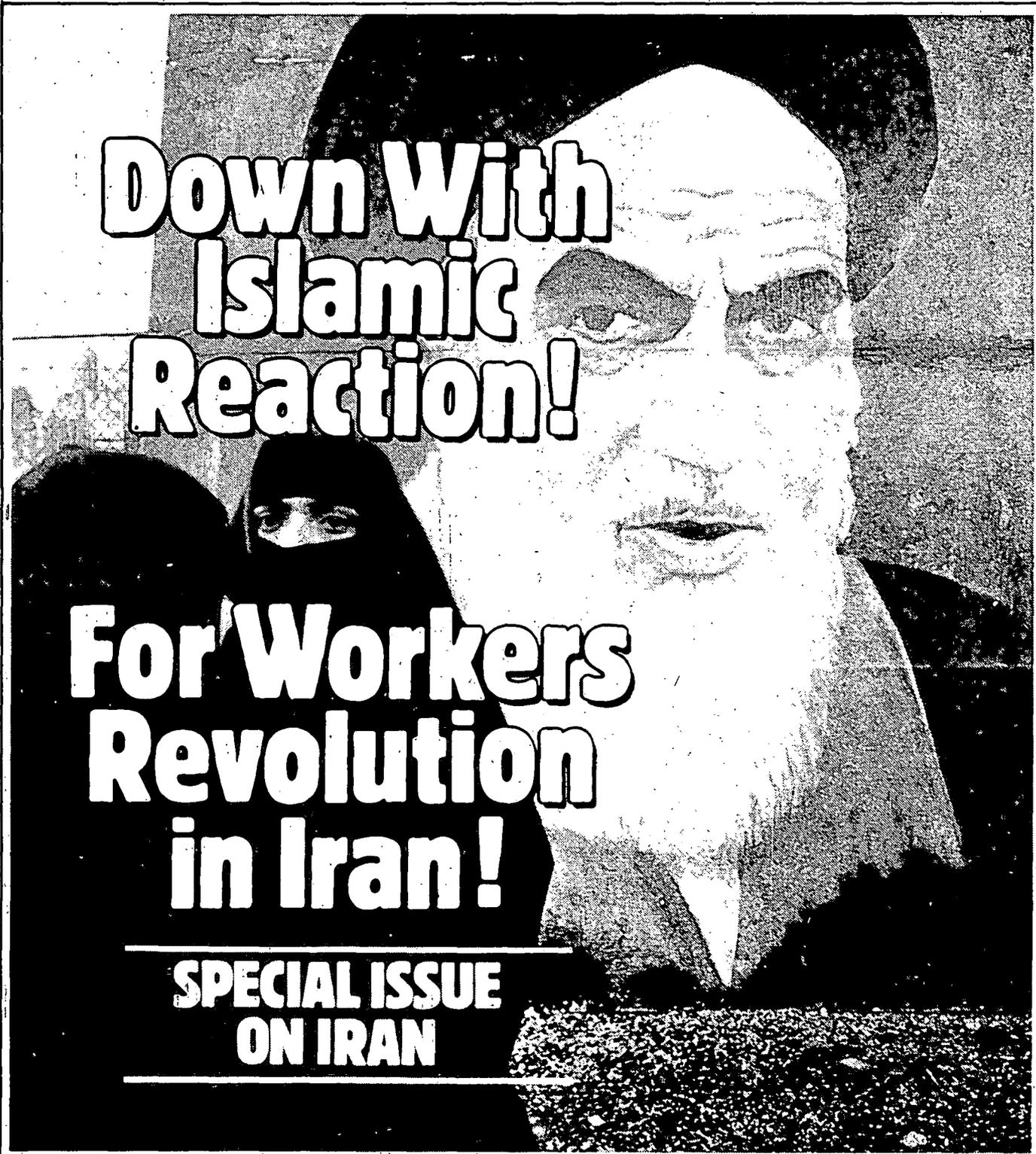


Women and Revolution



Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League

50c



**Down With
Islamic
Reaction!**

**For Workers
Revolution
in Iran!**

**SPECIAL ISSUE
ON IRAN**

No to the Veil!

Khomeini advisor Ibrahim Yazdi spoke more truly than he knew when he castigated the dangerous "Communist" slogan, "Down with the mullahs, Down with the shah" (BBC radio interview, 7 January). That perspective, if raised by a communist vanguard party rooted in the Iranian proletariat, could have provided the basis for smashing the brutal regime of the shah and breaking the power of Islamic reaction through socialist revolution. But there was no revolutionary vanguard in Iran capable of mobilizing a proletarian opposition to the shah. Every current, from the pro-Moscow "Communist" Tudeh Party to the Fedayeen guerrillas, tailed Khomeini's reactionary Muslim opposition, pretending to find "progressive," "democratic" "anti-imperialist" content in the slogans of the mullah-led movement. In all the world, only one tendency stood for "Down with the shah! Down with the mullahs! For Proletarian Revolution in Iran!"—the international Spartacist tendency. Now, tragically, our warning that Khomeini's rule would prove no less oppressive and reactionary than that of the shah has been fully confirmed.

Khomeini made no secret of his intention to establish a Persian Shi'ite theocratic state. Only those willfully blinded by opportunism could fail to see what this must mean for the 40 percent of the Iranian population which is not Persian. When Khomeini harshly repressed the Kurdish and Arab nationalists, his leftist cheerleaders began to backtrack, hurriedly searching through the fine print of their pro-Khomeini manifestos for some lip-service to the rights of national minorities. But those who succumbed to the tide of Khomeini's popularity at its height are not the leadership the Iranian masses need.

In Khomeini's theocratic state, the preachments of Islam acquire virtually the force of law. Corporal punishment is meted out in the public squares to petty criminals, adulterers, homosexuals. "If music be the food of love," Khomeini wants it banned from the airwaves. But his reactionary social program is concentrated in his attacks on "westernized" women. Here again, the "socialist" self-styled partisans of women's liberation showed their true colors. As Muslim fanatics marched in Tabriz chanting "Death or the Veil," the opportunists were ready with alibis for Khomeini's attempt to reimpose the head-to-foot *chador*, symbol of the forcible exclusion of women from economic and social life. Cindy Jaquith of the American Socialist



Women and Revolution

Spartacist demo to defend Iranian left (New York, 22 June 1979). SWP rejected united-front defense.

Workers Party (SWP) even termed the veil a "symbol of resistance to imperialism"! When sizable demonstrations of Iranian women protested Khomeini's edict that "Women will not go naked [unveiled] to the ministries," the SWP tried to broaden its tailism to include the militant women, too. But the women of Iran have no need for "defenders" such as these.

The opportunists cannot even defend themselves. When they threw in their lot with Khomeini, refusing to fight for the real needs of the oppressed, they did more than discredit themselves before those they should have led. They put a noose around their own necks. As Khomeini implements his promised witchhunt against "satanic Marxists," they can only beg him to remember that they were among the best builders of his "movement." Even now they engage in sectarian splitting of efforts to mobilize a broad international protest campaign in defense of the Arab nationalists, oil workers' leaders and leftists jailed by the regime, so terrified are they of being associated with principled opposition to those in power. Meanwhile the mullahs' shadowy *komitehs* (which the SWP once tried to cast in

the role of people's tribunals) pass their sentences in secret; in the city of Ahwaz, the SWP's co-thinkers of the Iranian Hezb-e Kargar-e Socialist (HKS) are held in the same cells where the shah's SAVAK plied its vile trade of torture.

At an SWP public forum held last March, a Spartacist supporter declared: "The Spartacist League will be defending your own comrades in Iran when they face the bloodbath that the 'Islamic Republic' will institute against them." But even hindsight brings no enlightenment to the SWP and its international allies of the United Secretariat (USec). On June 22 the SWP boycotted a rally to defend the Iranian left called by the SL in San Francisco, while in New York the SWP goon squad kicked our comrades off the SWP-sponsored picket line. In London the International Marxist Group's HKS defense demonstrations on July 7 and July 14 were so perfunctory that contingents from the smaller Spartacist League of Britain outnumbered the USec supporters at both. Spartacist comrades in Paris and Stockholm participated in USec-sponsored protests against the jailing of the HKS members, but in Sydney the Australian SWP abandoned its own demonstration rather than march together with Spartacist supporters.

At the height of Khomeini's popularity, the Spartacist tendency stood alone in telling the truth about the "Islamic Revolution" and calling for the exploited and oppressed to break from Khomeini and fight for a workers and peasants government. The combativeness of the masses, the broad-based willingness to resist the shah's despotism, was not in question. Indeed, when the showdown came, none but the shah's closest partners in crime proved willing to defend his regime militarily.

What was lacking was a revolutionary working-class leadership organized around a program of democratic and socialist demands capable of winning the support of the poor peasants, the national minorities, the militant women: for the abolition of the privileges of the clergy and the establishment of a democratic and secular constituent assembly; self-determination for national minorities; land to the tiller; equal legal rights for women; for a workers and peasants government. What was needed was a Bolshevik leadership to mobilize the strategically placed oil workers whose strikes helped topple the shah but who mainly stood aloof from Khomeini's religious mobilizations. The emergence of a class-conscious proletarian pole vying for power in its own right could have split away from

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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

Victory in Iran

Iranian masses show the way for workers around the world



TEHRAN, Feb. 18—Soldiers, urban, and democratic classes. For systematic account of see pages 2-5.

The following statement was issued February 14 by the political committee of the Socialist Workers Party:

Revolution strips away the layers of classism that separate the rich from the poor, the bourgeoisie from the proletariat, the exploiters from the exploited. It is the only way to end the rule of the few over the many.

From February 11 to 12, the old regime crumbled under the blows of a popular insurrection. Millions and millions of workers and peasants overthrew the shah's rule and the rule of the bourgeoisie. The shah's regime was overthrown and the shah fled the country.

The workers, peasants, and soldiers were in a position to organize their own government and begin restructuring Iranian society.

Committees arose spontaneously and in many areas took over the direction of traffic, the evacuation of those wounded in the fighting, and the maintenance of public services in Tehran—a city of 5 million.

Popular defense squads, or "Islamic militias," were also organized in the major cities of Iran. Many of these militias and squads are well organized and are active throughout the country.

Iranian workers in their own defense have shown the way for workers in other countries. They have shown that workers can organize themselves and defend their own interests.

Workers in other countries should learn from the example of the Iranian workers and peasants. They should organize themselves and defend their own interests.

The SWP stood with the mullahs; the Spartacist League stood with the Iranian proletariat.

WORKERS VANGUARD

25c

18 February 1979

Down with Khomeini! For Workers Revolution!

Mullahs Win



11-12 FEBRUARY 1979. A revolution broke out in Iran, overthrowing the shah and his regime. The shah fled the country and the Iranian people took power. The shah's regime was overthrown and the shah fled the country.

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Khomeini the plebeian forces and sections of the middle classes. Khomeini's priestly caste succeeded in pulling the entire Iranian people in its wake to overthrow the shah for its own reactionary purposes. The "unity" which the fake-lefts invoked to justify their capitulation was the product of their own misleadership.

It should not take unusual astuteness to recognize that a regime which bans coeducation and mixed bathing will oppose every struggle of militant women for equality. Yet ostensible Marxists placed themselves to the right of Kate Millett in their cynical prostration before the oppressors of Iranian women. To Millett's credit, after large militant women's demonstrations had protested the veil in Teheran on International

continued on page 10

Women and Revolution

Journal of the Spartacist League Central Committee
Commission for Work Among Women

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Iran and the Left

Why They Supported Islamic Reaction

Excerpted from Workers Vanguard
No. 229, 13 April 1979

In one sense it is now very easy to polemicize against those leftists, especially ostensible Trotskyists, who supported the Islamic opposition to the shah. We said Khomeini in power would seek to reimpose the veil, restore barbaric punishments (flogging, amputation), suppress the national minorities and crush the left and workers movement as ruthlessly as did the shah. Imperialist propaganda, they shouted—Khomeini is leading a great progressive struggle! Thus one self-proclaimed Trotskyist group in Britain, the small centrist Workers Power group, charged:

"The Spartacists make a series of charges against the Mullah-led opposition as a result of which they characterise the movement as one of 'clerical reaction'. A number of these charges amount to uncritical retailing of the chauvinist rubbish which filled the American press throughout the Autumn. The Mullahs they claim wish to restore Iran to the 7th century A.D.... They wish to introduce savage Islamic law punishments; stoning, public hanging and whipping etc. They wish to enforce the wearing of the veil and the removal of the rights given to women by the Shah...."

—Workers Power, February 1979

Well?

Now every piece of news out of Iran proves that the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) was obviously, indisputably, 100 percent right. The streets of Teheran are filled with the anguished cries of those, from middle-class liberal women to Guevarist guerrillas, who claim they were taken in by Khomeini's revolution. Tragically, the voice of the revolutionists who warned of the reactionary clericalist aims of the mullahs was drowned in the clamor of opportunists singing the praises of the "anti-imperialist" ayatollah. It is the Iranian masses who will pay the price.

Unfortunately, our main opponents here and in Europe are so cynical and so removed from the immediate consequences of their support to the mullahs' revolution that they will not repudiate their position. They will obfuscate or perhaps deny that they supported Khomeini, or concoct elaborate stagist theories to justify it. However, some subjectively revolutionary elements may just be shocked enough by the sight of Khomeini's marshals shooting down women protesting the veil to reconsider their solidarity with the mullahs' opposition to the shah. But unless

such leftists break with the *anti-Marxist methodology* which led them to support Islamic reaction in Iran, they will end up supporting the Khomeinis of Egypt or India or Indonesia tomorrow.

To polemicize against the methodological arguments of the pro-Khomeini left groups is not so easy, for they didn't raise any. That Khomeini led the masses in the streets is presented as the beginning and end of all argument. Confronting Spartacists at a March 4 forum in New York, Socialist Workers Party (SWP) leader Barry Sheppard shouted:

"Revolutionists were with Khomeini and this revolution, were with the masses in the streets against the monarchy. Only counterrevolutionaries would stand aside from that fight...."

"If it's popular, chase it" seems to be the motto of these inveterate tailists, whose instincts are closer to lemmings' than to Leninism.

The Islamic Opposition: A Reactionary Mass Movement

In the last weeks before the fall of the shah's bloody regime, all the forces of opposition to the monarchy in Iranian society, including the organized proletariat and the left, had rallied behind Khomeini. But the core of Khomeini's movement was the mullahs (the 180,000-strong Shi'ite Muslim clergy) and the *bazaaris*, the traditional merchant class being ground down by the modernization of the country. This traditional social class is doomed by economic progress, and so is naturally prone to reactionary ideology and its political expressions:

For opportunists it is unthinkable that there could be a reactionary mass mobilization against a reactionary regime. Yet history does offer examples of reactionary mass movements. Adolf Hitler organized an indubitably mass movement which toppled the Weimar Republic. In the U.S. in the 1920s the Ku Klux Klan was a dynamic growing organization capable of mobilizing tens of thousands of activists in the streets.

The experience of German fascism has had too shattering an impact on the memory of the left for our reformist/centrist opponents to deny the possibility of reactionary mass movements based on the petty bourgeoisie. But not, they argue, in backward, semi-colonial countries like Iran.

According to our reformist/centrist opponents, imperialist domination sanctifies the petty-bourgeois masses of the oppressed, backward countries, making



David Burnett/Contact

Behind Khomeini stood not only mullahs and merchants but fake-left opportunists.

them immune to reactionary mobilizations. The petty merchants and lumpenproletarians of Germany or France may sometimes do bad things, but not so their Iranian or Indian counterparts. We grant that Weimar Germany was a very different kind of society from the shah's Iran. But early twentieth-century tsarist Russia was not. As an extreme instance of combined and uneven development, no country in the contemporary world so resembles the Russia which produced the Bolshevik Revolution as does Iran.

One of the central doctrinal elements of Bolshevism was that the proletariat was the *only* consistently democratic class in tsarist Russia. The petty-bourgeois masses, including the peasantry, could potentially be drawn to anti-democratic, anti-working class movements. This was one of the important differences within the Iskra group of 1900-1903, a difference which foreshadowed the later Bolshevik-Menshevik split.

Lenin's insistence that the Russian petty-bourgeois masses could be rallied to reactionary as well as revolutionary democratic movements was no mere theoretical speculation, but found living expression in the Black Hundreds. Had the Black Hundred movement broken with the tsar and fought for power in its own name, using nationalist-populist demagoguery in pre-1917 Russia, no doubt at least a section of the Mensheviks would have sought unity with Black Hundreds (as their contemporary counterparts have done with Khomeini) in the "struggle against the autocracy."

One doesn't have to look as far back as the Black Hundred movement of tsarist Russia to find a reactionary mass movement, analogous to Khomeini's, in a backward, semi-colonial country. Look at Indonesia in

1965. The political reaction which overthrew the bourgeois-nationalist Sukarno and annihilated the Communist Party (then the largest in the world not holding state power) was not simply a military coup. The murder of *half a million* Communists and leftist workers and peasants (as well as many Hindus) was mainly carried out by petty-bourgeois Islamic fanatics led by the mullahs.

An "Anti-Imperialist" Bourgeois Revolution?

Since it is not so easy to portray Khomeini as a bourgeois democrat (he would be considered a reactionary by Henry VIII or Peter the Great), the favored leftist adjective is "anti-imperialist." This all-embracing term is the code word for class collaborationism in Asia, Africa and Latin America. We are presented with the view that the entire people of the colonial and semi-colonial countries, except for a handful of traitors and foreign agents (like the shah), have been revolutionized by imperialist domination. In this view the petty-bourgeois masses are always progressive while a section of the bourgeoisie is also progressive (i.e., "anti-imperialist").

The idea of all-class unity against imperialism finds its expression, for example, in the fictitious notion of "the Arab revolution" embracing an entire people, extending over decades and countries, a "revolution" which is directed *not* at overturning the existing Arab governments and ruling classes, but externally against the U.S. and Israel.

As Leninists, we fully recognize that the advanced capitalist countries, centrally the U.S., dominate, oppress and exploit backward countries like Iran. This



AP

Fedayeen guerrillas asked for role in Islamic state at Teheran University rally (above). Today they rot in Khomeini's jails.

fundamental historic fact imposes a particular program, strategy and tactics on proletarian revolutionaries in the colonial world. In these countries the struggle for democratic rights and against feudal reaction is inextricably bound up with the struggle against foreign domination. Popular movements against domestic reaction and imperialist domination are often led by bourgeois nationalists.

The particular problems of proletarian revolutionary strategy and tactics in backward countries were first posed at the Second Congress of the Communist International in July-August 1920. Here it was recognized that the communist vanguard should at times support and seek alliances with "revolutionary bourgeois-nationalist movements." But the *condition* laid down for such support was a very strong one. In his report on the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions, Lenin insists:

"There has been a certain *rapprochement* between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so that very often—perhaps even in most cases—the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, while it does support the national movement, is in full accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie, i.e., joins forces with it against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes. This was irrefutably proved in the commission, and we decided that the only correct attitude was to take this distinction into account and, in nearly all cases, substitute the term 'national-revolutionary' for the term 'bourgeois-democratic'. The significance of this change is that we, as Communists, should and will support bourgeois-liberation movements in the colonies *only* when they are genuinely revolutionary, and when their exponents *do not hinder our work of educating and organising in a revolutionary spirit the peasantry and the masses of the exploited. If these conditions do not exist, the Communists in these countries must combat the reformist bourgeoisie...*" [our emphasis]

Can support to Khomeini against the shah be justified with reference to the Comintern's position on bourgeois national liberation movements? To begin with, the Khomeini opposition was *not* a revolutionary bourgeois-nationalist movement. As a matter of fact, in

1920 the Comintern did deal with the kind of movement which has just conquered power in Iran, but not exactly in the spirit of possible support and cooperation with it. Here is what Lenin had to say about movements like Khomeini's:

"With regard to the more backward states and nations, in which feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important to bear in mind:...

"third, the need to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends, which strive to combine the liberation movement against European and American imperialism with an attempt to strengthen the position of the khans, landowners, mullahs, etc...." [our emphasis]

—"Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions" (June 1920)

Furthermore, Khomeini never even pretended that he would "not hinder" communists from organizing and educating the exploited. If Iranian leftists believed they would enjoy democratic freedoms under an "Islamic Republic," they duped themselves, Khomeini was always clear that he hated communism even more than he hated the shah. In a widely publicized interview in *Le Monde* (6 May 1978), the ayatollah stated:

"We will not collaborate with Marxists, even in order to overthrow the shah. I have given specific instructions to my followers not to do this. We are opposed to their ideology and we know that they always stab us in the back. If they came to power, they would establish a dictatorial regime contrary to the spirit of Islam."

A glance at the basic Comintern documents on the colonial question is enough to convict as opportunists those self-styled "Leninists" who supported the Islamic opposition—and those in Iran as suicidal opportunists. But this does not resolve the general question of support to bourgeois-nationalist movements in the colonial world. In 1920 proletarian revolutionary (communist) parties in backward countries were new on the scene. Mass bourgeois-nationalist movements were also a relatively recent development. It is therefore understandable and in a sense correct that Lenin's Comintern posed the relationship between the communist vanguard and the bourgeois-nationalist movement in an algebraic manner.

Particularly the Chinese revolution of 1925-1927, when the bourgeois-nationalist Kuomintang butchered their Communist would-be allies, and *all* subsequent experience show that the colonial bourgeoisie will never "not hinder" revolutionaries from organizing and educating the exploited masses. It was the Chinese revolution which caused Trotsky to generalize the theory of the permanent revolution from tsarist Russia to all backward countries in the imperialist epoch. Trotsky recognized that the Stalin-Bukharin China policy was simply the old Menshevik two-stage revolution transposed to the colonies:

"The struggle against foreign imperialism is as much a class struggle as the struggle against autocracy. That it cannot be excoriated by the idea of the national united front, is far too eloquently proved by the bloody April events [Chiang Kai-shek's Shanghai massacre], a direct consequence of the policy of the bloc of four classes."

—*Problems of the Chinese Revolution* (1927)

Imperialism is in its very essence the subordination of the weak propertied classes in the backward countries to the powerful bourgeoisie of the metropolitan

centers. There is no anti-imperialist bourgeoisie and therefore can be no anti-imperialist bourgeois-democratic revolution as such. In the imperialist epoch the historic tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, including national liberation, can be realized only through proletarian socialist revolution.

United Fronts in the Struggle against Imperialism

For Leninists, a united front is a specific, *episodic* agreement for common action: "March separately, strike together" was the way the early Comintern expressed the united front as a slogan. This was sharply distinguished by Trotsky from a political bloc for propaganda. Moreover, united-front tactics cover a broad range and are not all interchangeable. Thus there is a fundamental distinction between military support to bourgeois-nationalist forces (e.g., for the Algerian FLN against the French army and colon terrorists) and political (e.g., electoral) support. The tactic of critical electoral support or even entry can sometimes be applied to social-democratic (e.g., British Labour) or Stalinist (e.g., French Communist) parties based on the organized working class. Such a tactic, used to expose the reformist misleaders, can be justified as representing at least a first step toward the political independence of the workers, by drawing a class line against the bourgeois parties. But revolutionaries never give such political support to bourgeois formations, however radical or "socialist" their rhetoric or extensive their popular support. In contrast to reformist labor-based parties, bourgeois-nationalist movements (e.g., Chinese Kuomintang, Algerian FLN, Argentine Peronism) are not just misleaders but class enemies—they can turn on and destroy their working-class support without themselves committing political suicide.

There are, to be sure, specific *partial* struggles against imperialist domination (e.g., for political independence) which are progressive and are often led by bourgeois nationalists. Bourgeois-nationalist regimes sometimes carry out measures against foreign capital (e.g., Cárdenas' nationalization of Mexico's oilfields in 1937, Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal) which revolutionaries will support and if necessary defend.

The legitimacy of such united-front tactics depends entirely on the progressive content of what is concretely being fought for and not at all on the "anti-imperialist" posture of the bourgeois forces involved. In fact, in defending *genuine* national rights against imperialist attack, we are willing to make common cause even with extreme reactionaries. Haile Selassie, for example, was a feudal aristocrat. Yet revolutionary Marxists gave him military support in defending Ethiopia against conquest by Mussolini's Italy.

For opportunists, on the other hand, united fronts in the ex-colonial countries are based on the supposed progressive ("anti-imperialist") character of the bourgeois forces they are tailing after. Thus, Khomeini's movement was presented as "anti-imperialist," and conversely the shah was portrayed *not* as a representative of the *Iranian* bourgeoisie but as a direct agent of U.S. imperialism, sort of a high-class CIA operative. Polemicizing against us, *Workers Power* writes: "The Spartacist position would in practice rule out an anti-

imperialist united front against the Shah in Iran" ("Rights and Wrongs of the Spartacists," *Workers Power*, January 1979).

Even if Khomeini were a bourgeois nationalist espousing a democratic program (which he decidedly is not), we would reject an "anti-imperialist united front." This slogan was first raised at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922, where it was associated with agitation for "temporary agreements" with bourgeois nationalists in the struggle against imperialist domination. Even at that time it was used to justify capitulation to the bourgeois nationalists.

Within the Political Bureau of the Russian Communist Party Trotsky had opposed the entry into the Kuomintang (KMT) from the outset. The tragic Shanghai massacre of April 1927 was the bloody consequence of this entry. And those who call for political support to the Islamic opposition betray the same capitulationist impulses that led to the KMT entry—only worse, for at least the party of Chiang Kai-shek was "progressive" relative to the warlords. It wanted to unbind the feet, cut off the pigtails, etc. Not so the mullahs, who want to reimpose the veil.

There can be specific united-front actions of an anti-imperialist character between proletarian revolutionaries and bourgeois nationalists, such as a march on a colonial military base. Naturally communists would join in a pro-independence mass uprising, advocating that it go further than its bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leaders wish in breaking with imperialism. But what the pseudo-Trotskyist revisionists wish to do with the slogan of an "anti-imperialist united front" is exactly what Stalin-Dimitrov did with the slogan of a "united front against fascism" at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935: use it as a codeword for a political bloc with a section of the exploiters, actual and aspiring. The essentially Stalinist concept of "the anti-imperialist united front" amounts to supporting those bourgeois groups which stand for (or claim to stand for) a less pro-Western *foreign policy* than their main opponents.

A Revolutionary Policy in Iran

Our reformist/centrist opponents assert that the slogan "Down with the shah! Down with the mullahs!" meant political abstentionism in this period of revolutionary turmoil. This is their bottom-line argument. They fulminate and in part believe that the Spartacists advocated that Iranian revolutionaries stay home and perhaps study *Capital*, while the masses were toppling the shah. For opportunists, of course, political activism is always synonymous with tailing the mass movement. Not so for revolutionaries. We have in reality put forward an *active and interventionist political line* at every stage in the Iranian crisis, from the mass Islamic demonstrations last summer through the strike wave which paralyzed the economy late this year to the beginnings today of leftist and democratic protests against Khomeini's first steps in erecting his Islamic Republic.

The main action of the Islamic opposition consisted of a series of mass demonstrations under the slogans "God Is Great" and "Long Live Khomeini." The

program of these demonstrations, which was utterly transparent, was to *replace* the shah's autocracy with a theocratic state under Khomeini. Participation in these demonstrations could be *nothing other*, than support to the rule of the mullahs, that is, support to the kind of regime which now holds power.

Shameless reformists like the American SWP simply resort to "black is white" subterfuges, arguing that the veil is a "symbol of resistance to the shah" (dixit Cindy Jaquith) rather than an expression of *purdah*, the Muslim traditionalist seclusion of women; that to the masses an Islamic Republic meant a workers and peasants republic (according to Barry Sheppard); or that "allah akbar" (god is great) really meant the people were stronger than the shah's army (Brian Grogan's contribution). Where the reformists simply lie, centrist tailists like Workers Power resort to pseudo-orthodox confusionism:

"Whilst we in no way hide that the positive goals of mullahs are not and cannot be those of the working class we do argue that Trotskyists must participate in the actions against the Shah and the Generals."

—"Opportunists and Sectarians on Iran,"
Workers Power, February 1979

Ha! Any left group which attempted to participate in the "Long Live Khomeini" demonstrations with slogans opposed to an Islamic Republic would have received a swift lesson in Koranic justice.

Workers Power argues that participation in the Khomeiniite demonstrations amounted to "a de facto anti-imperialist military united front" (ibid.). But these demonstrations were *not* civil war, in which victory for the shah's army would have meant *obliteration* of the popular forces, and thus a policy of revolutionary defensism on the side of the mullah-led forces would necessarily have been posed. The demonstrations were essentially a pressure tactic for the Islamization of the existing state apparatus. The Khomeini leadership was clearly looking forward to a coup against the shah by a Persian equivalent of Pakistan's "soldier of Islam" General Zia. The demonstrations for an Islamic Republic were just that.

Our principled opposition to participating in the Khomeiniite demonstrations was not an option for political quietism. Depending on its resources and the concrete military situation, a Trotskyist organization in Iran would have used the opening created by the eruption of a mass Islamic opposition, and the occasional hesitancy of the shah's repressive apparatus, to agitate for revolutionary-democratic demands and its full class-struggle program. A Trotskyist vanguard would also have sought to break the ranks of the leftist groups, centrally the Fedayeen, from Khomeini by proposing to these organizations a series of united-front actions against the shah independent of the mullahs' movement and politically opposed to it.

The shah was brought down not only by the "Long Live Khomeini" demonstrations, the reformists/centrists will here argue, but also by the workers' strikes, especially in the economically decisive oil-fields. True. But whereas our tailist opponents *amalgamated* the reactionary petty-bourgeois protests and the proletarian strike wave into a single classless "anti-shah" movement, we drew a fundamental line between

them. The strikes were certainly blows aimed at the monarchy, although initially they had a very considerable economic component. Significantly, the key oil workers' strike did *not* call for an Islamic Republic, even though undoubtedly the workers supported the Khomeiniite opposition to some extent.

A revolutionary party in Iran would, of course, have vigorously supported the strikes and would have done everything in its power to strengthen and extend them, while demanding that the workers give *no support* to the Islamic opposition. As we wrote a month before the shah fled:

"The strike battles now being waged by the Iranian workers could be the basis of the independent mobilization of the proletariat as a competitor for power with Khomeini, not as cannon fodder for the mullahs. In the imperialist epoch, the democratic tasks of freeing oppressed nationalities, agrarian revolution, and breaking down imperialist domination can be carried out only under the leadership of the Iranian proletariat. But these urgent democratic demands require the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship for their success, not the dissolution of the working class into the petty-bourgeois masses."

—"Down with the Shah! Don't Bow to Khomeini!" Workers Vanguard No. 221, 15 December 1978

Once the shah had fled, popular fury turned against the police and especially the hated SAVAK; they were hunted down and killed by angry mobs. The Islamic leadership opposed these spontaneous reprisals against the shah's torturers because they were seeking a rapprochement with at least a section of the generals and also feared "chaos in the streets." A revolutionary party in Iran would not only have participated in the attacks on SAVAK, but sought to organize them on a united-front basis through popular tribunals. As we wrote in January:

"Thus the mullahs correctly see the popular mobilizations against SAVAK as counterposed to building up their jurisdiction and keeping up good relations with the officer corps. People's tribunals to punish the SAVAK torturers could be the beginning of revolutionary dual power, directed against both the religious hierarchy and officer corps."

—"Shah Flees," Workers Vanguard No. 223, 19 January

During the Bakhtiar interval, especially after Khomeini returned from exile, it was quite possible that the generals might have attempted to drown the mass opposition in blood. This was the shah's last message to his senior officers. As we wrote just after the mullahs' victory:

"Had such a confrontation erupted into civil war, Marxists would have militarily supported the popular forces rallied by the mullahs against an intact officer caste, even as our intransigent *political* opposition to the reactionary-led movement sought to polarize the masses along class lines and rally the workers and lower strata of the petty-bourgeois masses around a proletarian pole."

—"Mullahs Win," Workers Vanguard No. 225, 16 February

Such a revolutionary-defensist policy would be justified and necessary *not* because Khomeini is more progressive or anti-imperialist than the shah. As in any

war the decisive question was the line-up of class forces and the consequences of the victory of one side or another. If the generals had won such a civil war, they would have crushed not only the Islamic fanatics but also the advanced elements of the Iranian proletariat and the organized left.

After Khomeini, Us?

It has become commonplace among the pseudo-Trotskyist groups to liken Khomeini's role to that of Alexander Kerensky between the February and October revolutions in Russia. Barry Sheppard of the American SWP said at the previously cited NYC forum, "To say 'Down with the shah, Down with the mullahs' is the same thing as saying in Russia in 1914, 'Down with the tsar, Down with Kerensky'." Likewise the SWP's British partner, the Mandelbrite International Marxist Group, states: "If anything he [Khomeini] bears a closer resemblance to Kerensky, though analogies by their nature are never exact" ("Iran's February Revolution," *Socialist Challenge*, 15 February). This particular analogy is not merely not exact, but is so off the wall it is hard to deal with in a politically meaningful way. Analogies between the Russian February revolution and what has happened in Iran would be valid only if the tsar had been overthrown by a movement led by Metropolitan Tikhon of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Kerensky was an accidental figure thrown up by the revolution. He was insignificant before February 1917. It was precisely Kerensky's lack of political definition and strong party ties which made him an acceptable "leader" to the bourgeois liberal Kadets, the petty-bourgeois populist Social Revolutionaries and labor-reformist Mensheviks. Khomeini was anything but an accidental figure in the overthrow of the shah. He was the established leader of the dominant religious sect. He went into opposition to the shah precisely over the monarchy's superficial attempt at westernization (the 1963 "White Revolution"), especially over the land reform which damaged the economic interests of the mosque, and legal rights for women.

There is, however, an ulterior political logic in the fake-Trotskyists' fixation with the nonsensical Khomeini-Kerensky analogy. Everyone knows Kerensky was but a transitory figure, easily overthrown by the Bolsheviks after a few months in power. In making the Khomeini-Kerensky analogy our revisionist "Trotskyist" opponents are expressing their belief—or at any rate hope—that (soon) "After Khomeini, us." Here we come perhaps to the underlying reason why leftists supported a manifestly reactionary religious movement in Iran. It was a cynical maneuver to support the mullahs against the shah, on the assumption that the "inevitable radicalization" (the "objective dynamic") of the revolution would bring the left to power. Much of the left's effort to prettify this backward-looking religious fanatic as some kind of radical democrat was undoubtedly a hypocritical gesture to ingratiate themselves with Khomeini's Iranian followers.

Perhaps the most sophisticated defense for supporting the mullahs against the shah is an amalgam of cynicism and objectivism. It runs something like this: granted Khomeini is a religious reactionary; if he comes to power and consolidates his rule, this might even be

more reactionary than the shah, at least in its domestic policies. But a reactionary Islamic Republic in Iran today is very unlikely. In order to overthrow the shah, Khomeini had to unleash popular forces which he cannot control and which will prevent him from carrying out his program. In the political chaos which must follow the shah's fall, the left will gain over Khomeini. Although leftist support to Khomeini is an opportunist policy, there is a certain methodological similarity here to the ultraleft Third Period Stalinist position expressed as, "After Hitler, us."

The German Stalinists had all the arguments worked out: Hitler stood at the head of an unstable coalition of big capital and ruined petty bourgeois, which would soon explode; he could never deliver on his demagogic social program. But with the combined strength of a fanatical mass following and the armed forces Hitler



Sipa

Reformists defended stifling *chador* as "symbol of resistance."

built his Third Reich over the broken bones of the organized workers movement. The cynical policy of supporting Khomeini against the shah, figuring he can then be overthrown on the morrow of his victory, is like playing Russian roulette with five bullets in the chamber. Khomeini now has in his hands, though not yet securely, the resources of state power. He will certainly command the loyalty of the still-intact officer caste in any showdown with the left or workers movement. Furthermore, Khomeini enjoys enormous popular authority, especially among the backward rural masses, not only as the imam of the faithful but as the conquerer of the hated shah.

As revolutionaries, we are never fatalistic about the victory of counterrevolution. When Hitler was appointed chancellor in early 1933, Trotsky called on the German working class to insurrect against him. Likewise in Iran today we call for a united-front defense of the workers movement, the left and secular democratic forces against the imminent terror of Islamic reaction. But we recognize that the political and military advantages now lie with the Islamic Revolutionary Committee and not with the suicidal opportunists of the Iranian left and the tragically misled working class. Khomeini is not engaging in empty bombast when he threatens:

"If the united leadership is not accepted by all groups I shall regard this as an uprising against the Islamic revolution, and I warn these bandits and unlawful elements that we were able to destroy the shah and his evil regime, and we are strong enough to deal with them."

—*The New York Times*, 20 February

And how did Khomeini acquire the strength to destroy the shah? It was provided not only by the mosque's traditional petty-bourgeois base, the *bazaaris* and similar social strata. It was also the support of the Iranian left (the pro-Moscow Stalinist Tudeh Party and the eclectic Stalinoid Fedayeen) which gave Khomeini the weapons he will now turn against them. And the foreign leftist cheerleaders for the mullahs in the streets—the Jack Barneses and Ernest Mandels—they too bear responsibility for the gathering reactionary terror in Iran. Every unveiled woman who is beaten, every petty malefactor who is flogged, every worker militant who is tortured by an Islamic SAVAK will be right to curse all of those who helped bring to power their new tormentor. ■

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No to the Veil...

(continued from page 3)

Women's Day last March, the American feminist protested Khomeini's reactionary anti-woman policies and was ejected from Iran. But a feminist perspective for Iran can offer nothing more fundamental than the hypocritical tokenism of the shah's "White Revolution," which benefited mainly a small minority of urban middle-class women. The woman question in the backward countries engages the deepest prejudices and engenders the deepest fears. Even the mildest cosmetic reforms can evoke terrifying revenge against women from the strongholds of backwardness and superstition. To unleash the tremendous revolutionary potential of the woman question requires a class-struggle leadership armed with a broad new vision of a social order of equality and freedom. The fight for the basic needs of the vast mass of Iranian women—an end to forced marriage; literacy and education; contraception; freedom from poverty and legal subjugation; No to the Veil!—is an attack on the foundations of the capitalist social order and poses nothing less than socialist revolution.

This special issue of *Women and Revolution* documents our struggle for this revolutionary perspective. ■

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Iranian women join upsurge

Revolution inside the revolution

By Kathleen Denny
 "Nobody can influence me, nobody. Still less a woman. . . . What do these feminists want? You say equality, I don't want to seem rude but . . . you're equal in the eyes of the law but not, excuse my saying so, in ability. . . . You've produced nothing great, nothing!" —The former shah of Iran, interview with Oriana Fallaci, 'New Republic,' December 1, 1973.

In the last year workers, students, women, and peasants have spilled into the streets of Iran in an uncompromising battle against tyranny, culminating in



More and more Iranian women are rejecting the veil and the oppressive system that it symbolizes.

ners, to surround and isolate agents-provocateurs of the SAVAK, the hated secret police. Hundreds of others showered army trucks with flowers chanting, "Brother soldiers, don't kill your brothers." Actions like these were vital in winning the army ranks to support the revolutionary upsurge.

Women are also part of the insurgent working class, and their demands are being raised by other workers. Four hundred thousand striking teachers demanded the right to a union, childcare, and equal pay. Oil workers used their key position in the economy to further the struggle of all the oppressed and exploited. They demands included freedom for all political prisoners, childcare, and equal pay for women. Striking bank workers, most of whom are women, published evidence of the frenzied panic among the ruling class, who sent billions of dollars out of Iran in September and October alone.

Large numbers of women have entered the momentous upsurge that is shaking Iran and the world. News reports show women students, not with veils, but clad in jeans, selling revolutionary pamphlets. A women's liberation demonstration at Tehran University called for a government that would grant equal rights to women.

No "solution" imposed by male rulers from on high will satisfy the needs of the increasingly politically active women of Iran. Women who profoundly radicalized their thinking and took difficult action to fight for their

permission of her husband or father. It is perfectly legal for a man to have two wives. Men have the right to punish women family members for "crimes against the dignity of the family"—such as having a lover. Men can kill wives, sisters, and daughters without fear of serious criminal sanctions. Women are prohibited from testifying in divorce cases, and in all other cases the testimony of two women is equated with that of one man.

The majority of women of the household. In the mid-1930s, the father of the now-deposed shah, tried to unveil women by decree and would rip their hair out. In the mid-1930s, the father of the now-deposed shah, tried to unveil women by decree and would rip their hair out.

they too became victims of the savage persecution and torture which was turned against all those who defied the shah's system. Women and men, students, teachers, and workers were locked away and tortured for such crimes as talking about politics or reading a book.

Facing the disappearance and death of their husbands and children, under continual threat of arrest and torture themselves, it is not surprising that thousands of women first moved into political action to fight for their

Socialist Voice

By the end of August even the official government newspaper *Rastakhiz* reported, "The most visible thing was the active and massive participation of women shoulder to shoulder with men." Large numbers of women participated in demonstrations on January 19. The Montreal daily *Le Devoir* described how, in western Iran, "women wrapped in the traditional black robes and veil, they raised their clenched fists to the sky and shouted, 'Death to the shah!' and 'Now the women of Iran are free!'"

Shah's 'Reforms'—Not for Women
 The big-business media have

USec Falsifies History

"Large numbers of women have entered the momentous upsurge that is shaking Iran and the world. News reports show women students, not with veils, but clad in jeans, selling revolutionary pamphlets."

These words, written to bolster the standard reformist argument that any mass movement is inevitably radicalizing, appeared in *Socialist Voice*, newspaper of the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL, Canadian section of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat—USec) on March 5.

Oddly enough, however, the photograph which accompanied this uninspired little piece of opportunism did not show a single one of these radical, jeans-clad students. Captioned "More and more Iranian women are rejecting the veil and the oppressive system that it symbolizes," the accompanying photograph (above) shows women without veils all right but dressed in the style of 30 years ago! And for a very good reason—the picture was taken in 1951!

On March 8, International Women's Day, when tens of thousands of women took to the streets chanting "Down with Khomeini!" and "Down with this dictatorship!" the RWL would have been able to find the photo it was looking for to prop up its misleading position, but on March 5 the photographs of women demonstrators in Iran were an endless, undulating sea of black, shrouded, faceless forms—hard to palm off as a revolutionary vanguard.

But no matter. Taking a leaf from the Stalin school of falsification, the RWL shamelessly ran a 1951 photograph of a demonstration for the nationalization of Iranian oil over a caption designed to dupe readers into believing that it depicted the current situation.

In the months since the perpetration of this seamy fraud in the service of clerical reaction, history has proved absolutely correct the Spartacist position that Khomeini would be in no sense a progressive alternative to the butcher shah. But just as support to Khomeini has not radicalized the Iranian masses, it has not radicalized the RWL and its co-thinkers. Nothing—not even the arrest and brutalization of its Iranian comrades—can deter the USec from its devotion to the mullahs. When the Trotskyist League of Canada (TLC, sympathizing section of the international Spartacist tendency) called a united-front demonstration in Toronto on July 19 against persecution of leftists in Iran, the RWL refused to endorse it because it still considers our call "Down with Khomeini!" counterrevolutionary.

But *Socialist Voice* readers may not all be as dimwitted as the RWL presumes. A hopeful sign was the appearance of an RWL member at the united-front demonstration in defiance of his own organization. Taking part in this protest against mullah-led repression, he said, was more important than his membership in the RWL.

Khalil Tour...

(continued from page 16)

who claim that what is going on in Teheran today is the Iranian February Revolution," she said. "But it has been clear to us from the beginning that Khomeini was in no sense progressive." He said he wanted an "Islamic Republic" based on the Koran; in his plebiscite the people were given only two choices, either the shah or the Muslim clergy. He tried to win the support of the shah's army and decreed that only "Islamic soldiers" could be armed. Khalil went on to say:

"Today in Iran there are Islamic courts. We have no tears for the generals and SAVAK torturers who were executed by the mullahs. But why is it that only the mullahs have the right to speak in these courts? Organizations like the Fedayeen were tortured by the shah, yet these people are not allowed to speak because they are not part of the 'Iranian nation' according to Khomeini."

Khalil stressed that the fight for women's emancipation is a motor force for revolution in Iran. She quoted Trotsky on the Eastern woman, the "slave of slaves": "There will be no better fighter for the ideas of the Revolution and for the ideas of Communism than the awakened woman worker." It is in the so-called "third world" that feminism's penny-ante personalist notion of women's liberation is most patently absurd. In Iran, the woman question is self-evidently not a matter of who does the dishes, but of basic rights from literacy to contraception. In the advanced capitalist countries, women remain oppressed but with a difference: the bourgeois revolution (imperfectly) established their legal status as human beings. Similarly, it established a

certain separation of church and state, which was a gain for women. Islam is far from unique in its denigration of women, but in Khomeini's Iran, the Koran's codification of female inferiority and proscriptions against her participation in economic and social life acquire the force of law.

Khalil pointed to the history of militant women's struggles against the veil which symbolizes their forcible seclusion in the home. She noted that the Soviet government in Central Asia in the 1920s found a key point of support among Muslim women. In the epoch of imperialist decay, the weak national bourgeoisie is no longer able to accomplish the democratic tasks associated with the bourgeois revolution: a secular constituent assembly, self-determination of nations, freedom of religion, land reform, equal rights for women. The fight for women's emancipation, she stressed, requires the struggle for a proletarian vanguard party which can group all the oppressed under its slogans.

Khalil polemicized particularly against the opportunists on the left:

"The leader of the British International Marxist Group said that when he was in Iran he chanted the slogan, *allah akbar*, which means 'god is great.' He said this slogan is revolutionary because it is the slogan of the Iranian masses. But for us it is clear that this slogan belongs to Islam. Today in Iran, when the Islamic soldiers kill Kurdish fighters, they chant '*allah akbar*.' In 1974 when the Turkish army invaded Cyprus, when they were massacring the Greek people, they were chanting '*allah akbar*.' This slogan means one thing—Islamic reaction. That slogan belongs to them, not to us."

In her concluding forum in New York City on May 5, Khalil set forth the urgent tasks facing revolutionists in

Press Covers Fatima Khalil Tour



Iran today:

"The struggle today...is to smash the Islamic government and to base ourselves on the working class.... For that the task of revolutionaries is to fight to establish a revolutionary party.... The slogan of the workers and farmers government is the main slogan in Iran. It is necessary to break the masses from the ayatollahs, raising demands which will contradict the mullahs' interests, which will show the masses the road forward, demands like: Expropriate the land, including the mullahs' land! For a constituent assembly and self-determination! For full democratic rights!"

"Your Place is with Khomeini, Ours is with the Iranian Proletariat"

Muslim fundamentalists and their Maoist sycophants

saw the Khalil tour—like an earlier SL forum series on Iran given by *Women and Revolution* editor, D.L. Reissner—as a dangerous example of "satanic Marxism" and made several attempts to disrupt the meetings. But American trade unionists from over 25 unions from coast to coast turned out to ensure Khalil's right to speak. When a cowardly attempt to enlist the aid of the cops in shutting down our forum at San Francisco State University failed, the mullah-lovers stalked out, dragging away even those of their entourage who wanted to stay. But elsewhere, sharp debates during the discussion period highlighted the unique program of the Spartacist tendency.

At Wayne State University in Detroit the same Maoist
continued on page 14

"It's a Question of Life and Death for Women"

The following is an edited condensation of the remarks from the floor by SL spokesman James Robertson at the Fatima Khalil forum in Santa Cruz, California on May 2:

Persia is an important country. We of the Spartacist League noted its striking sociological resemblance to tsarist Russia and noted it appeared ripe for socialist revolution. But we made one crucial mistake—we simply compared the shah to the last Russian tsar. And here's the big difference: the tsar never shifted off the basis of Great Russian chauvinism and the Orthodox Church. But the shah cut the subsidy to the mullahs and made a token land reform. And they got him.

Whole populations of Iran were deeply offended and estranged from the government, including the ones that benefited economically and socially. A couple of years ago, when a financial squeeze came, they cut off the subsidies to the state religion—the Shi'ite religion. The Shi'ites, already offended, with some of their leaders (Khomeini particularly) in emigration and exile—and merely the threat of land reform, land to the working people, and much of it is church land—they went into opposition.

The shah represented a somewhat insane oppressive autocracy that didn't even rest on the deep reactionary forces. And he gave up Persian chauvinism; he used Ba'his in the top command. He was liberal in a cosmetic way about women. He was a big anti-Communist; he thought that would carry him. And he broke the crucial connections—he tried in the wrong day and age to modernize Iran from above.

But it was only cosmetic. It was fake and it depended on American imperialism. And he estranged the deep reactionary forces in Iran. So the key axes which are interlinked are the bazaar merchants—the little rug guys, the traditional small oppressors—together with the mullah apparatus,

which is very strong and interrelated. The shah called his throne the Peacock Throne, going back to Darius the Great—long before the Muslim religion. It was all fantasy, but it was a flat insult to the Muslim hierarchy. All sections of the population were offended by the torture, the arrogance, the corruption. And when the Muslim establishment turned on him, with its enormous apparatus and mass influence, it blew him to pieces.

Now before that the workers party, the Tudeh Party, was murdered in the tens of thousands. There is history. Why has the workers movement not raised its head? There's a large proletarian movement of industrial and oil workers in Iran, much bigger than there was in Russia. But it was murdered by the CIA, the mullahs and the shah, all working together, from 1946 to 1953. They brought down a liberal bourgeois nationalist, Mossadeqh, who was in a popular front with the Stalinists (he lived, of course, until he died a natural death—and the Communists were killed). So we have no fangs today in Iran. Now it was a Stalinist party in its ideology, so it permitted itself to be murdered. It went down too easily. But it was a workers party.

So what do we have in Iran? There's a whole host of nationalities, minority religions. There's the power of women's liberation, which is different than in this country. It's an oversimplification, but in the Muslim world women's liberation is not a question of who does the dishes; it's a question of life and death for women, of whether you should live in slavery. This struggle is a great motor force which must be centered on the proletariat. Only the proletariat can transcend and at the same time incorporate the appetites for social and national liberation. And the proletariat without a head, without a program, without a consciousness is nothing, as the fate of the Tudeh Party shows.

Khalil Tour...

(continued from page 13)

who two weeks earlier had announced that if Khomeini wanted to cut off his head, "I would be the one to take the sword and do it," was back on the scene. Repeating his slanderous litany that all Trotskyists were "CIA" and "SAVAK" agents, he baited the speaker for being on tour in the U.S. and not in Iran. To this Comrade Khalil responded:

"I ask you what are you doing here? Why aren't you in Iran? You don't say where you stand, just repeat slanders. But you are one of the people who last time called the bourgeois police on us. That shows your position. We are proud to be with the women who said, 'Down with Khomeini!' Your place is with Khomeini, ours is with the Iranian proletariat."

At the same meeting a Muslim woman denounced the speaker for daring to criticize the ayatollah, who had studied religion "for 40 years." The speaker retorted:

"So they have degrees. So does Dr. Kissinger, what about him?... Yes, Khomeini has published many books. When he was in Iraq he published books against the Jewish people and against the Ba'hai in Iran. What about them? According to Khomeini they are not part of the Iranian people, they should be crushed. Or the Kurds, because they are Sunni."

As she left the forum, the same Muslim woman revealed her class bias in her parting shot: "Women are free in Iran. My mother drives a Mercedes!" (But for how long? In devoutly Islamic Saudi Arabia even the most aristocratic women are not permitted to drive.)

In response to Khomeini supporters' attempts to justify the vigilante attacks by Islamic marshals to impose puritanical social norms, one SL spokesman shocked the Muslim fanatics by retorting:

"I used to be in a homosexual communist grouping that fused with the Spartacist League, and I say that Ayatollah Khomeini is nothing but Anita Bryant with a beard and a turban. You say that the homosexuals [shot by the mullahs' firing squads] were nothing but rapists, but you said the 'victims' had to be whipped a hundred times...."

Why do we hold these forums? Because we are looking for a few Iranians with guts, with the guts to stand up and say they are for the democratic rights of all the people—national minorities, homosexuals, women."

Significantly, those who did were virtually all women and members of oppressed nationalities. In Chicago one woman remarked:

"As an Iranian woman, I would like to thank the Spartacist League for being the only organization to see the class analysis of Iran, saying that Khomeini was never a progressive and what an Islamic state would mean for the workers and women in particular."

At Ann Arbor a Baluchi spoke against the pro-mullah thugs who had tried to stop earlier Spartacist League forums:

"I am here from East Lansing, sent to apologize from these people.... I know how the followers of Khomeini and sections of the Iranian students and leftists have been trying to strangle any voice which does not conform to their political goal.... And I wonder, if the so-called Iranian revolutionaries do not allow people to express their opinion in this country, what is the condition in Iran?"

It was particularly gratifying that a number of the trade unionists who had come initially simply to defend Khalil's right to speak found themselves drawn closer to the Spartacist League and its revolutionary program. In the crucial test posed by the Iranian events, the vindication of our Marxist program can lay the basis for a new wave of recruitment to the international Spartacist tendency. ■

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Interview with Fatima Khalil

W&R: Why did the Spartacist League organize your tour at this time?

Khalil: Many people in the United States were very confused when Khomeini came to power. Only the program of the Spartacist League was correct from the beginning: Down with the shah! Down with the mullahs! Through this tour we wanted to emphasize again the urgent tasks posed by the situation—defense of the democratic rights of women, national minorities and the left and labor movement against the mullahs, and the struggle for the establishment of a revolutionary party in Iran.

W&R: Besides the general political analysis of the Spartacist League, what other sources did you draw on for your talks?

Khalil: Two things. One was my own experience. I was brought up as a Muslim in a country in which the social customs were very similar to those of Iran. The other thing which I looked at and talked about was the Bolshevik experience in Central Asia. I talked about that because it is a very good example for us of how to organize masses of Islamic women against capitalism.

W&R: What sort of response did your tour receive?

Khalil: There was a great deal of interest. You could see that from the widespread press coverage and from the large turnouts at the forums. Interesting, too, was the response that we got from trade unionists. Some of them came simply to defend the forums, but they were really interested in the issue and they were willing to debate with people.

W&R: What was the response from other left organizations?

Khalil: Usually they didn't turn out to the forums. They must have been too embarrassed to come and defend their capitulationist line on Iran. Members of the pseudo-Trotskyist United Secretariat had actually defended the veil as a progressive symbol of resistance against the shah and had chanted "Allah Akbar"—"God is Great"—along with the anti-communist clerical reactionaries.

The Healyites, who also defended Khomeini at every point and defended the execution of leftists in Iran—and not only in Iran but in Iraq, where the Ba'ath Party has been killing members of the Communist Party—called us provocateurs and CIA agents! At this point I am not sure I should even debate with these Healyite scum or consider them as part of the working-class movement, the left movement.

W&R: What was the response among Iranian students and other Iranians in the United States?

Khalil: Many Iranian students and Iranian leftists had already returned to Iran. Most of the Iranians who came to our forums were, first of all, mullah-lovers who were very hostile and who came not in order to debate but in order to disrupt the forums, call us CIA agents and scream that what we had to say was all lies from the bourgeois press. Some of them even started to pray.

Most of them were also Persian chauvinists who had contempt for the democratic rights of minorities in Iran.

Some of them said, "You are not Persian. How can you speak about this?" One of them said, "There is no such thing as a Persian. We are Iranians." Then he turned around and continued talking about the Persian revolution. At that point, I spoke to him in Turkish. He was really surprised. He did not know what I was talking about, although this language is the language of a large percentage of the population in Iran.

They were generally very petty bourgeois. That was very clear; rich students sent here for a good education. Most of them have very good positions waiting for them when they go back to Iran.

The majority of Iranians who came to my forums were like this, but there were also some individuals who found themselves in agreement with the points which were made, and they were very pleased about the forums. One Iranian woman thanked us and said that the Spartacist League was the only organization which was for women's liberation in Iran and which had the correct line on it from the beginning.

W&R: How were the disruption attempts handled?

Khalil: We had had some earlier forums on Iran which were disrupted by Iranian religious fanatics who called the speaker a "slut" and a "whore." We were very determined to defend our forums against any further disruption by these people, so we called upon trade unionists and we organized labor defense guards. There were no serious disruptions, although we did receive a death threat in Los Angeles.

In San Francisco there was some disruption, but the pro-Khomeini thugs could not do anything because of the good organized defense, so they left the forum and called the campus police on us. They made it very clear that if we were in Iran they would not allow us to speak, and they might very well kill us. This is what they understand by "democracy." On our part, we made it clear to them that today here and tomorrow in Iran we will defend our forums and workers democracy in the same way and that we refuse to be silenced by these anti-communists.

W&R: Iran has generated considerable renewed interest among feminists. Can you say something about the feminist response and about Kate Millett's forum at which you spoke in New York?

Khalil: The feminists are confused about this issue. They don't know what to do. They don't have a strategy for women's liberation. The feeling at Kate Millett's forum was that the feminists wanted to do *something* for the women in Iran who came out into the streets, but the feeling was one of guilty liberalism. Nothing else. So they said, "We can't tell those women what they should do, but we should organize solidarity." Basically, the only program that they have is that women should fight for their rights. But they don't understand the necessity for *class struggle*. For them, Khomeini is bad essentially because he is male. But what happened in Iran again confirms the fact that the achievement of women's liberation lies in the establishment of a revolutionary party and the organization of the working class, the only class which can fight effectively for the liberation of women. ■

In Islamic society, women are not considered human beings," Fatima Khalil told audiences across the country during her recent three-week speaking tour. "I remember when I was a young girl and went to class to study the Koran. I was told that if I did not cover my head, I would go to hell and every strand of my hair would turn into long snakes. I was told that if I showed my finger to a strange man when I was married, I would have to cut it off. Since it would not belong to my husband anymore, therefore it would not belong to me." She described how under Islam "two female witnesses are considered equal to one male witness"

NO TO THE VEIL!
Down with Khomeini!
For a Workers Revolution in Iran!
SPARTACIST LEAGUE

Fatima Khalil Tour: The Truth About Iran

and how in the villages "young women—children, really—are often exchanged for animals."

This vivid and moving denunciation by a communist woman of Muslim origin of women's slavery under the veil—which the Iranian ayatollahs are now seeking to reimpose—drew wide press coverage as her tour, "No to the Veil! For Workers' Revolution to Defeat Islamic Reaction!" reached over 1,000 people in ten cities, including many Iranian students and American trade unionists.

The Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth League (SL/SYL) sponsored Comrade Khalil's tour as part of an aggressive propaganda campaign to bring the Marxist program for the Iranian masses before the international working class and socialist movement. The critical situation in Iran today poses a major test for the left, and it is the SL uniquely which took the correct position from the beginning, opposing the rise of Islamic reaction with the slogan, "Down with the Shah! Down with the Mullahs!"

Khalil's message to the American left was that the Iranian working class must lead the women, the national minorities, the peasants and all the oppressed sectors of society in revolutionary struggle against the Muslim clerical reactionaries. The alternative—clearer day by day—is theocratic barbarism.

Well before the overthrow of the bloody U.S.-backed shah, the international Spartacist tendency warned that replacement of the hated dictator by the Khomeini-led opposition would be no gain for the working masses; that the ayatollah's forces are anti-working-class Persian chauvinists seeking to return to the Koranic law of the 7th century. With the victory of the mullahs, our warning

was dramatically confirmed as women took to the streets of Teheran protesting imposition of the veil and as ethnic-religious minorities rose in revolt around the country. Based on her own experience as a student activist and trade-union militant in the Near East region, Fatima Khalil drew the urgent revolutionary lessons of the Iranian crisis.

For the SL/SYL the decision to bring Comrade Khalil to speak in this country was based on our understanding that the dramatic situation in Iran today poses a major test for the entire working-class movement, just as did the Chilean popular front in the early seventies. At that time the Spartacist League stood alone in refusing to give political support to Allende's class-collaborationist government which paved the way for the bloody Pinochet coup. Though there is little satisfaction for revolutionists in seeing our forecasts confirmed by defeats for the working masses, the lessons of Iran and Chile must shape the consciousness of subjectively revolutionary militants from whose ranks the nucleus of an authentic Trotskyist world party must be built to lead the workers and oppressed to victory.

No to the Veil! For Workers Revolution!

In her forums Comrade Khalil stressed that Khomeini has *not* betrayed—he said very clearly from the beginning exactly what he wanted. "There are people

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