

**February 1979: when internationalists
announced that Khomeini was no
more progressive than the Queen
of England or Emperor Bokass I**



Internationalist Voice

E-mail: internationalist.voice@gmail.com

Homepage: www.internationalist.tk

In 1979, demonstrations, protests and strikes, along with the entry of the working class on the stage of the struggle, sounded the alarm not only for the Iranian bourgeoisie but also for the world bourgeoisie. On the one hand, widespread repression was a remedy, which also radicalized the protests; on the other hand, society was so convulsed that the ruling class was no longer able to lead and continue the pursuit of imperial capitalism, so the bourgeoisie had to prevent radicalization. The emergence of alternative social protests merely served the survival of the capitalist system. The Islamic Republic, although an inappropriate alternative, was the only possible one to the world bourgeoisie at that time.

It was in such a context that Khomeini was moved to the centre by the right and left tendencies of capital and the clergy became anti-imperialist. The left of capital played an active role in consolidating the leadership of the clergy and, of course, the anti-imperialists among them. The right and left tendencies of capital are now trying to repeat what happened 40 years ago, transforming the working class into a black army in order to take part in street and other popular protests, so that the masses can be the material force of the “current revolution in Iran”, the same role they played in the 1979 revolution. Apparently, only words have changed, however: this time, instead of the anti-imperialist clergy and the anti-imperialist struggle, freedom, democracy and social justice, even with socialist touches, are talked about as a replacement for the ruling elite. If internationalist positions in the Iranian political milieu had not resonated in 1979, but had simply been a footnote in history, which, after 40 years, would still have filled internationalists with pride, then, today, internationalist positions in the same political milieu would have been a reality, despite being very weak.

We will now take a brief look at the positions of the left of capital and internationalists adopted early on in the formation of the Islamic Republic. An examination of the positions of the left of capital is not the subject of this article, but rather a historical account of the position that the capitalist left and the internationalists had assumed during the genesis of the Islamic Republic. Is the left of capital willing to republish its texts from 1979? Definitely not! We will briefly refer to the positions of the left of capital and internationalists in order to expose the functioning of political currents to the public.

Trotskyists

Trotskyists [1], like other left tendencies, welcomed Khomeini dearly. The Revolutionary Workers’ Party, led by Babak Zahrai, with all its power, cooperated with the Islamic Republic. The radical part of the Trotskyist faction demanded the military training of workers before sending them to war, writing: “In the first issue of the magazine *Socialist Workers*, on 2 October 1980, when the war began, we proclaimed that, since the problem with war was about workers volunteering to be sent to the front line because they believe the regime’s leaders, then the regime’s leaders should have armed and trained these workers to ‘be able to defend revolution through their councils!’” [2]. Fighting alongside the bourgeois gangs should have rang alarm bells for domestic Trotskyists or Trotskyists in Spain and China, because, of course, in World War II, they sent workers to their imperialist massacres as well.

Maoists

The Ranjbaran Maoist Party, in its first congress, hung a photo of Khomeini alongside the photos of their leaders, while the banner over the congress platform stated: “Long live the anti-imperialist and anti-authoritarian revolution of Iran led by Imam Khomeini” [3].

The Ranjbaran Party was also was in league with the Islamic Republic. Some headline articles from *Ranjbar* (the official publication of this party) read as follows:

- Iran doesn't have any leader other than Khomeini - *Ranjbar* No. 5
- Karbala, Karbala, the torch of free men, and the Soviet Union and the Americans are the enemy of the oppressed.
- - *Ranjbar* No. 7[4]

Another Maoist tendency, the Communist League, despite not sharing intelligence with the Islamic Republic, adopted a position that was no better than other Maoist tendencies. The Communist League began its work by congratulating some of the most notorious executioners, like Khalkhali, and in an article entitled A Historic Verdict, published in *Haghighat* No. 28, page 28, wrote:

“Ayatollah Seyed Sadegh Khalkhali, head of the Islamic Revolutionary Court, during a press conference ... passed an death sentence on the deposed Shah ... we congratulate this revolutionary decision and its proclamation by the Islamic Revolutionary Court and the presiding judge.”

With the start of the Iran-Iraq War, the Maoists victimized the workers by agreeing to them being sent as cannon fodder in the internal disputes of the bourgeoisie. The Maoists wrote: “The Communist League of Iran declares itself to be completely ready to advance the defence of revolution and our native country and participate in the war against the Ba'athist mercenaries of the trespasser!” [5]

In their criticism of the radical language of the Maoists, the Stalinists wrote: “Reject the counter-revolutionary and anti-national views from your movement! Our country is at risk of direct military aggression from mercenary imperialism and a part of its territory has been occupied ... we must defend the revolution and the homeland from the anti-revolutionary and anti-patriotic attempts at sabotage and disruption.” [6]

Maoists like Basij, on the front line, followed the same philosophy as the Basij and expressed pride in losing members of their organizations in the war, for example: “We lament comrade Abul Qasim Sarraf-Zadeh, a member of the leadership of the Communist League of Iran on the front line of the war, who lost his life as a martyr” [7]. These is not an example of the religious delirium of the Basij but the words of the Maoist leadership.

Again and again, when internal conflicts between bourgeois gangs flared up, the working class was asked to protect the life of President Bani-Sadr, a criminal bourgeois nut, from other gang attacks.

“Announcement concerning the conspiracy against the president: People of Tehran! To support the president and to deal with the criminal traitors and that evil bunch of thugs affiliated to the ruling party who are gathered around his house, we must guard him.” [8]

Stalinists

The most important Stalinist current, the Organization of the Iranian People’s Fedayee Guerrillas, played an important role in strengthening the Islamic Republic. The Fedayees admired their imam’s anti-imperialist perception, addressing him as the great leader of the Shiites and believing that his return to his homeland was in the interests of workers [9]. The majority of this faction became an appendage of the Intelligence Ministry. Its leader, Farokh Negahdar, in the period 1981-82, held meetings in the Islamic Revolutionary Court with executioners such as Mousavi Tabrizi, who ordered the execution of thousands of people, as well as being known as the “Butcher of Evin Prison”. For the Fedayees, their members and sympathizers had an overwhelming duty to betray other political activists, writing in their publication:

“The sympathizers of the Organization [of the Iranian People’s Fedayee Guerrillas] at this current momentous time must carry out their duties more decisively and with more determination than before. Expose the machinations of anti-revolutionaries and the promotion of anti-revolutionary groups’ policies in the workplace and among families and wherever the masses are present: these are among the tasks of militant sympathizers.” [10]

The basic question is, what role was played by the most radical tendencies of Stalinism in stabilizing of the anti-imperialist clergy.

The basic question concerns what role the most radical phrase tendencies among the Stalinists played in stabilizing the anti-imperialist clergy. Current 3,” the most radical part of Stalinism and the Organization of Struggle on the Path to the Emancipation of the Working Class (Peykar) [11], was the most important current within this context. For now, let us set aside the Peykar dream of a democratic revolution (state capitalism), as well as its perspectives and socialist beliefs, which found its way into one of the most backward countries in Europe, as demonstrated in the article Socialist Albania and the Brilliant Achievements of Socialism [12]. Instead, we should consider again the nature of the role that the Peykar played in stabilizing the anti-imperialist clergy. Then, we can determine its counter-revolutionary nature and how, as a part of the political apparatus of capital, helped in sustaining the new order of Islamic barbarism. Prior to the launch of its publishing activities, in an open letter to its anti-imperialist imam, Khomeini, in connection with the arrest of Mojtaba Taleghani, a member of the Peykar wrote:

“We have declared that the revolutionary courts work in defence of the oppressed ... through their revolutionary work, they continue to demand peace and justice for our suffering people.” [13]

The *Peykar* continued to promote these positions in its publication. Some of the headlines accompanying *Peykar*'s articles tell us which position had the most radical Stalinist tendency as well as reflecting the fact that the *Peykar*'s problem was not caused by its confusion, but was due to its ideological framework, i.e., Stalinism. One cannot belong to the camp of capital (the left wing of capital) and adopt a revolutionary stance. Here are some of the headline from the *Peykar*'s articles, which need no explanation:

- Initiated by Ayatollah Taleghani to Create Local Councils for Administrative Matters, as Approved by Ayatollah Khomeini as well, We Welcome and Hereby Offer Our Support for This Revolutionary Action - *Peykar* No. 1, page 2
- We Confirm the Revolutionary Act of Ayatollah Khomeini [in relation to cutting diplomatic ties with Egypt] - *Peykar* No. 2, page 7
- Honour the Memory of the Martyr and Militant Clergyman Ayatollah Saeedi - *Peykar* No. 7, page 1
- Pressure from the People, the Revolutionary Forces, Ayatollah Khomeini and the Revolutionary Council - *Peykar* No. 8, page 4
- The Court of the People, the Court of the Revolution [in relation to the execution of a parliament member from the period of the Shah's reign] - *Peykar* No. 12, page 1
- Look at the Imam's speech Addressed to Industry - *Peykar* No. 13, page 4 [anti-imperialist petty bourgeois]
- Our Candidates Wanted to Reflect the Aim of Working People in Order to Defend Their Interests and to Enable Their Participation in the Election - *Peykar* No. 12, page 1
- How the Ruling Bourgeois Has the Revolutionary Courts in Their Hands - *Peykar* No. 17, page 1
- Ayatollah Taleghani: Crystallization of the People's Half-century Anti-imperialist and Anti-authoritarian struggle - *Peykar* No. 20, page 1 [our oppressed masses have lost a friend, a father and a tireless fightermajor comrade in arms] [14]
- Imam Khomeini Grants Security to Muhammad Mir Lashary - *Peykar* No. 26, page 15

Internationalists

First, we must make it clear what the anti-imperialist struggle means for internationalists. We believe that, in the declining period of capitalism and in the era of imperialism, **all states**, regardless of their size, whether large or small, and regardless of their military and economic power, from the large gangsters like America and Great Britain to the small ones like Iran and Pakistan, are imperialists [15]. Thus, the anti-imperialist struggle means the struggle against capitalism **around the world** and its destruction by means of world revolution.

Internationalists, in February 1979, contented with being attached to the proletarian camp and relying on communist positions and internationalist perspectives, began to analyse the situation. This contrasts with the political delirium of the left of capital and the support for reactionaries like Khomeini, claiming the imam defended the oppressed and made the clergy anti-imperialist. Yes, in February 1979, internationalists declared that Khomeini was no more progressive than the Queen of England or Emperor Bokassa I. Yes, internationalists in that same February, announced that the proletariat must maintain its class independence and should not dissolve itself in the people's movements. Yes, in the same February, internationalists announced that the only revolution on the agenda, both in peripheral countries including Iran and metropolitan countries, was communist revolution.

Therefore, we translated [the statement from the International Communist Current](#), published on 17 February 1979, into Persian, and we recommend reading it.

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Notes:

[1] Trotsky and Trotskyism belong to two different camps. Trotsky, despite his mistakes, such as war communism, the nature of the Soviet Union and so on, died as a member of the proletariat and can still be regarded as revolutionary. Meanwhile, Trotskyism represents the political apparatus of capital.

[2] *Socialist Workers* No. 58, page 9, on the occasion of the ninth anniversary of the magazine

[3] *Ranjbar* No. 1, page 16

[4] Karbala is where the Shiites' third imam was killed.

[9] Statements of Organization of Iranian People's Fedayee Guerrillas in 1979

[10] *Kar (Majority)* No. 149, 17 February 1982, page 18

[11] The Peykar were literally slaughtered in 1981-82

[12] *Peykar* No. 82, page 15

[13] Open Letter on the Organization of Struggle on the Path to the Emancipation of the Working Class (Peykar) to Imam Khomeini, Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran - 13 April 1979

[14] One of the top members of the Azerbaijan Committee of the Peykar, Ayub (real name: Akbar Aghbashlu) tried to take action and prevent the article that spread across the Azerbaijan Province. He represented a very weak, radical and critical tendency within the Peykar. Finally, as a result of differences with Ayub, Ladan Bayani and some others in 1980 were separated from the Peykar and founded the Red Star Group. The Red Star Group, despite its serious and fundamental criticism of the left, continued its support for Stalinism. Unfortunately, the savage repression of the Islamic bourgeoisie offered no opportunities for the Red Star Group to pursue its criticism of the left of capital, or leave behind the nightmares of Stalinism and embrace more internationalist positions.

[15] In relation to the definition, nature and function of imperialism in the era of decadent capitalism, see *Nationalism Is a Deadly Poison for the Class Struggle*.