what today seem to be 'general' features of this transitional society are in reality peculiarities having less to do with the internal logic of such a society than with the conditions of socio-economic underdevelopment".

To begin with, Mandel's expression of academic uncertainty is misplaced and irrelevant. The least that can be expected of a scientific study and analysis is to clarify the distinction between the obvious characteristics and the appearance of the phenomenon under observation, and its inherent nature - i.e., to show that what seems to be "the internal logic" of the phenomenon, if Mandel cannot make the distinction as to whether his observed characteristics in societies which he considers as transitional to socialism initiate from underdevelopment (or any other similarity in these societies), or from their inherent laws, then the difficulty should be looked for, not in the stamp of "immaturity" of reality and inadequacy of the historical experience, but in his manner of analysis and methodology of perception. History has never provided any one with an ideal model for theoretical examination and study. Moreover, Mandel's view that today, in studying these societies "we are faced with a similar difficulty as if we were trying to explain simple commodity production on the basis of the economic relations of the cities of Venice or Florence in the 14th century", is obviously an undifferentiated syllogism. One was not equipped with the theory of historical materialism, had no idea of systems of production of the times, and had no picture of the capitalism that was to come, to the 14th century. None of these conditions apply to us. Both theory and historical experience allow us today to know exactly the nature and the laws of functioning of the Soviet system and that of similar societies, and to find the real place of factors such as "underdevelopment", "immaturity of relations of production", "bureaucracy", "the degeneration of the state", etc. in our analysis.

Mandel has at any rate formulated and explained

in his these "laws governing the society transitional to socialism", and therefore, whether these laws or not can be made out independent of this or that personal experience, or the critique and study of the content of these laws by themselves.

First, in formulating "the General Laws for the Existing Societies in Transition Between Capitalism and Socialism" Mandel, having discussed the characteristics of these societies, arrives at the conclusion that "the production relations specific to the transitional society [to socialism] are ... a hybrid combination of essentially non-capitalist planning and the elements of commodity production ... which arise from the basically still bourgeois distribution relations". (fourth thesis) This means that according to Mandel production relations in these societies is a combination of an essentially non-capitalist economic element (belonging to the new mode of production) and a bourgeois element (remaining from the previous relations). This, first and foremost contradicts his own overall deduction from previous historical "conclusions", indicating that production relations in transitional societies "are not simply a combination of the old mode of production which is to be overcome and the new one which is gradually developing" (second thesis). Mandel would probably wish to categorize this deviation as an exceptional feature of these societies along with the "extreme bureaucratic deformation" and the "degeneration" characteristic of existing transitional societies. This would beg the question as to the essential usefulness of so much theorizing about the "general characteristics of transitional societies" in history, in solving our present problem, i.e., explaining the condition of the Soviet Union and similar countries. When all phenomena under observation are exceptions to the general theory, it is not more sensible to give the theory up and look for a rule to explain these exceptions?

Second, apart from the inconsistency in the views expressed in the theses, the main problem lies in the very content of the laws which have at any rate been put forth as "general laws of existing transitional societies". To begin with, it must be said that the "conflict between the logic of the plan and the logic of the market" that Mandel and his disciples in general have discovered about transitional societies, and which they also formulate as "the conflict between the non-capitalist mode of production and the bourgeois mode of distribution"(4), cannot exist in an economic formation, no matter how unstable and transitional. Marxism has clearly shown that "the structure of distribution is completely determined by the structure of production. Distribution is itself a product of production, not only in its object, in that only the results of production can be distributed, but also in its form, in that the specific kind of participation in production determines the specific forms of distribution, i.e., the pattern of participation in distribution". (Marx, *Gundrisse*, p.95) It therefore remains an inexplicable enigma how

relations of production in a society may be in conflict with distribution relation for many decades, with the economic system continuing to produce and reproduce itself. To say that such a conflict reflects the transitional character of the society in mind toward socialism not only fails to explain the problem, it is as incorrect and meaningless as the idea of a society with non-capitalist production and capitalist distribution. The laws of transitional societies should by definition reflect the movement and the transitional character of such societies. From a conflict between the plan, i.e., existing and explain the dynamism of the economic transformation of these societies toward socialism. The laws claimed by Mandel do not explain this dynamism at all. The simultaneous existence and functioning of "two sets of contradictory laws", one non-capitalist and the other bourgeois, one serving proletarian, the other bourgeois interests, each with its own "driving force", while economically each one may overcome the other, is not characteristic of forming into socialism, but of an indeterminate economic and society, whose course of movement and changes is not determined by any objective necessity. In other words even if we accept the existence of the "conflict between the logic of plan and the logic of the market", this can only express a mechanical conflict between - according to Mandel himself - two sets of incongruous laws in a "hybrid economy", and not an organic conflict in an economic system as a whole (such as the conflict between the social character of production and the private character of property in the capitalist system). It therefore expresses nothing at all about the movement of this hybrid economy toward socialism. Indeed it can be said of Mandel's transitional society with its hybrid and incongruous economy, that it is more distanced from socialism than any ordinary capitalist society whose inherent and organic conflicts determine its forward movement and development. When Mandel says that, compared with the capitalist view of the Soviet Union, "the advantage of our analysis of the transitional society ... is that it puts us in a position at least to sketch out some such laws of motion [for Soviet society]" (ninth thesis), he makes the weakness of his ideas out as their strong point. The one thing that Mandel's laws fail to explain is exactly the dynamism of the motion of Soviet society. Third, and finally the more fundamental issue, is the incorrect content of the argument and views put forth by Mandel to show "the conflict between the logic of the plan and the logic of the market" as a law of societies transitional to socialism. According to Mandel, commodity-money relations (after the abolition of private ownership and the substitution of the law of distribution with a planned distribution of economic resources) survive because "the distribution of producers' share in the given consumption fund by means of a general equivalent remains indispensable" (fourth thesis). This view is fundamentally wrong. The mere existence of a general equivalent to distribute the necessary share in consumption goods does not necessarily mean the

survival of commodity-money relations, and the maintenance of even the commodity form of products. It is not possible to answer the question whether the commodity-money relations dominate the exchange of "consumption goods" and the "general equivalent", by means of a study and examination of relations of distribution and exchange alone. The answer lies in production relations - in the specific services of the term(s). The question is on what basis and in exchange for what have the producers received this general equivalent. Is it received on the basis of the value of labour power or is it according to the time and intensity of their work? The answer to this question would automatically explain the issue on the other side of this exchange, i.e., on the side of consumer goods. Which criterion determines the value of these products - the socially necessary time for work in producing them, or the amount of time directly used in their production? In the first case we are not doubt facing commodity-money relations, and in the second case "a certain amount of work in one form" is exchanged "with the same amount of work in another form" (Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme"), while the "general equivalent" has functioned merely as a medium. In such case "the product of labour" is distinct from "commodity", and general equivalent, or the medium of circulation is distinct from "commodity" both in form and in content. Mandel's basic mistake lies in the fact that he deduces merely from "the existence of general equivalent in the distribution of consumer goods", commodity-money relations and the relations of bourgeois distribution. From this he even draws the conclusion that "in transitional society to socialism" consumer products retain the form of commodities with all the corresponding consequences "of unavailability, of overproduction, of non-realisation of their exchange-value". (Theses, footnote 2) These problems, however, are all problems of capitalist production and production relations, not in bourgeois distribution and "logic of the market".

There is, of course, no doubt that the logic of the market still prevails over the economic system of the Soviet Union and other societies that Mandel regards as "transitional to socialism". Products still retain the form of commodities, and commodity-money relations remain with their corresponding consequences. But Mandel's effort to deduce the laws of transition to socialism from these facts is futile. These are absolutely unrelated even to "underdevelopment", "the immaturity of production relations", and "the bureaucratic deformation" of the societies under discussion. The problem is simply that the capitalist production relations have sway over these societies.

It is necessary to examine another contradiction of Mandel's - that of "the logic of the plan". It must be said first and foremost that "planned economy" is not in itself in conflict with "bourgeois exchange and distribution relations". Economic planning is not in itself in conflict even with bourgeois production. The bourgeoisie also can, by concentrating the major part of capitals in the hands of the government, and by putting certain policies into practice (determining

investment priorities, adopting specific monetary and financial policies, allocation of bank credits, monopolizing imports and exports, specific tax laws, etc.) consciously determine and control the volume of capitals in various production sectors, and the movement of capital between these sectors (examples: countries such as Syria, Algeria, India, Iran, Iraq under Khomeini, i.e., countries that even the Trotskyists would refuse to consider as transitional to socialism.) (7) Clearly in these countries "the law of value" and other laws of capitalist production are not abrogated; rather, their functioning is controlled and directed through direct governmental interference in the economy. Such planned economy, therefore, is not in itself incongruent with "capitalist production and distribution". The decisive factor is the class content and the goals and policies determining this planning. (8) Economic planning can aim at "industrialization", "development of productive forces", "solving the agrarian problem" (in many dominated countries which have joined the capitalist countries over the last few decades, we have been witness to the implementation of such programmes), or at any other economic objective within the framework of the capitalist system, serving its development and maximizing economic resources. When Mandel speaks of the "conscious distribution of economic resources" through planning, he should then make it clear which goals and policies it serves. A basic function of the state in state-capitalist systems, such as the countries mentioned above, has always consisted of the conscious distribution of economic resources, i.e., to decide and control the volume and movement of capital in various productive sectors. It is therefore clear that this factor does not, as yet, determine the socialist character of the plan.

What gives an economic plan socialist character, is not the manner of the distribution of economic resources in various productive sectors; it is regarding the capitalist character and functioning of these "resources" in the system of production as a whole. In the capitalist system economic resources or the material conditions of production (land, means of production, raw materials) take on the form of capital and appear as capital in productive relations. It is obvious that the mere act of distribution of these resources in productive sector, based on the decision of individual capitalists or state planning - has no effect on their capitalist character. Just as the commodity character of consumer products and the bourgeois character of the manner of their distribution and exchange is tied in with the commodity character of labour power, here too, the question of the capital character of the material conditions of production, depends, on its relation to the human conditions of production or to labour power. The capitalist system is nothing but generalised commodity production, i.e., the production system in which labour power has turned into commodity, and in the final analysis it is this factor, i.e., the commodity character of labour power which gives the entire

process of social production and distribution a capitalist character, resulting in a certain social relation, based on the production of surplus value, between material conditions of production (or economic resources) in various branches of production, and the human conditions of production or labour power. An economic programme which fails to disrupt the basis of this relation, i.e., which fails to organize the entire production in a way which would separate capital as a social relation (and not merely as the possession of individual capitalists), can serve all purposes other than socialism or "transition to socialism". In such a programme can be found no element of "non-capitalist production" or any conflict with bourgeois commodity-money relations and "logic of the market".

3- The Soviet Union as a Degenerate transitional Society

Mandel's ideas of the laws and characteristics of transitional societies, as he says himself, relate to the economic structure of the Soviet Union. More accurately, these ideas are essentially contrived to justify and theorize Soviet society as a system in transition to socialism, so that, based on these views, all facts and observations indicating the capitalist character of the Soviet system can be pushed aside, as manifestations of the "sway of bureaucracy" and the "bureaucratic formation" of the Soviet state and system and the way can be made out as reasons for the transition of Soviet society to socialism. This remainder turns out to be essentially the state ownership of means of production and economic planning by the government. In other words, according to Mandel and Trotskyists in general, the government in power in the Soviet Union is both the cause of the degeneracy of the economic system and its deviation from a mature model of society in transition to socialism, as well as the means of the preservation of the non-capitalist character of this system, and its move towards socialism! Trotskyism tries to justify this contradiction by means of the thesis of the "degenerate workers' state", and by attributing the first function to the bureaucratic degeneration of the state, and the second function to being working class. A comprehensive critique of this view requires a separate discussion (comrade Farhad Besharat has outlined this critique in Marxism and the Question of the Soviet Union, Bulletin of Views and Discussions No. 1). * So far as it concerns the critique of Mandel's theses, it would suffice to take a look at those characteristics of the Soviet economic system, regarded as "the formation of the Soviet system" in these theses, to invalidate this view.

Mandel himself concedes that the Soviet system has the following characteristics:

- 1- Commodity-money relations and the commodity form of products have been retained with all their corres-

ponding consequences.

- 2- Many products are hoarded and distributed in the black market.
- 3- Individual enterprises function on the basis of profitability and the income of the director is related to the profit of his own firm.
- 4- The management of enterprises is carried out in a capitalist fashion (material motives to increase production and the setting of wages on this basis).
- 5- The only motive and aim of the ruling bureaucracy is to "maximize their own consumption". The "main motor" for the realization of the plan is this factor.
- 6- Labour, particularly in the sector for production of consumer goods, has not as yet assumed a social character.

These characteristics cannot be interpreted as anything but indications of the existence of a capitalist system in the Soviet Union, by anyone slightly familiar with the nature and functioning of capital. The existence of any of these characteristics in any production system, involves the functioning of capital and the exploitation of wage labour. The last characteristic that Mandel expresses as: "certainly the degree of socialization of labour in consumer goods sector is smaller than in 'producer goods sector' cannot mean anything but "certainly the exploitation of labour power in consumer goods sector is retained more than in producer goods sector". To attribute these characteristics to "the sway of bureaucracy" and "extreme bureaucratic degeneration" does not change the fact that these factors are organic parts of the Soviet production system, are regularly reproduced, and are expanding all the time. In other words, the functioning and the survival of Soviet economic structure is impossible and unamalgamable without the existence of commodity-money relations, the profitability of individual enterprises, bourgeois methods of management, and so on. On the other hand, "planned economy" which is posed against all these facts as the non-capitalist character of the Soviet economic system, and the most fundamental argument for its transition to socialism is discredited and turns against itself, when it is granted that "maximizing their own consumption (increasing the income) on the part of the ruling bureaucracy as the omnipotent agent for introducing and executing economic plans, is the dominating planning and the motor for its realization." Obviously such a plan cannot be in conflict with bourgeois distribution, and generally with any of the above capitalist characteristics; indeed its functioning would not be feasible without relying on these factors, on intensifying and expanding them.

And, finally, Mandel, and Trotskyists in general deduce the sway of bureaucracy, and all capitalist characteristics of the Soviet system that they formulate as "the bureaucratic deformation of the Soviet economic structure", from the "underdevelopment of production forces" and "the isolation of the

October revolution", while this is an obviously deterministic and fatalistic idea. Mandel himself rightly rejects the argument that "on the basis of the productive forces existing in the Soviet Union (then and now) only capitalism is, and has been, possible". But he makes the same methodological mistake when he states that "... the USSR through Yugoslavia to China and Cuba are transitional societies in conditions of socio-economic underdevelopment (with an insufficient degree of development of productive forces), which therefore show, in various forms, severe or extreme forms of bureaucratic deformation". What he is saying, in fact, is that "on the basis of the degree of the development of productive forces in the above mentioned countries (then and now) nothing but the sway of bureaucracy and the bureaucratic degeneration of the economic system in these countries is, or has been, possible". (Even in the tenth thesis Mandel mentions the development of productive forces as the primary condition for the annihilation of the elite bureaucracy and the advancement of the Soviet Union into a socialist society) and this view draws the existing Soviet condition and that of similar systems as inevitable and beyond the will and conscious activity of the working class as the other argument. Such views which spring from a mechanical approach to dialectical materialism, Trotskyism has in common with modern revisionism, and are a major aspect of their difference and contradiction with Leninism. In the Trotskyist viewpoint, the critique of political economy (the critique of the nature and function of the Soviet economic system based on the nature and function of the state) is only the other side of the coin of mechanical materialism.

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The contradictions and theoretical faults of the theses is by no means limited to what was discussed above. Other incorrect forms such as concluding "the necessity of capital accumulation" and "the social character of labour in the capitalist system" from the competition of capitals, and defining "extended commodity production" on the basis of "means of production becoming commodities" are also mentioned in the theses. But dealing with all of them is beyond the scope of this article. The theoretical source of all the "mistakes" can, in the final analysis, be summed up in ignoring the place of "labour power" in production, i.e., what should be the axis and basis of all economic Marxist analysis. Apparently this decisive question does not particularly interest the Trotskyists who have made a fetishism from "planned economy" and "nationalization of capitals". Trotskyist socialism is distinguished, not by negating exploitation and the liberation of labour, but primarily with "centralized, planned economy", and "wiping out competition" and this turns the Trotskyist critique of the Soviet system and government into a non-proletarian, reformist, justifiatory, and patronizing criticism which, in its most radical form, expresses nothing more than an inconsistent, democratic critique -

a critique which, from the point of view of distorting the ideal of socialism and effacing its possibility and desirability in the minds of the world working class, (one of the most fundamental blows that the defeat of the October revolution and the sway of capital in the Soviet Union has delivered onto the communist and working class movement in the world) definitely rubs shoulders with modern revisionism itself.

Notes

1- "What we have experienced hitherto - from the USSR through Yugoslavia to China and Cuba - are transitional societies in conditions of socio-economic underdevelopment (with an insufficient degree of development of the productive forces), which therefore show, in various ways, severe or extreme forms of bureaucratic deformation and degeneration." (from the third thesis)

2- "what distinguishes the various economic formations of society - the distinction between for example a society based on slave-labour and a society based on wage-labour - is the form in which this surplus labour is in each case extorted from the immediate producer, the worker." (Capital, Vol.1, Penguin, p.325)

3- Mandel himself admits this. In an interview with Denis Bergé he says: "Transition to simple commodity production did not require the take-over of power by small producers: we have not had a simple commodity state. The feudal state did exist, and then came the bourgeois state." (The French Critique No.18-19, September 1977. Quoted from Socialism-vs-Engelab, No.2). Mandel apparently is not aware that this fact is in contradiction with "social formations relying on simple commodity production relations."

4- "In reality, the character of Soviet economy is a contradictory combination of the non-capitalist and a bourgeois mode of production." (Ernest Mandel, "The Marxist Theory of Economy", quoted from Socialism-vs-Engelab, No.2)

5- "In the shallowest conception, distribution appears as the distribution of products, and hence as further removed from and quasi-independent of production. But before distribution can be the distribution of products, it is: (1) the distribution of the instruments of production, and (2), which is a further specification of the same relation, the distribution of the members of the society among the different kinds of production. (Subsumption of the individuals under specific relations of production.) The distribution of products is evidently only a result of this distribution, which is comprised within the process of production itself and determines the structure of production." (Marx, Grunderisse, p.96)

* See Bolshevik Message No.11, the article: "Trotsky & the Critique of the Relations and state in Soviet Union"-BM

6- It is likely that Mandel has deduced the maintenance of commodity-money relations from the persistence of the bourgeois right of production based on "to everyone according to his work." But drawing such a conclusion is by no means permissible. That in a society in which the producers obtain their share of social wealth through exchange, equality continues to maintain its bourgeois meaning, does by no means lead to the existence of bourgeois exchange and commodity-money relations. No doubt with the distribution of consumer goods on the basis of the time of work, the workers - who have different needs - will not have the same living conditions, but this very mode of distribution indicates that commodity-money exchange, i.e., the particular form of exchange based on the labour power as commodity is completely negated, even though exchange itself, which would remain up to the time of "to everyone according to his need", would still continue to exist.

7- Generally speaking, countries supported by the Soviet Union and Soviet revisionist parties as societies going through the "non-capitalist route to growth" are each in one way or the other dependent upon a planned, centralized state economy. Trotskyist organisations (here we mean the official line of the Fourth International) have for this reason adopted a supportive approach to these countries. The similar approach of the Tudeh Party and the Iranian Trotskyists to the Islamic Republic is an example of the correspondence of views between Trotskyism and modern revisionism in relation to any regime which would engage in "nationalizing capitals" and "concentrating economic resources in the hands of the state". Indeed, the Trotskyist thesis of "transitional society" and

the revisionist thesis of "the non-capitalist route to growth" are not particularly different as regards their economic foundations of their analysis. Politically, therefore, they arrive at similar conclusions.

8- It is interesting that Mandel says, in response to one of his critics: "we do not in any way defend the view that planned economy is per se socialist production relations. What we do emphasize, one can say, is the fact that planned economy represents production relations unique to the transitional stage from capitalism to socialism." Thus Mandel leaves no room for doubt that in his view planned economy per se represents specific production relations, and therefore, according to him the (plan itself, and not its content and goals, determine the character of the planned economic system - irrespective of whether it is socialist, or non-capitalist and transitional.

9- To what extent is the critique of capital on the basis of the exploitative relations of capital with labour overshadowed by factors such as the commodity nature of the means of production, it is well reflected in what Mandel says here: "Against the viewpoint which regards Soviet production relations as basically capitalist, it can easily be shown that capitalist production relations are by no means limited to 'the domination of the masters of the means of production over direct producers.' Rather, it involves a whole set of other characteristics, such as the commodity character of the means of production itself, and the fact that the circulation of these is carried out among different production units in the form of the purchase and sale of machinery, raw materials, etc." (Ibid; interview with Denis Bergé)

PUBLICATIONS OF THE CPI

Komunist is the central organ of the CPI, published in Persian. The following issues of the paper were published during the first half of 1988:

Komunist No. 35, Jan. 1988

- Resolutions of the 10th plenum of the CPI central committee
- A review of the struggles of the printworkers in Tehran. R. Moghadam
- Rah-ah-Kargar and the problem of programme (part III). N. Javid
- How should the labour law be passed?

- On labour fines (translation of an article by Lenin) - part I.

...

Komunist No. 36, Feb. 1988

- The Islamic Republic too will be overthrown by another insurrection. K. Davar
- About the military presence of the U.S.A. in the Gulf: Interview with the comrade Abdollah Mohtadi.
- Boycott and dissolve the Islamic Councilist R. Moghadam



- Prepare to get our annual payments in the workplaces!

- On labour fines - part II

...

Komunist No. 37, March 1988

- So Israel will not be safe! M. Farzad
- Mass organisations of the working class: Interview with comrade Mansour Hekmat.
- About the Paris Commune
- On labour fines - part III.
- Islamic Councils in Kurdistan: a weapon in the hands of the Islamic Republic (A CPI radio broadcast)

Komunist No. 38, April 1988

- Preparing for the First of May. K. Davar
- Certain important aspects of the CPI's activities at the international level: Interview with comrade Hamid Taghvaei (part I)
- Let us rise against the Iran-Iraq war!
- On the KDP's Eighth Congress & political deadend. A. Mohtadi

- Communique of the 11th plenum of the CPI central committee

- Interview with a leader of Hamadan's brick-yards strike

- On labour fines - final part.

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Komunist No. 39, May 1988

- The prospect of civil war in Afghanistan. M. Farzad
- Certain important aspects of the CPI's activities at the international level: Interview with comrade M. Taghvaei (part II)
- The French railway workers' strike & the general assembly movement. F. Besharat
- May Day message by the central committee.

- Communique of the CC of Komala about the present situation of the KDP and the termination of internal conflicts in Kurdistan.

- Two articles by Engels: "A Fair Day's Wage for a Fair Day's Work", "The Wages' System."

- Some remarks about the struggle against Islamic Councils in factories

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Komunist No. 40, June 1988

- Islamic Republic and the defeat of pan-Islamism. N. Javid
- Unilateral declaration of ceasefire by Komala & the developments within the KDP: Interview with comrade Abdollah Mohtadi.
- Communique of the Sixth Congress of Komala
- Closing speech by comrade Ebrahim Alizadeh in the Sixth Congress of Komala
- On the labour law (A CPI radio broadcast).

Why Ghazemlou's party refuses to reply (A broadcast from radio Voice of the Iranian Revolution).

Evictions in Kurdistan & the war

The Character of the Commune (K. Marx)

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PESARO (Vanguard) is the organ of the Kurdistan Organisation of the CPI (Komala);

PAYAM (Message) is the biweekly paper of the radio Voice of the Iranian Revolution (The radio of the Kurdistan Organisation of the CPI);

Bosoooy-e-Sosyalism (Towards Socialism) is the theoretical-political publication of the CPI;

MARXISM & the QUESTION of the SOVIET UNION is a bulletin of views and debates published as a supplement to the theoretical organ;

RESANEH is a newsletter published by the CPI - the Committee Abroad;

REPORT is the biweekly newsletter in English of the CPI-the Committee Abroad.

Communique of THE SIXTH CONGRESS OF KOMALA

Working masses!
Militant people of Kurdistan!

The Sixth Congress of the Kurdistan Organisation of the Communist Party of Iran (Komala), after successfully accomplishing the tasks it had set itself, concluded its work after six days.

Preparation for the Congress began a long time ago. Delegates of the district organisation and of the various organs were elected in district conferences and election sessions of the central organs. The Congress materials were in advance sent to the members.

The Sixth Congress opened on May 3rd, 1988 with the singing of the Internationale and observing a minute's silence in memory of the comrades who have fallen on the path of workers' emancipation, among them comrade Jafar Shafi'ee. First the delegates' credentials and the procedural rules were discussed and approved, and then the Congress began the agenda. The agenda included:

- 1- The report by the central committee about the work of the organisation between the two congresses;
- 2- A sum-up of the activities of Komala so far; its present situation, and the perspectives;
- 3- Komala's strategy in Kurdistan's movement;
- 4- The military work, and certain important aspects of the future activities of the open organisation;
- 5- Assessment of the present situation of the KDP in Kurdistan;
- 6- Election of the central committee.

In its discussions, the Congress reviewed, from the standpoint of a workers' party which should at all times be the representative of the protest and interests of the working class, a decade of Komala's public activities and the effects that this has had on

the condition of workers and toilers and the situation in Kurdistan.

In the light of these discussions it became clear how the activity and presence of Komala during this period has resulted in the spread of the ideas of socialism, the promotion of workers' class-consciousness and the rise in the political and democratic expectations of the people in Kurdistan.

Taking these gains and experiences of the workers and their political party into account, the Sixth Congress tried to depict the next steps which should be taken in order to unite and organise the rank of the workers' revolution, as well as the perspective of the workers' movement in Kurdistan and the expectations of the working class from the victory of this movement.

In addition, the political and military situation in Kurdistan was discussed and examined in order to determine the general lines of the political, organisational, and military activity, to draw lessons from the past experiences, and to adopt new methods and tactics in the activities of Komala in all fronts.

An overall assessment of the situation of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the causes of its political deadend and confusion was another point on the agenda of the Congress.

The Congress passed the necessary resolutions for the dissemination of its discussions and decisions which will be published gradually.

The election of the members and substitute-members of the central committee was the last point on the agenda. Expressing its gratitude to the efforts of Komala's organs and the Peshmarga force in providing the necessary facilities and the security, the Congress ended its work on May 12, 1988, after the closing speech by comrade Ebrahim Alizadeh and the singing of the Internationale.

**Central Committee of the
Kurdistan Organisation
of the CPI-Komala**

May 14, 1988

Financial Contributions for the revolutionary movement in Kurdistan may be credited to the following account:

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ADDRESSES OF THE CPI - THE COMMITTEE ABROAD
BM BOX 3004, LONDON WC1N 3XX ENGLAND
OIS, BOX 50040, 104 05 STOCKHOLM SWEDEN