

Strikes shake Shah's bloody regime

Iran: workers revolution not clerical reaction!

Down with the Shah! Down with the mullahs!

With massive protests and demonstrations against the Shah continuing to rock Iran, the blood-soaked Pahlavi dynasty is looking more and more like a regime on its last legs. Even the fulsome support of every major world power -- from all the Western imperialist governments to the Stalinist regimes in both Russia and China -- may not be enough to save the Peacock Throne. Despite the imposition of martial law and the grisly massacres of thousands of protesters, the demonstrations and strikes which have shaken Iran for the last year and a half show no sign of coming to an end.

Anti-Shah demonstrators tore through the streets of Teheran on November 6, setting fire to banks, cinemas, hotels, government buildings and the British Embassy. The Shah's desperate response was to tighten the provisions of martial law -- but dissent inside the army is reportedly widespread and demonstrators have openly fraternised with the troops.

This situation poses point blank the question: who shall rule in Iran? The mass protests have been dominated by the Muslim mullahs (religious leaders) led by Ayatollah Khomeini, who have sought to channel the widespread hatred for the Shah into a reactionary crusade for a religious-based government. But the last few weeks have seen an important change. A major workers' strike wave has introduced a new element, potentially posing a way forward from the reactionary alternatives of the monarchy and the mosque.

The workers' strikes are distinct from the mullah-led protests, and the religious leaders have often taken their distance from them. Thus when strikes by taxi drivers, government, airline, hospital and postal employees, among others, broke out in early October, the merchants of Teheran unexpectedly *opened* the city's main bazaar, which had been shut down in support of the religious opposition. They wanted, said the merchants, 'not to confuse the issue with the other strikes' (UPI dispatch, 7 October). As if to emphasise -- and reinforce -- the separation between the religious protests and the workers' strikes, the Shah recently responded to the strike by Iranair staff by ordering the air force to transport thousands of Muslims to Mecca for the annual pilgrimage (*Guardian*, 3 November).

At first, the strikes focused largely on economic issues; but now the 30,000 strikers at the huge Abadan oil refinery (the largest in the world) have also taken up explicitly political demands for an end to martial law and freedom for political prisoners. This dramatic entry of the Iranian working class -- three-million strong and one of the most powerful in the Middle East -- onto the political stage underlines sharply the question of the role of the proletariat in the struggles against the Shah. Organised, militant and relatively less constrained by the stranglehold which the mullahs have on the masses of the petty bourgeoisie, the Iranian workers hold the key to meeting the democratic aspirations of the oppressed through proletarian socialist revolution.

'Left' apologists for the mullahs

However the Stalinists and guerrillaists who dominate the left both in Iran and among Iranian students abroad are united in insisting that the workers' struggles must be subordinated to the reactionary aims of the Islamic clergy. The Iranian left is prepared to support *any* opposition to the Shah, from whatever quarter and no matter what its motives and programme. For them, the popular front with the Koran is justified by the dogma of 'anti-imperialist unity': the subordination of the oppressed to assorted militarists, bourgeois politicians and petty-bourgeois demagogues.

In contrast, for the last several months the international Spartacist tendency has intervened energetically in demonstrations, conferences and public meetings of Iranian exiles in both Europe and America, in order to insist that the mullahs are *in no way* a progressive alternative to the



Mass demonstration in Teheran

despotic Shah, and to pose the revolutionary proletarian alternative: Our slogans, 'Down with the Shah! Down with the mullahs! For workers revolution in Iran!', have won us the enmity of all manner of Muslim and Stalinist Iranian students and exiles, and of sundry non-Iranian leftists who today also seek to gain cheap popularity by standing under the banner of the ulema.

At an October 14 demonstration in London called by the Committee Against Repression in Iran (CARI), the Spartacist League contingent uniquely raised chants against *both* the Shah and the religious opposition. This aroused the ire not only of the Muslims and Stalinists, but also of the supporters of the fake-Trotskyist International Marxist Group (IMG) and Socialist Workers Party (SWP) who are among the adherents of CARI.

Following the demonstration CARI came under sharp attack from the Stalinists and Muslims, who claimed that they had raised the 'Trotskyist' slogan 'Down with the Shah! Down with the

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mullahs!', and that this was a 'reactionary' position. In response, CARI issued an eight-page leaflet in Persian, which assured the mullah-lovers that, in fact, CARI supported the opposition of Khomeini; and that only 'a few members of the Spartacist group' raised the demand 'Down with the Shah! Down with the mullahs!' on the October 14 demonstration. CARI had only allowed the Spartacists to march on the demonstration, according to the leaflet, out of respect for workers democracy. But this was shown to be a sham on November 3, when a gang of CARI goons, with the tacit support of the IMG, physically prevented Spartacist League supporters from distributing materials at a CARI-sponsored film show and rally (see box).

The mullahs and Father Gapon

CARI claims that the mullahs represent a 'democratic movement against the Shah'. Some of its adherents (notably supporters of the IMG and SWP) attempt to draw an analogy between the current protests and the Russian revolution of 1905, which began with the workers marching behind a Russian Orthodox priest, Father Gapon. The SWP's *Socialist Worker* (28 October) argues that Gapon 'was a religious figure not unlike Khomeini' in order to justify its policy of tailing the mullahs. But the Gapon/Khomeini analogy is entirely superficial and false.

Khomeini and his fellows have a programme which is not at all democratic or progressive, even in relation to the despotic Pahlavi dynasty. On many social questions -- for example, the oppression of women -- they hold positions which are actually more backward than even the current reactionary dictatorship. Moreover, the mullahs are not reluctant participants in a mass plebeian revolt which is essentially outside their control. Rather, they have determined the political thrust of the anti-Shah demonstrations, giving them the unmistakable odour of clericalism.

In contrast, Father Gapon was not genuinely representative of the Russian clerical establishment; indeed, he supported the demand for the separation of church and state. And as an isolated individual he quickly faded into obscurity after 1905 -- something that is not about to happen to Khomeini, the recognised traditional leader of millions of Shi'ite Muslims.

To be sure, the Muslim leaders play upon popular hatred for the real crimes of the Shah.

The Peacock Throne claims to have 'liberalised' Iran, bringing prosperity and progress to a once backward society. But the Iranian masses know that this is a lie: while the Shah jets around the world, the brutal terror of the army and SAVAK secret police stalks the streets and basic democratic rights are denied. However the mullahs have not become the spokesmen for elementary democratic demands.

Despite the fact that the Russian workers in 1905 initially supported a Russian Orthodox priest, from the start they demanded a constituent assembly based on universal suffrage, an eight-hour day, and the amelioration of working conditions. But what are the slogans of the mullahs' 'democratic' opposition in Iran? In the February 1978 Tabriz revolt they were: 'Victory to the just rule of Islam', 'We are adherents of the Koran, we don't need Rastakhiz [the Shah's political machine]', 'Death or *Hejab* [modesty, ie the veil]' and 'Death or Khomeini'.

Russian revolutionaries actively participated in the 1905 revolutionary uprising and were able to gain the leadership of the soviets -- but they never accompanied this with fanatical upholding of a Russian Orthodox 'progressive clergy'. Today, however, the Iranian leftists and their British camp followers fall all over one another in their rush to hail the 'progressive mullahs'. They make much ado about the supposed 'anti-imperialism' of the Islamic movement. The overturning of Coca Cola lorries, the destruction of cinemas and shops selling alcohol, the constant railing against 'pornography' -- the left dignifies each of these acts of blind hostility to every aspect of Western culture with an anti-imperialist label.

Resistance, the tabloid newspaper published by the Iranian Students Association (ISA) in Chicago and widely distributed by ISA supporters in this country, complains that the Iranian people are 'subjected to vulgar movies, alcohol, carbonated chemicals, and international



Teheran demonstrators burn furniture from a wrecked bank, November 6

financial gambling at the expense of our entire way of life'.

But those who accept the insane proposition that imperialist super-profits and the brutal exploitation of the Iranian proletariat are made possible by the consumption of Coca Cola must therefore believe that Saudi Arabia, one of the bastions of US imperialism's control in the Middle East, has somehow cleansed itself of imperialist domination. There one finds Committees for the Commendation of Virtue and the Condemnation of Vice roaming the streets shutting down shops at prayer time, attacking youths with long hair and flogging those found drinking alcohol in public. And of course cinemas, nightclubs and discotheques are banned by the Saudi oil sheikhs.

That the various wings of Iranian Stalinism should feel a kinship with the mullahs is not surprising, for there is an intersection between them on social and cultural questions. The ISA's nauseating apologies for the Islamic degradation of women is a case in point; here Stalinist puritanism -- which glorifies the nuclear family and advocates rigid norms of 'decency' -- dovetails with the socially backward code spelled out in the Koran. But when ostensible Trotskyists like the IMG and SWP twist and turn in an effort to discover the 'progressive' features of the Muslim leaders, this is an expression of pure and simple opportunism.

Authentic Trotskyists, in contrast, would attack unsparingly the reactionary programme of the mullahs, reaffirming the traditional communist hostility to all forms of religious obscurantism and clericalism. A *military bloc* between revolutionary proletarian forces and Islamic groupings would be possible if such groupings were part of a genuine democratic opposition to the Shah or to imperialist intervention. But Khomeini's movement calls for an Islamic republic under the continual censorship of the religious hierarchy. Victory for the mullahs would, if anything, increase the already brutal oppression of minority nationalities and non-Shi'ite religious sects; and an Iran purged of television and Coca Cola would not have changed its relationship to imperialism one iota.

The fruits of Islamic reaction

The mullahs have an obvious strategy for power -- an appeal to the army. From his refuge in France, Khomeini recently appealed to the generals to 'rise up and help overthrow the Shah' (*Washington Post*, 16 October). As the protests continue, the Shah's authority is increasingly eroding even inside this, his only bastion of power. Already in the last year a major-general and a top SAVAK official have been executed for alleged anti-Shah plots.

The rise of the Iranian Muslim opposition is taking place in the context of renewed reactionary religious fervour throughout the Islamic world. The mullahs' crusade against the Shah is part of the same drive as the July 1977 Islamic army coup of General Zia in Pakistan and the August 1975 coup establishing an 'Islamic Republic' in Bangladesh. Throughout this region the natural political allies of the Islamic clergy are the imperialist-trained army offi-

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CARI's 'democracy': mullahs yes, Bolsheviks no!

A series of actions taken by the Committee Against Repression in Iran (CARI) have provided a clear indicator of the willingness of the British left to fall into line with the reactionary leadership of the Iranian Islamic opposition under Ayatollah Khomeini. CARI, which is heavily backed by the fake-Trotskyist IMG and the SWP, panicked when Iranian Stalinists and Muslim activists falsely attacked it for raising the Spartacist League's slogan 'Down with the Shah! Down with the mullahs!'. It rushed into print with a lengthy Persian-language leaflet denying any connection between CARI and the 'reactionary' anti-mullah slogan.

But, not surprisingly, this has not been enough to allay the criticisms of the anti-Trotskyists who predominate in the Iranian opposition: so CARI members have gone further in their attempt to preserve the fictitious unity of the anti-Shah struggle against our fight for a class perspective in Iran. At a CARI meeting in Birmingham on October 28 CARI spokesmen claimed that our slogan has caused us to be labelled as 'CIA and SAVAK' agents, and that it has 'split the Iranian left'. SL members were told that they were likely to be beaten up by the Muslim/Maoist alliance, and an SL spokesman who attempted to ask a question during the discussion period was refused the microphone. Pabloite CARI members did not protest at this, though presumably such manoeuvres run counter to their self-

proclaimed support for all sections of the struggle against the Shah.

The CARI definition of 'democracy' was fully clarified, however, at a London CARI rally on November 3, where SL members leafletting and selling outside were ejected on the grounds that their mere presence was a 'provocation'. This move was backed up by 'stewards' who, they claimed, were there to defend CARI's 'right' to hold a meeting free of Spartacist 'disruption'. So much for CARI's claim (in the Persian-language leaflet) that they fight our ideas with 'reasons' and not 'physical violence'!

The tactics employed at the meeting provide a graphic demonstration of the kind of politics into which CARI has been drawn by its refusal to oppose the present leadership of the struggle against the Shah. CARI supporters who go along with or support Ayatollah Khomeini would do well to examine the level of activity which the organised left has been allowed under populist Islamic demagogues in Pakistan and Libya.

The suppression of genuine political debate will never cohere an authentic Leninist party in Iran; the struggle against the Shah will be won only by the hard fight to construct a revolutionary working-class leadership. The politics of the IMG and the SWP turn sincere would-be revolutionaries in CARI away from that fight.

IMG sabotages anti-fascist defence

The following letter (which has been slightly abridged for publication) was sent to the Birmingham branch of the International Marxist Group because of the IMG's irresponsible conduct around the defence of the ramp, the main selling place for left-wing newspapers in the city centre. Copies of the letter were sent to the Socialist Workers Party, International-Communist League, Workers Power and the Workers Socialist League.

Spartacist League, Birmingham Branch
27 October 1978

International Marxist Group
Birmingham Branch
attention Branch secretary

Dear Comrades:

We are writing this letter to sum up the past 3½ months of activity in defence of the ramp. Since the initial fascist attack on July 8, we have made numerous attempts to co-ordinate a united defence with the IMG and the other left organisations that sell there. However your organisation, in particular, has not only shown a light-minded attitude to the formation of an organised defence but has sabotaged every agreement that was arrived at for co-operation in defending left paper sellers.

You have not disputed the importance of the ramp sale, and the danger to left paper sellers did not end with the obviously premeditated July attack by the fascists. The subsequent mobilisations by the National Front and British Movement and the persistent harassment of paper sellers by the police should indicate to anyone that the ramp is still threatened. Likewise it is obvious that at the present time the best way to resist this threat is through consistent, substantial and well-organised mobilisations of the left.

From the beginning we have fought for this kind of defence -- and from the beginning you have done little but obstruct any real effort toward united action. The week after the first fascist attack you claimed, along with the Socialist Workers Party, that the 'mobilisation' of your ranks for the fun and frolics of the

Manchester Anti Nazi League Carnival had priority over the ramp defence. Despite having smaller forces at our disposal than either the IMG or SWP, we mobilised more militants and took a far more active role in organising a defence bloc that weekend. During the next few weeks, while we continued to make the Saturday ramp defence a high priority, you rarely acted on your commitment to tell other organisations of your plans for the ramp, nor did you succeed in mobilising more supporters than the usual complement of paper sellers and badge floggers.

Following the fascist provocation on July 29, when eight to ten young thugs made a brief appearance on the ramp, and the subsequent *Searchlight* report of the fascists' plan to attack with a force of 25-30 on August 5, we called a meeting of left organisations to discuss a co-ordinated defence. The IMG proposal at this meeting -- agreed to by the SL, SWP and I-CL representatives -- was, in short, that each group mobilise a minimum number of supporters for an agreed selling period and communicate to the other organisations all relevant information, including their own plans and ability to maintain their commitment on a weekly basis.

But you were incapable of living up to even these modest arrangements. 'Saturday after Saturday' you mobilised half the number of supporters you had agreed to. You chose not to communicate to us important developments regarding the ramp. And, when other obligations prevented you from fulfilling your agreed commitments, you failed to abide by the agreement to inform the other organisations beforehand.

After the escalation of police harassment, culminating in the arrest of an SWP comrade in late September, the SL, IMG, SWP and I-CL, at a meeting held in your office on October 12, came to yet another agreement for a united response. We all agreed ... to mobilise a joint contingent of at least eight people before commencing sales. You demonstrated your seriousness about this agreement by breaking it two days later.

The practical importance of defending what is 'only' the most important common selling place of the entire Birmingham left makes a

balance sheet of this whole episode necessary. The problem is not just that you are incapable of consistently mobilising even a fraction of your claimed membership, nor that your well-known dilettantish incompetence has been strongly confirmed for everyone. The sad fact is that you cannot be trusted to keep your word about even the most modest united front commitments.

Your petty, stupid and short-sighted sectarianism toward the united defence of the ramp is undoubtedly connected to the fact that we have been the organisation that has been most energetic about building the defence. For we are also the organisation which is most frankly hostile to your popular-frontist programme for 'fighting fascism' alongside the Liberals, lords and bishops in the Anti Nazi League. It was this bankrupt, pacifist programme which led you to dance away the afternoon in Brixton on September 24 with the scab Carnival 2, while 2000 fascists marched on the East End of London. We, in contrast, gathered our forces at the Brick Lane counterdemonstration, raising slogans against the ANL betrayal and arguing for a programme of building workers defence guards based on the unions and crushing the fascists through mass working-class action. However, our uncompromising hostility to your politics has in no way deterred us from fighting for joint action in defence of the ramp: a goal which should be shared by all organisations in the workers movement.

Clearly, despite all our attempts, the united defence of the ramp has come to an impasse. Its failure is above all *your* responsibility, comrades of the IMG. But the failure of this attempt at common defence work with your group will not deter us from seeking similar united fronts in the future. We remain open to *serious* new initiatives concerning defence of the ramp, or indeed united fronts in any area where common action would be to the benefit of the workers movement.

Fraternally,

A Holford
for the Spartacist League

ANL's ultimate weapon: the petition

Faced with widespread recriminations over its refusal to mobilise against the National Front on September 24, the Anti Nazi League has recently decided to launch a new campaign. The immediate target is the newly-opened NF national offices in the East End of London, which the emboldened fascists have provocatively located just a stone's throw from Brick Lane. According to *Socialist Worker* (October 21) this campaign has already achieved marvellous success, or as

the back-page headline tells it, this is the 'Last Ditch for the NF'. Some bold new initiative? The formation of union-black defence guards, perhaps? Or a massive ANL-led mobilisation to evict the fascists and deny them the streets? Not likely! True to its character, the ANL has resorted to that classic instrument of 'militant' struggle, so beloved of pacifists, preachers and Labour reformists ... a petition.

This petition calls for the 'removal' of the fascist headquarters. But who is supposed to do the 'removing'? Certainly not the masses of workers and oppressed minorities: according to the ANL, they are supposed to spend their time listening to 'anti-Nazi' speeches from union bureaucrats and Liberals and dancing at Carnivals, not 'falling into the trap' of confronting the fascists in the streets. Clearly, the 'removal' is supposed to be organised by the local Labour-controlled Council, since calls for state bans against the NF go hand-in-hand with social-patriotic leaflets and pacifist Carnivals to make up the sum total of the ANL's anti-fascist strategy.

Socialist Worker describes how the fascists have been driven back to their 'last ditch'. Fifteen ANL supporters, pen and paper in hand, ventured into the NF's self-proclaimed stronghold of Hoxton Market on October 15 where they gathered no less than 500 signatures in 1½ hours of canvassing. Only one minor incident spoiled this glorious success: as they were leaving the market, the ANL petitioners were attacked by a gang of NF thugs 'with clubs and by trained boxers'. One Asian youth was clubbed by an NFER until he was 'unrecognisable'.

And what conclusion does *Socialist Worker* draw from all this? 'We'll be continuing with the petition, all over Hackney, to show how

unwelcome they are. Come and help us.'

Few incidents could condemn better the dead-end treachery of ANL politics than this confrontation between NF thuggery and impotent 'anti-Nazi' petitioning pacifism. By blocking the mobilisation in the East End against the fascists on September 24 in favour of the Brixton Carnival 2, the ANL has undoubtedly strengthened the NF's confidence in its ability to hold the streets and attack with impunity immigrants and leftists. The message from the Carnival betrayal and from Hoxton Market is the same: only a break with the legalist, belly-crawling popular frontism of the ANL can open the road to the construction of workers defence squads, based on the trade unions, capable of crushing every fascist mobilisation. ■

C. P. Recipe For Fighting Fascism!



Cartoon published by the then-Trotskyist American SWP in *Socialist Appeal*, 1939. Today the ANL supporters play the despicable role of the Stalinists in the 1930s

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Early Bolshevik work among women of the Soviet east

There are two basic reasons why we are reprinting the following article, which originally appeared in *Women and Revolution* no 12, summer 1976. The first is to expose and counter the deliberate falsifications peddled by today's fake-Trotskyists about the historical record of Lenin's Bolshevik Party on the woman question. At a time when the International Marxist Group (IMG) and its United Secretariat mentors rail against the Bolsheviks' supposed 'underestimation of the subjective factor' in women's oppression, and excoriate Lenin and Trotsky for their correct refusal to support feminism and fight for an 'autonomous women's movement', it is necessary to reassert the importance of the fight against women's oppression to the Bolsheviks' proletarian revolutionary programme, both before and after the seizure of state power.

The second, and more immediately pressing, reason for reprinting the article at this time is the response of these same pseudo-Marxists to the current massive upheaval against the Iranian monarchy. In the absence of a revolutionary proletarian alternative, the popular revolt against the Pahlavi autocracy has in large part fallen under the sway of reactionary religious leaders like Ayatollah Khomeini, who yearn to replace the bloody rule of the Shah with a fundamentalist 'Islamic republic'.

Khomeini, Ayatollah Shariatmadari and the other Shi'ite mullahs do not represent even a bourgeois democratic opposition to the Shah, along the lines of the liberal democrat Mossadegh who was ousted by a CIA-sponsored coup in 1953. Instead, they would like to return to the 'golden age' of Islam in the seventh century. Their occasional 'anti-imperialist' rhetoric cannot mask their real programme of opposition to all 'corrupting' and modernising Western influence which undermines Islamic law and tradition. Most notably, the mullahs fervently desire to reverse the paltry gains made by women in recent decades.

The toiling masses of Iran must be broken away from these reactionary misleaders, if their heroic struggles against the Shah are not to lead to the creation of a new regime which is no more democratic or progressive than the Peacock Throne. The Spartacist League has uniquely taken a stand in forthright opposition to both the blood-drenched Iranian monarchy and the religious fanatics, raising the slogans 'Down with the Shah! Down with the mullahs!' and 'For proletarian revolution, not Islamic reaction!'

In contrast, the IMG and the other fake-Trotskyists have fallen into line behind Khomeini, trying to disguise or openly apologise for his reactionary programme. Anxious to tail any currently popular movement, these charlatans see no contradiction between championing petty-bourgeois feminism in Britain and cheering on the fanatically anti-woman Islamic fundamentalists in Iran.

The International-Communist League (I-CL), sometime left critics of the IMG, have perhaps been the most typical and the most brazen in their prostration before the religious leaders. Under the title 'What Iran's Opposition Wants', the October 21-28 issue of the I-CL-supported paper *Workers Action* prints lengthy excerpts from a *Le Monde* interview with Khomeini. Far from raising a single word of criticism of the ayatollah, *Workers Action* extols the 'foremost leader of the Muslim opposition' for his 'courageous opposition to the Shah' and 'programme of democratic reforms'.

Asked by the *Le Monde* interviewer to defend himself against the proposition that 'Shi'ism is backward-looking and hostile to progress', in particular as regards women, Khomeini first

echoes Mary Whitehouse by attacking 'dirty and corrupting cinema programmes' and then gets to the heart of his defence. He cites the 'participation of women of all sections of society in the recent demonstrations', claiming: 'The women were alongside the men in the struggle to demand their independence and their liberty.'

But Khomeini does not say (nor does the I-CL intervene to point out) that the women who fought for their 'liberty' in the streets were cloaked from head to foot in the *chador*, the long veil prescribed by Islam as a symbol of women's subservience and degradation. Khomeini summed up his concept of 'liberty' for women in an earlier *Le Monde* interview:

'As for woman, Islam has never opposed her liberty [...]. On the contrary, it has always been against the concept of woman as object and has restored her dignity to her.... But the regime of the Shah is attempting to prevent women from exercising their liberty by plunging them into immorality.... We wish to liberate women from the corruption that is menacing them.' (*Le Monde*, 6 May)

The 'dignity' which the mullahs so fervently wish to 'restore' for women includes enforced wearing of the veil, legal subordination to father and husband, denial of the right to vote and forced exclusion from virtually all aspects of social and economic life. In the mullahs'

The triumph of the October Revolution in 1917, which dramatically transformed the lives of Russian women, wrought even greater transformations in the lives of the women inhabiting the Central Asian regions which had been colonized by tsarist Russia. But in these feudal or pre-feudal generally Islamic cultures, where the lot of women was frequently inferior to that of the livestock, change came more slowly.

The status of women varied, of course, from culture to culture and within cultures, depending on social class and the nature of the productive process. But from the mouth of the Volga through the Caucasus and Turkestan, from Iran and Afghanistan to Mongolia and northward to Siberia virtual enslavement was the rule, although restrictions were of necessity less strictly applied to women of the poorer classes -- nomads and peasant women -- whose labor was essential. A certain level of trade and industry and a settled way of life in the cities was a prerequisite for the luxury of strict enforcement of Islamic law.

It was not only the formal prescriptions of the Koran, but also local customs codified in the religious common law (the *Shariat*) and the civil law (the *Adats*), which determined the situation of Islamic women. The few partial reforms expressed in the Koran -- the forbidding of female infanticide, the restriction of polygamy, the recognition of limited property and inheritance rights for women -- were generally nullified by local *Shariats* and *Adats*.



Women wearing the *chador* on recent demonstration in Teheran

holy city of Qom in central Iran, women whose *chadors* are considered too short are stoned.

The struggle to implement the programme of Bolshevism among the culturally backward peoples of the Soviet East took the Bolsheviks into conflict with the ideas and social customs which had held the society together for many centuries. But they did not seek to evade such necessary conflict in order to amass short-lived 'popular support' -- they fought to build a real base of support for the programme of proletarian revolution. In Iran today, as in Russia earlier this century, only the victorious revolutionary proletariat can meet the democratic aspirations of the toiling masses and lay the material basis for the eradication of all social oppression, including the brutal subjugation of women. For a Bolshevik party in Iran!

The practically universal institution of *kalym* or bride price in itself illustrates the Muslim conception of marriage as a purely commercial contract having nothing to do with emotional bonds or personal commitments. In some areas the bride's presence was not even required at the wedding. The purchase price of the female commodity had already been negotiated between the families of the bride and groom, and the wedding was merely a ceremony at which the transaction was notarized. The marriage contract was subject to dissolution by the husband at any time, and polygamy and child marriage were quite common. Children too physically immature for marital relations were subjected to the 'horrible operation' -- they were ripped open by a midwife to make consummation possible.

Kalym bound a woman, often from childhood, to the husband who satisfied her father's price. If she ran away, she could be pursued as a criminal and punished by her husband or his clan. A runaway wife might be punished by having her legs broken or by other barbaric tortures. For a woman so much as suspected of infidelity, the appropriate punishment was branding on the genitals with a hot iron.

For the poor, marriage by capture often replaced payment of *kalym*. Once she was seized, carried off and raped, the woman had no choice but to remain with her abductor, since she had been disgraced and no other man would have her. Even widowhood brought no freedom, because a wife for whom *kalym* had been paid was the prop-

erty of the husband's family or clan and was bequeathed to his brother. Suicide by fire was the only alternative according to the laws of Islam. However, access to heaven was dependent on the will of the husband, and if cheated out of *kalym* by a wife's suicide, he was unlikely to invite her to enter into paradise.

Rules demanding the veiling and seclusion of women had been introduced into Islamic law with the conversion of the Persian aristocracy in 641 AD. In many parts of Central Asia the veil required was not simply the *yashmuk*, covering the mouth, but the *paranja*, which covers the whole face and body without openings for sight or breath. For centuries many women have lived thus shrouded and imprisoned in their *ichkaris* (segregated living quarters). A Yakutsk legend depicts a model daughter of Islam. Her living body is set before guests who proceed to cut off pieces to eat. The girl not only bears this torment in silence but tries to smile pleasingly.

The triumph of Russian imperialism in the 1880s brought few advances in social organization or technology in the Muslim East. The wretched Russian peasantry lived like royalty in comparison with the primitive peoples of this area.

The tsarist government forced the agricultural villages to switch at this time from food crops to cotton, and railroads were built to transport this product to Russian textile plants. Following the railroad workers were women who did not wear veils -- Russian prostitutes. For a long time they were the only models available to the Muslim nomads and peasants of the 'liberation' which Russian capitalism had bestowed upon women.

The October Revolution transforms Central Asia

With the victory of the October Revolution the Bolsheviks turned toward Central Asia in the hope of developing its vast and desperately needed natural resources. The flow of these resources to the West was threatened, however, by the fact that Central Asia was from the beginning a haven for every sort of counterrevolutionary tendency and for the retreating White armies. Bourgeois consolidation anywhere in this area would have provided a base for the imperialist powers to launch an anti-Soviet attack.

The extension of the proletarian revolution to Central Asia, moreover, could become the example of socialist development in an economically backward area which would undermine the resistance of burgeoning nationalism in the East and inspire the toilers of other underdeveloped regions the world over.

But immense economic and cultural leaps were required to integrate Soviet Central Asia into

a society revolutionized by the Bolsheviks in power. Trotsky called the area 'the most backward of the backward', still living a 'prehistoric existence'. Indeed, the journey eastward from Moscow across Central Asia was a trip backward through the centuries of human development.

The Bolsheviks viewed the extreme oppression of women as an indicator of the primitive level of the whole society, but their approach was based on materialism, not moralism. They understood that the fact that women were veiled and caged, bought and sold, was but the surface of the problem. *Kalym* was not some sinister plot against womankind, but an institution which was central to the organization of production, integrally connected to land and water rights. Payment of *kalym*, often by the whole clan over a long period of time, committed those involved to an elaborate system of debts, duties and loyalties which ultimately led to participation in the private army of the local *beys* (landowners and wholesale merchants). All commitments were thus backed up with the threat of feuds and blood vengeance.

These kinship and tribal loyalties were obstacles to social progress because they obscured class relations and held back the expropriation and redistribution of land and other property. Poor peasants, who stood to gain by the equalization of wealth, hid the property of their rich relatives threatened with expropriation. Blood vengeance enforced vows of silence, and Soviet authority was undermined by conspiracies that served only the old oppressors.

Civil war

The Bolsheviks hoped that women, having the most to gain, would be the link that broke the feudal chain, but this necessitated a great deal of preparation, for the Muslim institutions, oppressive as they were, served real social functions and could not be simply abolished. Like the bourgeois family, they had to be replaced.

Lenin warned against prematurely confronting respected native institutions, even when these clearly violated communist principle and Soviet law. Instead, he proposed to use Soviet state power to carefully and systematically undermine them while simultaneously demonstrating the superiority of Soviet institutions, a policy which had worked well against the powerful Russian Orthodox Church.

Extending this practice to Central Asia, the Soviet government waged a campaign to build the authority of the Soviet legal system and civil courts as an alternative to the traditional Muslim *kadi* courts and legal codes. Although the *kadi* courts were permitted to function, their powers were circumscribed in that they were forbidden to handle political cases or any cases in

which both parties to the dispute had not agreed to use the *kadi* rather than the parallel Soviet court system. As the Soviet courts became more accepted, criminal cases were eliminated from the *kadis*' sphere. Next, the government invited dissatisfied parties to appeal the *kadis*' decisions to a Soviet court. In this manner the Soviets earned the reputation of being partisans of the oppressed, while the *kadis* were exposed as defenders of the status quo. Eventually the *kadis* were forbidden to enforce any Muslim law which contradicted Soviet law. Two Soviet representatives, including one member of Zhenotdel -- the Department of Working Women and Peasant Women -- were assigned to witness all *kadi* proceedings and to approve their decisions. Finally, when the *wafks* (endowment properties), which had supported the *kadis*, were expropriated and redistributed among the peasantry, the *kadis* disappeared completely.

This non-confrontationist policy in no way implied capitulation to backward, repressive institutions. It was made clear that there could be no reconciliation between communism and the Koran. Although 'Red Mullahs', attracted by the Bolshevik program of self-determination and land to the tiller, suggested to their followers that Islam was socialism and vice versa, the Bolsheviks insisted that Soviet and Muslim law could never be reconciled precisely on the grounds that the most basic rights of women would be sacrificed.

The bloody civil war that pitted the Bolshevik state against imperialist-supported counterrevolutionary forces devastated the young workers state and threatened its very survival. During this period, when the Bolsheviks' capacity to intervene in Central Asia was crippled, the crude tactics employed by their ostensibly socialist opponents fueled anti-Soviet sentiment.

In Tashkent, the railroad center of Central Asia, the governing Soviet was made up of Russian emigrés, many of them railroad workers, led by Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks. In an orgy of Russian chauvinism and self-indulgence foreshadowing the policies of Stalinism to come, they expropriated the holdings of the most respected Islamic institutions and stood the slogan 'self-determination of the toiling masses' on its head to justify the exclusion from the Soviet of native intellectuals and sympathetic mullahs, whom they labeled 'non-proletarian elements'. At the same time, they collaborated with former White officers. When the Tashkent Soviet began arbitrarily requisitioning food from the peasants during the worst grain shortages of the civil war, Lenin intervened to stop this. But the seeds of anti-Soviet rebellion had been sown.

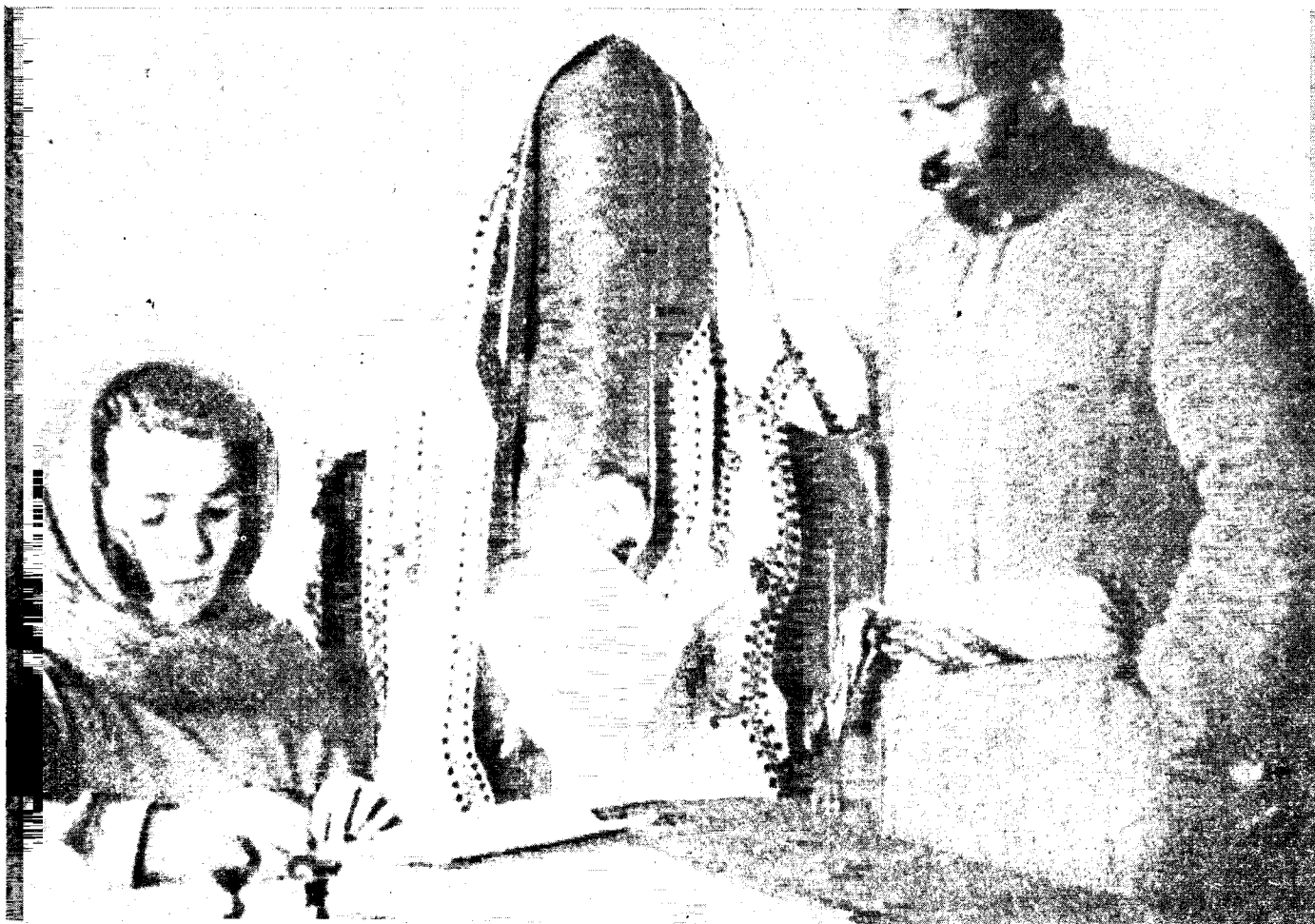
The Basmachis, tribal and traditionalist elements (mainly Uzbek and Tadzhik), who were avowed enemies of the Bolsheviks, served as a pole of attraction for the most sordid conglomeration of forces dedicated to the preservation of the status quo. When Enver Pasha of Turkey, who came to the region as an emissary from Moscow, deserted to the Basmachis, supplying the leadership and authority necessary to unify the warring *beys* into a viable army of fanatical Muslim terrorists, civil war in Central Asia began in earnest. Soon thousands of Muslims joined these forces in the hills.

Few Central Asian women took the side of the Bolsheviks during the civil war and few of these survived. The heroism of those few who dared defy family, law and the word of the prophet was unsurpassed. One such woman was Tsainet Khesmitova, who ran away from her aged husband while still a child and served as a spy for the Red Army. Her husband's hired assassins eventually caught her, cut out her tongue and left her beaten body buried neck deep in the desert to die. She was rescued by a Red Army unit but was so mutilated that she was forced to live out her life in a Moscow institution for Bolsheviks incapable of work.

Another was Umu Kussum Amerkhanova, the first woman activist of Daghestan, who repeatedly escaped from the death sentences which the White Army and her own countrymen sought to impose on her. Wearing men's clothes, she led Red troops at the Daghestan front until the end of the war and survived to continue the work of transforming the role of women in Central Asia.

Bolshevik ability to intervene effectively in Central Asia began with the end of the civil war and the transition from the emergency policies

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Registration of an Uzbek marriage in Tashkent. The bride is wearing a paranja

Bolshevik work...

(Continued from page 5)

of war communism to the stabilization carried out with the institution of the NEP (New Economic Policy). The Turkestan Commission was set up under the leadership of M Frunze, a talented military commander, and G Safarov, a leading Bolshevik of Central Asian origins. The detested emigrés were recalled to Russia, and the land they had confiscated was distributed to the Muslim toilers. With food requisitions replaced by the tax-in-kind, and government allocations of seed and food reserves, the Basmachi revolt came to an end. But the peasants' experience with chauvinist Menshevik policies was not forgotten. Resistance would continue to flare up in the future when agricultural tensions were again exacerbated.

The end of the war signaled the initiation of systematic Bolshevik work among Muslim women. In the absence of native activists, it was the most dedicated and courageous members of Zhenotdel who donned the *paranja* in order to meet with Muslim women and explain the new Soviet laws and programs which were to change their lives. This was an extremely dangerous assignment, as any violation of a local taboo enraged husbands, fathers and brothers to murder. In fact, the discovery of numerous dismembered bodies of Zhenotdel organizers finally compelled the Soviet government to reinstate the death penalty for explicitly 'anti-feminist' murder as a counterrevolutionary crime, although non-political murder (even murder committed in vengeance against wives) received a standard sentence of five to ten years' imprisonment.

Zhenotdel activists organized 'Red Yertas' (tents), 'Red Boats' and 'Red Corners', depending on the terrain. They attracted local women by offering instruction in hygiene and crafts, by providing entertainment and a place to socialize and by distributing scarce consumer goods. Although the clubs were at first concerned primarily with publicizing and explaining the new laws, they later became centers for culture and education and waged a remarkably successful campaign to liquidate illiteracy.

At the 13th Party Congress in 1924 an offensive was launched in Central Asia which was designed to bring women into production and political life. Funds were allocated from central and local budgets for assemblies of women's delegates and for associations to combat *kalym* and polygamy. Plans were also made to form producers' and consumers' cooperatives and to establish literary and hygiene circles and medical dispensaries.

The implementation of these measures continued to depend on the initiative of a handful of Zhenotdel activists, for so deeply ingrained were the old values that often even Central Asian Communists could not conceive of substantial changes in the status of women, and the women themselves often failed to report crimes against them to the courts. The response of local party branches to the new measures ranged from open hostility and sabotage to passive incomprehension.

The party locals in Daghestan, for instance, interpreted the law abolishing *kalym* as an instruction to lower bride prices. In some areas the party instituted fair price regulations: a young, pretty girl from a well-to-do family might cost 300 rubles while a pockmarked widow was to be priced the same as a hornless cow.

By 1924 Zhenotdel organizations had entrenched themselves in many areas, and because of their influence and the changes in material conditions, Central Asian women began for the first time to vote. This advance was facilitated by the fact that the official summons each of them received from the party to appear at the polls was regarded as a valid reason for them to go out in public, thereby saving their husbands from ridicule.

Once at meetings, women were persuaded to run for office on the party platform. At the same time, legal reforms and land redistribution gave them rights under the law, and through producers' and consumers' cooperatives they were able to acquire seed, tools and training, making it possible for them to support themselves. These alternatives to economic dependency in marriage in conjunction with the publicizing of divorce laws resulted in a marked increase in divorce, initiated especially by child brides and second and third wives.

Had a balanced approach of training and education complemented this liberalizing agitation, these new divorcees could well have become enthusiastic pioneers of agricultural collectives and proletarian reinforcements for industrialization. Their example would have been followed by married women as well, with the incentive of increased family income working to neutralize the hostility of their husbands. But at the January 1924 Party Conference, which preceded the 13th Party Congress, the leadership, program and methods of the party changed decisively.

The degeneration of the revolution after 1923, expressed through the theory of 'socialism in one country' and implemented through the strangling of workers democracy in the Soviet Union, permeated and deformed all sectors of the government.

In an ominous prelude to the policies of the 'third period', such as the forced collectivization of agriculture, the legal offensive against traditional practices in Central Asia was stepped up until the divorce rate assumed epidemic proportions. Although local party branches protested the pace of the offensive and warned that it had become 'demoralizing to all concerned and a threat to continued Soviet rule', Zhenotdel continued its one-sided agitation for women to initiate divorce, until the Red Yertas, clubs and hospitals were filled with far more divorcees than they could possibly handle. Under the impact of masses of women whom they could not support, these organizations in desperation simply dissolved. In some cases, they were transformed into brothels.

In 1927 the offensive was narrowed still further to a single-issue campaign against seclusion and the veil known as *Khudshum*. First, party meetings were held at which husbands unveiled their wives. Then on 8 March 1927, in celebration of International Woman's Day, mass meetings were held at which thousands of frenzied participants, chanting 'Down with the *paranja*!' tore off their veils, which were drenched in paraffin and burned. Poems were recited and plays with names such as 'Away with the Veil', and 'Never Again *Kalym*' were performed. Zhenotdel agitators led marches of unveiled women through the streets, instigating the forced desegregation of public quarters and sanctified religious sites. Protected by soldiers, bands of poor women roamed the streets, tearing veils off wealthier women, hunting for hidden food and pointing out those who still clung to traditional practices which had now been declared crimes (such as conspiring to arrange a marriage for exchange of *kalym*).

The *Khudshum* appeared to be a success on March 8, but on March 9 hundreds of unveiled women were massacred by their kinsmen, and this reaction, fanned by Muslim clergy, who interpreted recent earthquakes as Allah's punishment for the unveilings, grew in strength. Remnants of the Basmachi rebels reorganized themselves into *Tash Kuran* (secret, counterrevolutionary organizations) which flourished as a result of their pledge to preserve *Narkh* (local customs and values).

Women suing for divorce became the targets of murderous vigilante squads, and lynchings of party cadre annihilated the ranks of the Zhenotdel. The massive terror unleashed against the recently unveiled women -- which ranged from spitting and laughing at them to gang rape and murder -- forced most of them to take up the veil again soon after repudiating it.

The party was forced to mobilize the militia, then the Komsomols and finally the general party membership and the Red Army to protect the women, but it refused to alter its suicidal

policies. The debacle of International Woman's Day was repeated in 1928 and 1929 with the same disastrous consequences, exacting an extremely high toll on party cadre. Lacking Zhenotdel leadership those clubs which had survived the legal offensive now disappeared.

By 1929 Central Asia was caught up in the general resistance of peasant peoples throughout the Soviet Union to the forced collectivization of agriculture dictated by Moscow. Significant social advancement for most Muslim women in Central Asia was deferred. Not for another decade, when the productive capacity of the planned economy had developed sufficiently to provide jobs, education, medical care and social services on a scale wide enough to undercut primitive Islamic traditions, did they begin to make substantial gains.

The Russian Revolution created the objective preconditions for the liberation of women. But the consolidation of the Stalinist bureaucracy was accompanied by a general reversal of significant gains for women throughout Soviet society. Thus the oppressive family structure which the Bolsheviks under Lenin had struggled to replace with the socialization of household labor was now renovated as an economic institution by the increasingly isolated regime which realized that the family provided services which the degenerated workers state could not. In defense of the family, abortions were illegalized, divorces were made much less accessible and women were encouraged through government subsidies and 'Mother Heroine' medals to bear as many children as possible. In 1934, as if to sanction its physical liquidation in Central Asia at the hands of *Tash Kuran* terror, the Soviet government liquidated Zhenotdel organizationally, as well. ■

Iran...

(Continued from page 2)

cers; the most graphic example is the 1965 Suharto coup in Indonesia in which Muslim fanatics played an important role. The proletariat has no stake in the victory of either a right-wing military/bonapartist monarchy or a mass-based clerical offensive which requires an Islamic army coup to succeed.

The Pakistani coup provides striking parallels to the current movement in Iran. Seizing upon the corruption of the Bhutto dictatorship and the land-hunger of the peasantry, the Muslims were able to mount an assault on Bhutto's 'secularism' (a favourite chant at mass demonstrations was 'Bhutto drinks whisky'). The opposition's reactionary programme included censorship 'in conformity with the moral standards of Islam' and promised to 'close every bar from Khyber to Karachi'.

After a general strike brought the Bhutto regime to its knees, the mullahs' appeal to the army to 'save Pakistan' was answered by Zia, a self-described 'soldier of Islam'. He immediately forbade all strikes and trade unions and instituted the traditional Islamic penalty for theft, the amputation of the thief's hand.

Indonesia shows the gruesome results of the interaction between an Islamic mass movement, the army and leftists capitulating to 'anti-imperialist' mullahs and generals. In the name of *gotong royong* (national unity), the PKI (the pro-Peking Communist Party) organised work brig-

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ades to build and repair mosques. PKI leaders publicly professed conversion to Islam. In order to cement this alliance with the mullahs and generals, the Stalinists suppressed workers' strikes and factory occupations as well as land seizures.

Thus the Indonesian proletariat was completely unprepared for the CIA-backed coup in which the army, in alliance with the Muslim forces, massacred half a million leftists, workers and peasants. While the mullahs whipped up a mob attack on the PKI headquarters in Jakarta, literally calling for an anti-communist holy war, the Muslim Party celebrated the massacres as the 'Unity of the Armed Forces and the People'.

Iranian leftists who want to see the liberation of the workers and oppressed must learn the lessons of history -- or else they condemn to bloody defeat both themselves and those whom they seek to lead.

The workers must rule in Iran!

Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh: all these countries provide negative confirmation of the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution. In the epoch of imperialism, neither reactionary despots like the Shah nor pan-Islamic fanatics like Khomeini can in any way meet the democratic aspirations of the toiling masses. The only social force which can lead this struggle to victory is the working class under revolutionary leadership.

Trotskyists advance a programme of genuine democratic demands, including the smashing of the monarchy and SAVAK, a secular constituent assembly based on universal suffrage (including female suffrage), land to the tiller, the right of self-determination for Iran's oppressed nationalities and full legal equality for women. Such demands provide real immediate answers to the just outrage of the Iranian masses, and are irreconcilably opposed to the fundamentalist moralising offered up by Khomeini as the phoney 'solution' to their oppression.

The fight to win over the various sections of the oppressed to the banner of the proletariat requires an intransigent struggle against the Muslim holy men -- the kind of struggle the Stalinists and fake-Trotskyists will never undertake. Bolsheviks stand foursquare for the democratic right to freedom of worship. But we are irreconcilably opposed to any organised political expression of the clergy and at all times fight for the separation of church and state.

The democratic tasks of the Iranian revolution will only be won through the methods of the class struggle, utilising the immense social power of the Iranian proletariat. This is why the current mass strike wave is so important. The working class must take the lead in the struggle to overthrow the Shah under a democratic and proletarian programme, struggling for organs of dual power -- soviets -- whose victory alone can achieve the democratic tasks of the Iranian revolution and lay the basis for the liberation of Iranian society from the vestiges of the reactionary Islamic code.

The mullahs' 'left' apologists are an obstacle to the struggle to free the Iranian working masses from the Shah's despotism. For the key is the fight for a conscious revolutionary leadership to connect the immediate democratic aspirations of the masses with the struggle to smash the capitalist state, expropriate the imperialists and the native bourgeoisie and establish a workers and peasants government. The situation in Iran today cries out for the forging of a Trotskyist vanguard party to lead the masses in the fight against both the despot of the twentieth century and his would-be replacements, the apostles of the seventh century.

Not the Shah's white terror, not the reactionary reign of the 'just rule of Islam', but proletarian revolution for a workers and peasants government!

-- adapted from *Young Spartacus* no 68, November 1978

Phase 4...

(continued from page 8)

sellout artist par excellence -- wrote on October 19 to Ford Chairman Sir Terence Beckett asking for negotiations 'to discover a way through what can only be described as a ghastly mess' (*Financial Times*, October 20). Despite the bureaucrats' recommendation to reject the latest company offer in early November, they are still seeking private meetings with Ford management in an attempt to find a 'solution'. Such manoeuvres can only lead to some kind of sellout compromise package -- probably including a productivity deal and a form of management's proposed 'attendance bonus', which is aimed at drastically cutting down strikes and absenteeism. Moreover, by ensuring that the membership stays in the dark about the progress of negotiations and by keeping the Ford strikers isolated, the bureaucrats are laying the basis for a mood of exhaustion and despondency to take hold in the ranks.

Whether they be at Fords, at Leylands, on the docks or in the mines, the way forward for workers fighting to defeat the government's pay freeze must be to demand: stop the secret negotiations! No new 'social contract' with strikebreaker Callaghan! A key demand at Fords now to prevent bureaucratic wheeling and dealing is for the election of local and national strike committees by mass meetings. In addition to maintaining the successful blacking and picketing, the strike committees should take over negotiations, settling only for the full claim -- including the 35-hour workweek -- and refusing any productivity deals.

The bureaucrats' isolation of the Fords strike in the service of the government must be brought to an end. Union members must demand that their claims be put in *now*, irrespective of the 12-month rule, and that strike action be called in unison with Fords to build an open offensive that can bury wage controls once and for all and fight unemployment through a shorter workweek at no loss in pay. The trade union

leaders now feign concern about prices: very well, but the answer is not the fiction of price controls under capitalism but the fight for a sliding scale of wages which will ensure that wages rise automatically to keep pace with inflation.

It is clear that the working class is getting tired of the declamation 'we must keep the Labour government in power'. On September 26 a delegation of shop stewards from Dagenham, in a Stalinist-inspired pressure tactic, visited Downing Street to warn that 'proposals that we should work for the return of Labour MPs are now being openly derided'. And during the strike vote at the Ford Southampton plant workers hoisted the banner 'Bring back hanging -- Big Jim first'. This gut-level hostility to the Labour Party's betrayals must be transformed into an open and active fight against the Labour government and its attacks.

Break with Labour traitors

Such a fight is what the union leaders desperately want to avoid. Their argument for the Ford workers is that Ford is a profitable company capable of paying the claim in full and still pulling in £300 million profits this year. True, Ford may be willing to give in for this reason -- despite the fact that British capitalism as a whole, given its chronic low level of productivity in relation to its major imperialist competitors, *cannot* concede comparable demands generally without a drastic worsening of its already decrepit condition.

But this is no argument for working-class sacrifice! The situation cries out for action -- strikes now! -- and a sharp break with pro-capitalist Labourism in favour of building a revolutionary class-struggle alternative, if British workers are to meet even their daily economic needs.

Any evasion of the question of leadership only plays into the hands of the bureaucrats and their 'special case' arguments. Yet this is precisely what is done by the Ford Workers Group (formerly Ford Workers Combine), a small reformist 'rank and file' conglomerate which is backed by the International Marxist Group (IMG) and Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

This economist lash-up has centred its arguments on the necessity to maintain the full claim, not even pretending to provide a programmatic alternative to reformist Labourism. Posing as builders of 'a movement which is independent of the leaders', but 'supporting the union leaders as long as they represent the interests of the members' (*Socialist Challenge*, November 2), the Ford Workers Group can show no way forward. Instead, it happily provides uncritical platforms at public meetings for 'left' Labour Party traitors like Joan Maynard and Ernie Roberts -- parliamentary cretins who are grateful for an opportunity to show a left face, as support crumbles for the government which they have helped to sustain.

Economism and 'left' Labourism offer the working class no way out of the current situation. Without an alternative revolutionary leadership, the choices for the working class are not happy: more years of falling living standards under traitorous Labour rule or the virulent reaction of Thatcher's Tories. Moreover, extreme right-wing movements like the National Front loom on the horizon, seeking to garner support for their programme of reaction from those who despair over the sharp economic decline of British capitalism.

A key tactic for breaking workers from Labourism to a revolutionary alternative in this period would be to refuse critical electoral support to Labour when Callaghan calls an election on the government's record of coalitionism, wage control and strikebreaking. However, predictably enough, the SWP, IMG and the rest of the fake-Trotskyist 'far left' are almost unanimously calling on workers to return Callaghan to office.

No, support for the Ford strike, opposition to the wage freeze and implacable hostility to reformist Labourism are inseparably bound together. The British workers movement needs a new revolutionary leadership capable not only of winning defensive struggles over pay and working conditions but able to lead the fight for a new social order -- for the smashing of the capitalist state and the creation of a workers government. Those unable to say 'no' to Callaghan, Healey and Foot after four years of vicious wage cutting will never provide such a leadership. That task falls to the Spartacist League, the only organisation possessing the programme to win working-class power. ■

Defend Dave Stevens!

A Wolverhampton anti-racist militant faces a possible two and one-half years in prison as a result of a right-wing provocation at a demonstration last March 11. Dave Stevens, treasurer of the Wolverhampton Anti-Racist Committee and the chief steward at the demonstration against racist attacks and police harassment of the town's black community, was arrested after an unidentified man attacked the march.

As the demonstration reached the central library, a lone thug slipped through the police lines without resistance and attacked the front rank of the march. When the stewards subdued the attacker and handed him over to the police the cops responded by seizing Stevens! The thug 'disappeared' as soon as he was handed over to the police, while Stevens was charged with using threatening behaviour, three separate assaults on police constables and assault causing bodily harm on a police inspector.

This prosecution takes place at a time of

increased attacks on immigrant communities and leftists by both the local police force and Wolverhampton's large and active ultra-rightist organisations. Attacks on immigrants by fascist street thugs occur frequently, and since charges were laid against Stevens he has been subjected to brick-throwing attacks. The labour movement cannot stand by while Stevens is subjected to this frame-up and continued attacks! If he is convicted, the fascist hooligans will gain confidence in attacking leftists and immigrants with impunity while their friends in the police, the enforcers of the bosses' law, protect them and arrest their victims.

Funds are needed to defray the expenses of Stevens' defence campaign. The Spartacist League has contributed to the defence, and we urge others to send donations to: Wolverhampton Anti-Racist Committee, c/o Student Union, Wolverhampton Polytechnic, Wolverhampton, West Midlands.

Drop the charges against Dave Stevens!

SPARTACIST BRITAIN

Ford workers must not stand alone!

Strike now to smash Phase 4!

No new deal with Callaghan!

With the Ford strike already into its seventh week, the outlook for Callaghan's Phase Four wage controls is bleaker than ever. The militancy of thousands of workers whose real wages have been slashed for years in the face of double-figure inflation is bursting out in a rebellion against the five per cent pay ceiling. On November 3 the 57,000 Ford strikers rejected the company's supposed 'final offer', which was already more than double the government limit. The same day, mass meetings at four British Leyland factories in Birmingham rejected a five per cent offer, with workers at the Drews Lane plant staging a walkout.

The spectre of a generalised strike wave against Labour's wage freeze could soon become a reality. But standing square in the way of a class-wide offensive against the government's attempts to prop up dilapidated British capitalism are Callaghan's friends in the trade union bureaucracy. The TUC leaders have been consuming endless 'working dinners' with the prime minister trying to concoct a new 'social contract'-type deal to prevent a showdown between the union ranks and the Labour government. And inside the unions -- particularly at Fords -- the bureaucrats at every level have been pushing the 'profitability' of individual companies as the criterion for wage claims -- a line which flatly contradicts the pressing need for a united struggle to recoup and defend the living standards of *all* workers.

The working class currently has little enthusiasm for the government's rhetoric about 'austerity'. Already wage control has pushed living standards in Britain below those of the workers in Spain. Section after key section of the organised union movement is slapping down



Fighting spirit of striking Ford workers runs high

its wage claim and scornfully rejecting the paltry five per cent 'increases' offered by the employers. In addition to tanker drivers and the miners who are both claiming a 40 per cent rise, power workers' stewards have said there is 'no way we are going to accept 5 per cent' (*Financial Times*, October 23). British Oxygen workers, the National Union of Seamen, Fleet Street employees, the Bakers' Union, production workers in several Leyland car plants and many more sections of workers are also seeking rises several times above the five per cent limit.

Faced with such pressure from the ranks, the top bureaucrats were obliged to talk tough at the TUC and Labour Party conferences in September, blustering and voting against a further round of wage control. One example of how mili-

tant these fakers are talking just now was provided by Ron Keating, assistant general secretary of the National Union of Public Employees, who told the press: 'The men at Ford are not alone. They will be followed by one million local council workers and 250,000 hospital staff.'

But right now the 'men at Ford' are alone -- just as the bureaucrats really want. Despite all the left speeches of union leaders and the yellow 'socialists' of the Tribune Group, not one section of workers has been brought out on strike alongside the Ford workers. Procrastination, appeals for workers to 'wait and see' and divisive arguments about profitability have been the bureaucracy's techniques for stifling the wage revolt -- and already they have had some effect.

Mass meetings held at the end of October at the Vauxhall plants in Dunstable and Luton voted against strike action; a week earlier 8000 Kodak workers voted not to strike against the company's productivity deal offer. If the defeatist line prevails generally, the consequences will be disastrous: a fourth year of wage control and a 'Phase Four' election with Callaghan calling for votes to Labour as the party best able to keep the unions in line.

No secret negotiations!

The closed-door TUC/cabinet talks do not look like resulting in any explicit revised pay ceiling or any commitment to firmer price controls by the government. Instead Callaghan will probably have to make do with TUC guidelines for negotiators, union commitment to cooperate in the 'battle against inflation' and general appeals for 'responsible free collective bargaining' by the bureaucrats. But whatever the final outcome, one thing is clear: the aim of these traitors is to defend the Labour government at any cost. As Len Murray said: 'I have never taken the view that we are on a collision course.'

Likewise at Fords the misleaders are doing their best to defuse the situation. Reg Birch -- Maoist leader, AUEW official, secretary of the union side of the negotiating committee and

continued on page 7

Solidarity from North American union militants

During the past month, militant trade unionists in the US and Canada have been fighting for their unions to take action in support of the British Ford strike. At Ford's River Rouge complex near Detroit, members of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 600 -- the largest in the union -- have called for financial aid to the strike and for the UAW to refuse any work Ford might try to divert to its North American plants. Similar demands have been made by car workers at Ford factories in New Jersey and Ontario, Canada, and at the General Motors plant in Fremont, California. And the Militant-Solidarity Caucus of the National Maritime Union has urged American seamen to halt all Ford shipments to Britain for the duration of the strike.

In the October 9 issue of its newsletter, *Militant Auto Worker*, the Militant Solidarity Caucus -- a class-struggle opposition group in UAW Local 906, Mahwah, New Jersey, which is politically supported by the Spar-

tacist League/US -- linked the British Ford workers' struggle to the fight against wage control in the US:

'Ford UAW members in particular and the entire U.S. working-class as well have a stake in the victory of the British Ford strike. Jimmy Carter is trying to set up similar "voluntary" wage guidelines in the U.S. If Ford shoves these wage guidelines down the throats of the autoworkers in Britain, we can expect that Ford will try to push Carter's wage guidelines in our contract next year.'

Militant Auto Worker went on to demand:

'The UAW must immediately show its solidarity with the British Ford workers by:
'1) Financial contributions to the strike funds of the British Ford workers!
'2) The UAW must not handle any scab work! The Union must monitor Ford for attempts to divert struck work from British Ford to plants in this country and refuse to handle such diverted scab work!'