

Polemic on the path of the revolution in Iran

The following article was published in *Peykar*, issue no. 34, central organ of the Organization of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class in Iran. It was published on December 17, 1979, shortly after the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. The complete text, published in five parts, is entitled "The zig-zags of the counter-revolution and their one-sided reflections in the ranks of the revolution." *Peykar* is one of the many Marxist-Leninist forces in Iran. These forces are engaged in a sharp debate in order to achieve unity among communists who have several points of disagreements, ranging from the characteristics of the Iranian society, to the different strategic and tactical positions adopted in regard to the Khomeini regime.

This document presents the analysis made by *Peykar* of the history of the last few years, as well as the class analysis and the tasks of the revolution. The text is a polemic aimed at modern revisionism and those who defend the "three worlds theory". An important part of the complete polemic is also aimed at the positions and practice of the Union of Communists of Iran (UCI), namely the latter's support at least for the moment, of Khomeiny, and its analysis of Iranian society, etc. Another section of the text, which is not reproduced here, deals with "semi-Trotskyism" which, in *Peykar's* opinion, is the characteristic of the Communist Party of Workers and Peasants of Iran, *Proletarian Path* and others. According to *Peykar*, "left semi-trotskyism" characterizes those who refuse to wage the revolutionary democratic struggle, under the pretext that it is necessary to make the proletarian revolution, and of not submitting to the leadership of reactionary forces, namely certain sectors of the bourgeoisie and of the petty bourgeoisie.

This text has been slightly edited by *International Forum*. The basic translation has been made by sympathizers of *Peykar*.

The positions expressed here have evolved slightly since their publication in this polemic.

From the pages of *Peykar*...

1) The three periods of the revolution

The bourgeois democratic and anti-imperialist revolution in Iran has gone through two distinct periods and is now entering its third period.

First period:

This period begins with the revolutionary upsurge in early 1976, and the resistance movement of the people of the shanty-towns of Tehran in the summer of 1977. The protest and

anger of the working masses caused severe clashes in the government. Different sections proposed different solutions in order to overcome the mass resistance, and they used this resistance to increase their own power. The clash in the ruling class created favorable conditions for the development of the revolutionary movement. Revolutionary intellectuals who were more conscious — the students in the first place — felt the tide swelling and took their protests to the streets. The regime soon faced mass demonstrations

everywhere. From the beginning, we can see the bourgeois liberal tendency try to lead the mass movement and keep the latter's demands within legal limits. In Iran, the liberal bourgeoisie ("non-dependent middle bourgeoisie"), because of its economic and political positions in the dependent capitalist relations and its ferocious defence of the domination of capital, demanded at best a moderation of the pressure of the monopolies and imperialist capital. Therefore, it could not be really anti-imperialist content of the struggle against dependent capitalism to a struggle against the personal dictatorship of the Shah. The revisionist traitors of the Tudeh Party theorized and propagated these counter-revolutionary position.

But the revolutionary potential of the masses was too great to remain within these limits. It continued to grow and spread, day by day, until the direct confrontation between the masses and the regime in Qom, on January 19. From this moment on, we could see the rapid growth of another tendency trying to consolidate its leadership and domination over the revolutionary movement. The rich traditional petty bourgeoisie, led by the religious forces linked to Khomeiny, tried to assemble its "**political army**". In one demonstration after the other, they called upon the masses to follow them. In early 1978, we can see that they have imposed their leadership on the movement. Despite its support and defence of the revolution, despite its growth, the rich petty bourgeoisie has contradictions with the growth of the movement because of its class positions. Although these forces remained faithful to the revolution until the end of the first period, they could only grow closer to the liberal bourgeoisie and become more influenced by it since there was no proletarian party. The massacre of September 7, 1978 (known as the Black Friday), provoked a revolutionary situation. The regime, and "those at the top" could no longer stay in power as before, and the masses, "those at the bottom" no longer accepted to live as before. The Leninist law on "revolutionary situations" could be seen in its full meaning, and the slogan calling for the overthrow of the Shah became a practical slogan. In the fall of 1978, a mass strike movement developed. The proletariat, in the first ranks of the people's struggle, opposed the state of siege with its iron fist. Mass political protests became more

meaningful and broader; the resistance movement became more radical.

None of the new tactics used by the regime could stop the masses from moving forward. Even with a large part of the liberal bourgeoisie joining the regime (Bakhtiar's government), and even with the imperialists dumping the Shah, the anti-people regime was doomed. Due to the inexistence of the proletarian party, the petty bourgeoisie, through the mediation of the liberal bourgeoisie, fell into the trap of imperialism, and concluded its historical compromise with reaction. After the formation of the Bazargan government, negotiations took place between the representatives of Ayatollah Khomeiny (Baheshti, Bazargan and co.) and imperialism and reaction. While soldiers deserted the army by the hundreds, Khomeiny declared: "The army belongs to the people, and the people belong to the army". Khomeiny forbade the punishment of the Savakis (members of the Shah's secret police) and traitors by the masses, by stating that it was up to the righteous authorities to examine these things. This marks the beginning of the historical compromises of the petty bourgeoisie with the counter-revolutionary camp. But the winter insurrection (in February) postponed this attempt. The fear of the ever-increasing revolutionary power of the masses temporarily kept the petty bourgeoisie and its leader Khomeiny in the camp of the revolution.

The second period:

This period starts with the obvious vacillations of the petty bourgeoisie from the revolutionary to the counter-revolutionary camp. After the winter insurrection, a dual government is formed, consisting of the liberals, the compradores, and the organs of the petty bourgeoisie, such as "the revolutionary councils" and the "committees of the Iman". This period will last until the integration of the Revolutionary Councils into the State, July 21, 1979. During this period, two distinct political forces exercised power over most regions of the country. It was also during this period that a third force emerged and grew: the democratic councils, also called people's soviets, in Kurdistan and Turkmenen Sahra. These councils were basically dominated by the radical and democratic petty bourgeoisie. Except in a few places, they did not succeed in maintaining and stabilizing their hold.

The first force, that of the liberal bourgeoisie and the compradore bourgeoisie, tried to reconstitute the economic and political system of dependent capitalism which had been undermined during the revolution. It also tried to dominate the second power, that of the traditional petty bourgeoisie, by using the latter's material and moral influence among the people, in order to destroy the third power, the democratic councils, and also to suppress the democratic struggle of the working class and the peasantry in all regions of the country. This vacillation continued until the end of this period, when the petty bourgeoisie started to play the dominant role over the liberal and the compradore bourgeoisie. During this process, though the petty bourgeoisie had not yet joined the counter-revolutionary camp, it had nonetheless left the revolutionary camp. It acted in both these camps: the execution of military personnel, leaders of the regime, and Savak agents was naturally a revolutionary move, supported by the communist forces and by the masses. But this move was sharply contrasted by the repressive measures taken to smash the national and democratic struggles of the working class and the masses in general.

Third period:

With the complete integration of the revolutionary councils in the government, the petty bourgeoisie joined the camp of counter-revolution for a certain period. A central organ of power emerged from this integration: the ruling government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, under the leadership of the sold-out liberals, who determined the general policies of the government. Although there were contradictions among the different sectors of the government, these contradictions remained within the framework of the government and its policies. All the different fractions shared a common interest in the smashing of the mass movement, the workers' organizations and the national liberation movement. At that time, the leading clique of the Islamic Republic of Iran launched its ferocious attack against the heroic people of Kurdistan...

Later on, the military and the political defeat of the regime in Kurdistan dealt a heavy blow to the material basis of the regime, that is, the **illusions of the masses**. The growth of

dissatisfaction, strikes, demonstrations, etc., in all of Iran clearly showed that the people no longer gave the government the benefit of the doubt. And it is in this context, that the government as a whole, but at the initiative of the rich traditional petty bourgeoisie, come up with a new tactic. Khomeiny ordered the seizure of the nest of spies that was the U.S. embassy. This is how the murderers of the Kurdish people suddenly hid behind revolutionary and anti-imperialist phraseology. The ruling clique, once forced to reconstitute dependent capitalism in order to survive, now attempted to present itself in harmony with the masses, to mobilize them temporarily against the U.S.A. to force them to return the Shah, all this in order to preserve its long-term interests.

2) Right and "left" tendencies in the three periods of the revolution

In each of these three periods of the democratic and anti-imperialist revolution of the Iranian people, there have been right and left tendencies within the communist movement of Iran, which have had negative effects on the development of the revolution. The rightist tendencies in the communist movement come from two revisionist groups: the Khrushchevite revisionists, led by the traitors of the Central Committee of the Tudeh Party¹, and the "three-worldists" led by the "Revolutionary Organization" of the Tudeh party and Co. These revisionist poles, by presenting their new devious and treacherous theses, attack the communist movement, which is vulnerable to right and left deviations because of the inexistence of the communist party. All of them, each in his own language and by his own methods, deny the necessity of the revolution, deny the necessity of the hegemony of the proletariat over the democratic revolution at the stage of imperialism. They advocate that the proletariat must tail behind non-proletarian and even reactionary forces. This is the source of the revisionists' betrayal.

a) Modern revisionism and Khrushchevite revisionists.

The Khrushchevite revisionists have assembled all their treacherous positions under the thesis of "the non-capitalist road of development"; all their theses lead to the extinction of the



In Kurdistan, Iran, the people carefully study the revolutionary posters that have been put up in order to follow the latest developments in the struggle (photo from the *Revolutionary Worker* of the RCP, USA).

revolution and to the alienation of the people under the yoke of imperialism, of Russian social-imperialism in particular. They basically deny the necessity of the democratic revolution under the leadership of the proletariat party; they also deny the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat and put forward that democracy can be achieved under the leadership of other sections of the society, such as the national bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie. They also maintain that with the help of the Soviet Union, this can and will lead to socialism. They advise all communist parties and organizations around the world to accept the hegemony of non-proletarian forces in any revolutionary struggle;

and by making peace with them, they betray the revolutionary struggle of the masses.

On the contrary, we are convinced that in the era of imperialism no democratic revolution can succeed, no matter how democratic or radical it is, no matter how close to the proletariat its leadership is, unless the revolution is led by the proletariat and its party, which considers the democratic revolution as the basis for the socialist revolution. According to the teachings of Lenin and Stalin, national and democratic revolutions are part of the world proletarian revolution. And due to the fact that these peoples wage a struggle against world reaction, that is, imperialism, they are to be considered

the natural allies and a reserve force of the proletariat. With the same reactionary theses of the "non-capitalist road of development", the revisionists of the Tudeh party in the early stages of the revolutionary mass movement, invited the communists, the progressive strata and the masses as a whole to compromise with the "most honest sectors" of the comprador bourgeoisie. And when this class was totally exposed and denounced, they thought that in this "revolutionary situation", we had to compromise with the liberal bourgeoisie (Bakhtiar's government) which had become the saviour of the bankrupt regime of the Shah. When the new regime came to power, they initially proposed to support the liberals and compradores; they finally came out to support the "anti-imperialist" conciliatory petty bourgeoisie; they systematically tried to hold back the revolutionary mass movement. This is the strategy of the treacherous Tudeh party....

This same revisionist tendency can be seen in the Fedayin Guerilla Organization of the Iranian people.... In the first period, when it was absolutely necessary for communists to expose and denounce the liberal bourgeoisie in their slogans, the Fedayin raised the banner of the struggle against the dictatorship, and followed the "united front against the dictatorship" put forward by the Tudeh party. Thus, in practice they denied the necessity of the proletarian leadership in the democratic revolution. Instead of supporting such slogans as a "People's Democratic Republic", or "the creation of the proletarian party", they put forward "people's sovereignty", etc. In the second period, although they had reconsidered their approach, the Fedayin were still influenced by liberal tendencies and even non-liberal tendencies. They could not clearly demarcate from the liberals and the compradores. They supported the State against the "stubbornness" of the "Committees of the Iman". They could not distinguish the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary gestures of these committees, in opposition to the reactionary nature of the so-called "liberal" State. This is how they made it even easier for the Committees of the Iman to integrate the dual government, and to break with the revolutionary camp.

b) The three-worldist revisionists and the new revisionist tendency

Alongside the Khrushchevite revisionists, there is the other revisionist pole, that of the three-worldists. They

do not consider the main trend of our era to be revolution, but war. Overestimating contradictions between imperialists on the world scale, they focus everything on the contradiction between the peoples of the world and the imperialists, on the one hand, Soviet social-imperialism, the rising imperialist, on the other. They openly advocate, in theory and in practice, class collaboration between the workers and the exploiting classes. They ignore the whole question of the mass movement and revolution, and call upon the proletariat to join one reactionary side to oppose the other.

The three worldists in Iran, led by the "Revolution Organization of the Tudeh party", have opposed the resistance movement from its very start. They believed that the weakening of the "national and independent" regime of the Shah would make the Northern neighbour (the Soviet Union) less powerful, and so they supported the regime in practice. When the regime was overthrown, against their reactionary will, and when the liberals and compradores took power, they rushed to support them and in the struggle against social-imperialism, they gathered under the banner of Iman Khomeiny. They considered all the anti-communist slogans shouted by the masses, under the influence of Khomeiny, as being "anti-Soviet" slogans. Thus, they fanned the flames of anti-communist feelings among the unconscious masses. They heartfully supported the barbaric attack of the Islamic regime on the Kurdish people, because according to their position, this would stop Soviet infiltration within the Iranian revolution. These sold-out reactionaries cannot understand that the only way to put a stop to Soviet influence in the Iranian revolution is to develop the revolutionary spirit of the masses and to expose the liberals and expel them from the ranks of our movement, to engage in communist work among the masses, and to refuse to compromise with the counter-revolutionary and reactionary regime.

This tendency... is shared by the Union of Communists of Iran (UCI)². In the first period of our revolution, their dogmatic view on the revolutionary issues led them to erroneous positions. By comparing the situation of Iran with that of China, the UCI characterized Iran as a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country, and not as a dependent capitalist society. Therefore, they confused the liberal bourgeoisie of Iran with the national

bourgeoisie of a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country. And the democratic attitudes that this national bourgeoisie could inherit because of its necessary economic support from the internal production and market was also mistaken, because in the system of dependent capitalism, the liberal bourgeoisie does not base itself on internal production. This is how, instead of denouncing the liberal bourgeoisie, they gave their "conditional" support to traitors like Sanjabi, Fourouhar (translator's note: these were leaders of the National Front, the main political representative of the liberal bourgeoisie at that time), and their like and begged them to take arms! For example, as a result of this erroneous understanding, **Haghighat** (translator's note: organ of a split from the UCI called "Union of the Interior") called Bakhtiar a "democrat" and expected him to be realistic. This was at a time when Bakhtiar was trying to lead the people to conciliate with U.S. imperialism and with the reactionary regime. The source of the UCI's errors and deviations was the dogmatic attitude in using China as a pattern for the Iranian revolution. A section of the UCI even supported the "three worlds theory", and it tried to distinguish between the correct understanding and the "reactionary interpretation" of this theory. Fortunately, this confusion was finally overcome by the UCI and denounced. But we have later seen sharp signs of survival of this tendency in all sections of the UCI. For example, in the second period, **Haghighat** invited the communists to participate in the Committees of the Iman, in order to democratize these set-ups, ignoring the fact that they were nothing but organs of the rich petty bourgeoisie which vascilated between the camps of revolution and counter-revolution; in practice, they invited the masses to follow these committees.

1. The communist movement in Iran refers to the Tudeh (revisionist) Party as the "Central Committee" to distinguish the revolutionary elements of the reformist Tudeh Party (until 1953) from the opportunist elements of the Central Committee who fled to other countries or who submitted to the regime while many honest cadres were being executed.

2. Editor's note — The Union of Communists of Iran has taken a clear stand in opposing not only the "three worlds theory" but also the present leadership of the CP of China. Peykar recognizes this fact in another part of this text which we have not published in this issue of *International Forum*.