

UNITED ACTION OR UNITED FRONT

THE O.C.U. HAS WRITTEN NUMEROUS ARTICLES AND PAMPHLETS ON THE IRANIAN LEFT: TRACING ITS HISTORY AND PROBLEMS, CRITICIZING ITS PRACTICE, AND FINALLY ATTEMPTING TO DEFINE ITS TASKS. THESE ARE, IN FACT, TOO NUMEROUS TO CITE HERE. TWO RECURRING THEMES THROUGHOUT ITS DIALOGUE WITH THE LEFT, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN O.C.U.'S PLEA FOR AN ACTIVE ATTEMPT TOWARDS PRINCIPLED UNITY AND RELATEDLY, FOR A TOTAL REJECTION OF STALINIST CONCEPTS AND TACTICS. "UNITED ACTION OR UNITED FRONT" (RAHAI, n. 85, 7/2/81) CONTINUES THIS DIALOGUE UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES FOCUSING ATTENTION ON THE "PAYKAR" AND "FEDAYEE MINORITY" ORGANISATIONS, TWO OTHER LEFT ORGANISATIONS ACTIVE IN IRAN TODAY.

. . . A look at the publications of many left organisations shows that today, unlike before, most in one way or another, have come to accept the need for united action. There are now fewer instances of open sectarianism and self-aggrandisement. In the past few weeks, two important advances have been made, both an outcome of the intensification of repression by the Islamic Republic: first, the emphasis on the necessity for united action and second, an understanding of the importance of democratic struggles. While these are definite advances, if remaining ambiguities and problems are not attacked head on, these advances will remain superficial and formal - advancing us only to another dead end.

To start with, we must ask why it took the left so long to comprehend the importance of democratic struggle in the first place. Must each and every individual in this country be subjected to tyranny a hundred times over before the communists realize that they must struggle for freedom? When we were publishing repeated pleas on this

issue, there were not few organisations and groups who, content with having a book stall in this street or that back alley, thinking they were "free", condemned us to "extremism" on the issue of freedom. These forces were so distant from the political environment of society and the political changes taking place; so completely wrapped up in their cocoons; so deeply emersed in their perverted communist - read Stalinist - theories, that they repeatedly negated the human need for freedom and development as inseparable parts of the meaning of social justice and social freedom. Only when the guns had been put directly to their heads did they realize that yes, freedom is not such a bad thing after all. If these forces were the only ones active in society at this time, it might have even been amusing to observe them but this terrifying backwardness emerged at the time when other forces in this same society were deceitfully raising the banner of "freedom" and were mobilizing hundreds and hundreds of people around it. In Rahai, no. 46 (Sept. 1980) we discussed this problem and finally in Rahai, no. 56 (Dec. 1980) we wrote:

... it is not an exaggeration to say that the most important factor making Bani-Sadr what he is today was the Iranian left. It is the Iranian left that allowed him and his kind to become the only actors "fighting" for the cause of freedom... this Iranian left has made the cause of freedom appear to be that of liberalism ...

The revolutionary Iranian left must stand up against these bad teachings and distortions. Freedom is not the slogan of the liberals. It is a real slogan of the communists. In capitalist society, the communists do not condone the fascists' closing of liberal newspapers. The defense of the press - even the liberal press - is essential. The Iranian left ... must not fear the heckling of fascists disguised as leftists ... By raising the call for freedom, they must express their own demands, mobilize and help those who are rebelling against repression, and disarm the

liberals.

And finally:

He who abandons the barricades of freedom and hands them over to the liberals is the one who serves liberalism, not he who remains and fights and shows that the communists are the most freedom-loving individuals on earth.

These warnings were repeatedly left unheard until the day came when the Paykar organisation, for example, learned that:

It has thus come to pass that the masses, disturbed by growing repression and unaware were pulled under the false and anti-revolutionary banner of liberalism raised by the liberal bourgeoisie.
(Paykar, no. 110,

One must ask: were not you and those that agreed with you on your view of freedom part of why it "came to pass". . . . What have you to say today to those people whom you have described as "unaware" What did you do to make them aware ?

. . . . Was it really "necessary" that we should have gone on under the influence of non-communist Stalinist teachings, seeing moment by moment the deception of the people by the liberals, until finally on the unexpected night of June 15th be forced to claim that: oh no, the "unaware" masses have gone under the banner of liberalism?

Certainly, as a result of the heavy share it had in hurting the communist movement in this respect, Paykar will be moved towards self-criticism, at least superficially, in the near future. If the past is any indication of the future, however, this criticism may come in the form of laying the blame on this or that real or imagined tendency in the Fedayee Majority or Minority organisation. In other words, the old story of "it wasn't really me but my hand" will continue. When the ability for self-criti-

cism does not exist, it is unavoidable that recourse will be found to such methods. In any case, whether this new discovery is real or superficial, its proclamation is nevertheless a step forward...

But the understanding behind the need for unity on the part of many organisations presents several problems. As an example, consider the argument put forth in Kar, no. 114, under the title, "On Forming a Front". In this article, the Fedayee comrades, in answering the questions raised by forming a front, present explanations based on an unclear and ambiguous perspective.

The comrades claim:

Despite the need for the unity of revolutionary forces, the conditions are not yet present to do so.

or:

Unity in action of the revolutionary forces is a step towards creating the suitable conditions for forming a front.

and, elsewhere:

Those forces who share a common immediate goal and a common enemy must agree to a revolutionary program.

This shows that the comrades have a vague notion of certain concepts and definitions and under some kind of populist influence, constantly are led to blur the distinctions between different social forces. Let us explain.

Suppose that under the influence of an intensified fascistic atmosphere, the need for unity amongst left and revolutionary democratic forces arises. . . . Fine. Under these circumstances, what else can we call such a front which aims to struggle against fascism, other than a front against fascism? Is the front under consideration by the comrades such a front or something else? If it is, then you should explain what are the pre-conditions and the

obstacles towards forming an anti-fascist front.

We don't find any such explanations because the aim of the comrades for forming a front is unclear. Thus, when many have asked Kar the vague question of why it does not form a "front", the comrades have only been able to answer, more vaguely, that, "the conditions for forming a front do not exist."

We feel that the conditions for forming an anti-fascist front do in fact exist today with one qualification. The left forces - the communist forces - must first bring about a unity or coalition between themselves and then enter into discussions with non-communist forces. Any and all kinds of one to one and separate discussions between communist forces and other forces will only lead to the hegemony of non-communist forces, in whatever kind of front, and here specifically in an anti-fascist front.

Comrades! First, we must build the house. Until then, that is until the left organisations have not learned or do not want to enter into serious discussions with one another and present a common program, non-communist forces will have the right to claim leadership.

How can you explain to the people the fact that the left organisations, supposedly of one family and all claiming to be communist, cannot come together; that they are so conceited that each demands in return for its own cooperation, the exclusion of another. And yet, they hope to join together under the catalyst of the "revolutionary democrats". Don't the people have a right to call these organisations childish and immature and to not trust them? Don't the revolutionary democrats have a right when entering into separate negotiations, to promote what is only in their own interests?

Comrades! at the beginning it is necessary to build a left alternative. If it is not yet possible to become a social alternative, it is still necessary to build, present and publicize a united left voice. The people of this land must first come to know what the left represents. The revolutionary democrats must come to know that before them stands a firm union. All this is not unattainable. Over and over again we have written about its necessity and the existing possibilities.

And what responsibilities would this anti-fascist

front have were it to be formed? This front would partake in anti-fascist struggle. If this seems obvious, it is not. The comrades, for example, do not realize that an anti-fascist front does not make a revolution; that before making a revolution, one must know what kind of revolution one intends to make. In your opinion, what would a "unity of revolutionary forces" actually aim to do? What kind of revolution would it work towards? Amongst the revolutionary democrats which you would include, let us take the example of the Organisation of People's Mujahedin.

Do you, or we, or for that matter anybody else know the kind of revolution that the Mujahedin seek? Is it an Islamic revolution, a socialist one, "new democratic", "national democratic", or something else? We don't know. Your supporters also don't know. Do you the leaders of the organization know? Are you ready to make an Islamic revolution with the Mujahedin? They believe in Islam and want that Islam, in a democratic way, rule society. Do you want this?

You will undoubtedly ask as others will, which Islam? You may say, that the concept of Islam held by the Mujahedin is completely different than that of the present regime. Yes, we agree. But specify what kind of Islamic Republic you are willing to fight for.

As for us, we do not accept any kind of Islamic Republic, any religious state or religious leadership. We will not struggle for such nor make a revolution to bring it about.

We respect the democratic tendencies of the Mujahedin and are ready to fight alongside them for democracy and against fascism. But we also know that their revolution is not our revolution. Of course, they too know this well. Therefore, what kind of a "revolutionary front" are you considering that would allow you and other communists and the Mojahedin to partake in "a revolutionary program usually called a front"; to make a kind of revolution the nature of which is not at all clear?

Comrades! Before the uprising, you criticized us for our understanding of the role of the clergy and our description of the clergy as reactionary and fascist. You

said we were being ultra-leftist. At the time when we published, "The Role of the Clergy in Seeking Power" and warned the left that this group would turn on us and after the revolution make us their target, the Iranian left was too confused and immature to see or want to see such a reality.

But what about today? Is there anyone to be found today who is a leftist and doesn't accept this? And if we have learned from experience does this knowledge only relate to the past or can it not be also useful for the present and the future?

Comrades! We can unite with the revolutionary democrats against fascism. We can form an anti-fascist front with them, we can even form an anti-imperialist front because they are anti-imperialist. But we and they cannot make a social revolution together because both of us do not agree on one kind of social revolution. It is not simply a question of definitions - it is one of theories and perspectives. We must be exact. We must know what it is that we want so that we can specify the road to it.

When you wrote an open letter to the Majlis, we became very worried. When you criticized yourselves for doing so, we were in turn relieved. You claimed that the reason for your mistake was "zigzags and backwardnesses" and the absence of "a clear policy and program". Your honest approach was commendable, but comrades, whatever the reason may have been, who in the end is responsible? What fault do the people and your supporters share who only witness such things. You were honest and confessed the truth. Others have not had the honesty nor the courage to do so on many occasions. But what now? Is backwardness a virtue? Are we some kind of non-social forces who by simply acknowledging our weaknesses become purified?

Comrades! Neither you, nor we, nor Paykar, nor the Worker's Way, nor any other group or organization can by itself eliminate backwardnesses. A remedy should accompany a diagnosis. Only our unity can bring about that "clear policy and program" of which you speak. You cannot do it alone. No one can. Before another catastrophe falls upon us, let us try to eliminate our incompetencies.

History will not forgive those who did not try to do away with weaknesses. And here lies the difference between "criticism" and "confession".*