

Editorial

IN DEFENSE OF IRAN

Iran today faces a revolutionary situation comparable to the one in Russia between February and October 1917.

There is no infallible tactical formula for revolutionaries during such times — political alliances will be determined by the specific dangers or openings as they materialize, just as Bolshevik policy toward the provisional government changed from month to month during the revolution. The principle involved is the political independence of the revolutionary proletariat aiming at the eventual seizure of power, but maintaining full tactical flexibility.

When Kerensky's government was threatened by General Kornilov's counter-revolutionary army, the Bolsheviks demanded and got arms with which they defended the provisional government against the right danger. It was this policy which brought Lenin's party the legitimacy in the eyes of the masses (as well as the guns) which later made possible the overthrow of Kerensky and the completion of the revolution.

We believe the situation in Iran is comparable to Russia during the Kornilov period, and that revolutionaries must rally to the defense of Khomeini's government. The danger posed by the U.S. and its Middle East allies/puppets should not be minimized. Though the likelihood of a direct U.S. military attack seems to have receded for the time being, the undercover destabilization escalates every day.

U.S. meddling in Iranian politics — repeatedly charged by Khomeini and the revolutionary left, and hotly denied by the State Department — is not difficult to demonstrate. The sudden sharp rise of the political and military fortunes of Aya-

tollah Shariat-Madari in Tabriz is the best example. Shariat-Madari, whom Chicago's best-known Zionist, Irv Kupcnet, calls "our kind of ayatollah," is the man who before the revolution stated on behalf of the National Front, "whether or not the Shah remains head of state does not matter to us." [*International Herald Tribune*, May 20-21, 1978] Now, as all of Iran is demanding that the Shah return to face trial, Shariat-Madari says, "We had the shah for 37 years. Who wants him back?" [*Chicago Sun-Times*, December 16, 1979] It is not accidental that this man is being groomed by the U.S. government while the media here promotes him as "the second most important leader in Iran." [John Chancellor, *NEC News*, December 30, 1979] In October, the U.S. resumed the shipment of military spare parts and ammunition to Iran and Iranian army officers are still being trained on U.S. military bases — reminiscent of the U.S. maneuvers in Chile during the Allende years, laying the groundwork for a military coup.

Our general stance does not mean supporting Khomeini's government uncritically or unconditionally; STO supports the armed revolutionary left.

There are many reactionary tendencies which must be combated by the revolutionary left. The constitution as adopted, for example, made vast concessions to the right, as against the original draft. The oppressive policy toward minority nationalities has opened the door to reactionary intrigue.

(In the past, the Kurdish movement under Barzani's leadership was used by the Shah, the CIA, and the Israeli government to at-

tack the Baathist government of Iraq. No doubt the CIA would like to repeat and improve on this scenario, using the national movements' grievances as a pretext to weaken Khomeini and bring on a civil war which would justify a military coup.) The forces presently fighting for autonomy in Kurdistan have purged the remnants of Barzani's forces and have made opposition to U.S. imperialism a clear part of their program. These forces are: the Kurdish Democratic Party; the Party of the Toiling Masses, led by a religious leader, Hosseini; and fedayee guerrillas.

The continued fighting in Kurdistan has had two results for Khomeini's regime: it has hurt him in that it has exposed the brutality of his Revolutionary Guards, and it has been helpful to him in that it has sustained an atmosphere of jingoism and Persian national unity. At present, peace negotiations have been proposed and have bogged down over the Kurdish forces' insistence that the fedayee guerrillas be included in the negotiations, and the government's refusal to meet with them.

The Khomeini government has attempted to repress the left, but so far the attempts have ended in failure. The newspaper of the Organization of Iranian People's Fedayee Guerrillas (OIPFG), *Kar* (Labor), was shut down last summer by the government. Within a few months it was available again — not openly on all the newsstands, but nevertheless readily available at the universities and some workplaces. Subscribers in the U.S. now receive it regularly.

The Marxist left was able to function openly until last summer and is again functioning openly at

the time of this writing. The Revolutionary Guards did attack the offices of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (OMPI) and the OIPFG: the OMPI placed an armed guard around its office and succeeded in defending it, and while the OIPFG headquarters were indeed burned, that did not hold back their growth and influence. The OIPFG and the Workers Syndicates jointly sponsored a Mayday demonstration which attracted 500,000 people. During the last few weeks, huge crowds have marched openly in Tehran under the banners of the OIPFG and OMPI in support of the occupation of the U.S. embassy. A few Trotskyists have been jailed, but the government has been forced to cancel scheduled executions.

Despite these right-wing currents there is a progressive side to the Islamic revival that is sweeping the Middle East which much of the U.S. left has failed to understand and appreciate — largely due to its

knee-jerk anti-clericalism. Islam represents a third force in the region, one which is opposed to the interests of both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. It would not have been able to make the gains which it has made if it were wholly reactionary and anachronistic. Obviously it is inadequate to the broader revolutionary current and obviously it imposes fetters on those very forces which it releases — the clearest examples are the repression of women and homosexuals and sexuality in general. But the left brings no credit on itself for its failure to understand what is positive in this Islamic movement and what is the basis of its appeal.

It is within this framework — not outside it — that the boldest revolutionary thrust to date has taken place: the students' seizure of the U.S. embassy, which is in its ninth week as we write. By taking the embassy, the students let loose the storm which was held back the February before. Very quickly two

governments fell: first the Bazar-gan/Yazdi regime which was presumed to be secretly pro-U.S. (Ibrahim Yazdi's secret meeting with Zbigniew Brzezinski led many to conclude that he was the CIA's main conduit in the Iranian inner circle); then the "moderate" government of Abol-Hassan Bani-Sadr. Now Khomeini's longtime loyalist, Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, is feeling the heat.

Thus far Khomeini himself has embraced the revolutionary fervor, and his public statements have all supported the students. Throughout the Middle East and Africa — from Palestine and Eritrea to Western Sahara and South Africa — revolutionary anti-imperialist movements have cabled their support, stressing the grave threat posed by the U.S. The revolutionary left in this country should not hesitate to join the chorus.

January 5, 1980

Documents of the Iranian Revolutionary Movement

Below we reprint documents from three of the armed revolutionary movements in Iran.

Excerpt from "On the Revolution," translated from Kar (Labor), newspaper of the Organization of Iranian People's Fedayee Guerillas, December 1979.

All of these forces -- workers, peasants, students, craftsmen, merchants, and soldiers — rose up roaring the slogans of "death to the Shah" and "death to imperialism." There was a common cause and each was determined to remedy the existing situation in favor of their own socio-economic interests. But what were the results? Due to

the lack of a revolutionary nationwide organization of the working class, it was the clergy who benefited most from the opportunity for agitation and propaganda by its large-scale and direct contact with the masses through its traditional religious organization. Thus, using the popular cry of "death to the Shah," they were able to direct the revolutionary movement and mobilize the masses under their own leadership.

The clergy, relying on the masses' religious beliefs and their hatred of the Shah, and on the upheaval created by an economic and political crisis, raised the motto of "Islamic Republic" as the only cure for the people's problems. How-

ever, "the Islamic Republic," which the narrow-minded clergy is striving for, is the canonic rule of a Moslem clergy leadership. This has been crystallized in the recent Constitution passed by the "Experts Assembly." This Islamic rule is in contradiction to imperialist domination; it is also in contradiction to the existing objective realities of Iranian society.

The liberal Bourgeoisie, who had been prevented by the Shah's dictatorship from developing its social interests — namely, the exploitation of the people — to its fullest potential, had asked for some reforms from his so-called Majesty. Immediately after the movement became widespread, the liberal Bourgeoisie