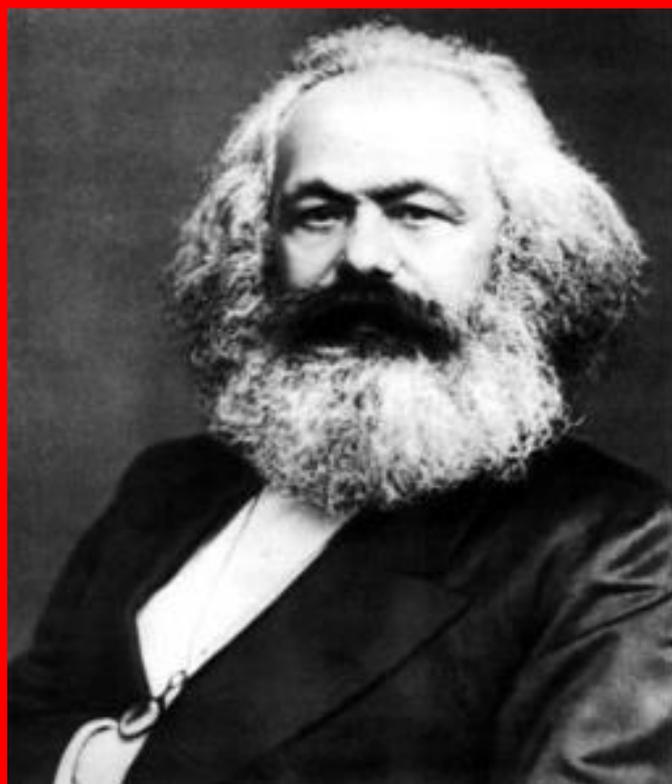


Worker Communism

Radical Conscience of the Left of Capital

(Part 12)



In defense of Marxism

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The collapse of worker communism

Mansoor Hekmat, given his ability, was able to deal with the internal contradictions and heterogeneous positions of revolutionary Marxism and present a new ideology with a radical look, under the title of the ideology of worker communism. Worker communism was able, by its radical phrase, to absorb the protesting layer in the political milieu and grow numerically. In the short term, with its radical turn of phrase, along with communist and internationalist terms, can address the inner contradictions; but, in the long term, the new ideology will show that these self-contradictions emerged as a crisis. Before examining the collapse of worker communism, let's see how worker communism was going to revive Marxism and communism in the world. Mansoor Hekmat said the following about the revival of communism in the world by worker communism:

“If anything is to revive communism in the world, it is the ability and competence of two or three worker-communist parties in the world who have become a force in several countries of a fair size. This is what will regenerate communism, Marxist theory, the Communist Manifesto and Capital. It is our duty and what we owe to the world communist movement to become powerful. We just need to be in power for a couple of years in some part of the world...We, the parties who are able to become a power in society, will revive communism...We are capable of this. I don't honestly know which other parties around the world are doing this. But I can see that on the scale of a country like Iran we are capable of doing it.”[1] [Our translation]

Ideologists of worker communism described the Iranian Worker Communist Party to be the party that was the most revolutionary, the most leftist and the most socialist political party in contemporary history since the Russian Revolution of October 1917. It was supposed that the Worker Communist Party, like the Bolshevik Party, would play a historic role in the revival of communism, not only in Iran but in the world. According to one of the leaders of worker communism:

“Without exaggeration, building a political party with the above characteristics is the greatest project of communism in modern world history since the Russian Revolution of October 1917.” [2] [Our translation]

When the glorious mansion of worker communism, with its massive stone pillars, and with the divine glory of Mansoor Hekmat, seemed immortal to the followers of worker communism, it began to crumble as a result of a political earthquake. Like the dissolution of religious sects, the dream world of the disciples collapsed at once. Following the publication of a press release by one of the party's founders, Reza Moghaddam, who was about to leave the party, a political explosion took place in the Workers' Communist Party in April 1999, which left about 75 party members and cadres involved in the process. The main reason for resignation was the inability of the leadership to fulfil the goals of worker communism, that is to say, the non-class transition. Consequently, the leadership rotation was announced along with the programme positions of the Second Congress of the Worker Communist Party. The

resignations tried, with the radically phrased literature, to contrast the non-communist positions of the Worker Communist Party with those of the old communist positions and subsequently launched an artificial dispute. The resignations did not appear in the form of a certain intellectual tendency, but were fragmented. This proves the legitimacy of these positions of the internationalists, that it is not possible to form a revolutionary tendency within bourgeois parties. Within bourgeois parties, one can only speak of the loss of force and convergence towards revolutionary positions, which was not true for the fall of worker communism, in other words, the forces that broke away from worker communism never attempted to orientate towards communist positions.

On 4 March 1999, Bahman Shafiq, a member of the then Central Committee of the Worker Communist Party, submitted a paper entitled “Theses on the Creation of the Worker Communist International” to the Central Committee in line with the formation of a worker communist international. Bahman had put forward a draft proposal for a worker communist international, with a number of German left activists. But his plan, rather than extending the scope of its influence, sparked a collapse in worker communism. It is a fact that the assassination of the Crown Prince of Austria-Hungary on 28 June 1918 sparked World War I, but the cause of World War I was not the assassination of the Crown Prince, but the capitalist system that had passed through its boom period and entered its decadent era. Capitalism had resorted to the last solution, a world war, to respond to its crisis and survive. The same can be said of the demise of worker communism. Bahman’s thesis of international formation ignited this spark. However, the reason for the collapse of worker communism was not Bahman but the fact that the internal contradictions of worker communism had elevated this intellectual tendency to an explosive level, with only a spark needed for a fully fledged political explosion. The crisis that Mansoor Hekmat was able to delay many times finally revealed itself. Let’s first look at his reaction to the Bahman thesis. He wrote:

“The communist international must be a unity of communist forces, not an aggregation of communist intentions with subtitles in different languages, or a dialogue between communist isolationists. The key to establishing an international centre for the spread of worker communism, with whatever structure and agenda it wishes to exert beyond paper and the public domain, is that its primary creator must be real political forces. My first question to the German comrade who has come to create a worker communist international with us is, what is preventing him from first creating a worker communist party involved in German political life? If there is an active communist organization with 1,000 members in Germany, show us, and we will announce a worker communist international the same day.

In my opinion, our point of departure is to set up an international, find or help to create organizations in the most important countries of the world, whose attitude and action plan are more or less similar to ours, and make an impact on their society ... Simply put, we are talking about the political expansion of the Iranian Worker Communist Party - bringing it closer to power, reaching out to the communist circles in more important countries, in order to push them to form active political parties with a programme to similar ours, and certainly creating a forum for the international dissemination of our views and finding like-minded

people, in my opinion, represent the real way forward on the path to a worker communist international.” [3] [Our translation]

The crisis was not the result of a process of internal struggle, such as in the case of the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, or even that of conventional bourgeois parties, but rather more like the dissolution of religious sects. The discussions took place not only at the level of the party members but also at the level of the Central Committee and its advisers. The members of the party only realized their ideological crisis as resignations began to come in. Those who resigned stated that Mansoor Hekmat had fallen out of line with worker communism with discussions, for example, on “party and society”, “party and political power” and “party and personalities”. Meanwhile, the class transition has not taken place, meaning that the Worker Communist Party has not been able to find its labour base. Mansoor Hekmat skilfully recognized this and stated in the discussions of Second Congress on “party and society”, “party and political power” and “party and personalities” that the Worker Communist Party had not fallen out of line with worker communism and stressed that the current insurgents in the party had not raised any political or programme differences with the party before. Hekmat wrote:

“The last (and first) time we saw a systematic disagreement of comrade Bahman with the official line in the party leadership was in the last plenum on the issue of the party’s attitude towards the political situation in Iran, Khatami, civil society and the party’s practical approach towards Iran.” [4] [Our translation]

For Hekmat, the new positions of the Worker Communist Party were a continuation of the debates on worker communism, and, while there had been no rotation in worker communism, he provided a list of topics that eventually led to the formation of the ideology of worker communism. As Hekmat argued, why you don’t come to discuss those positions? In other words, from the horizon of Mansoor Hekmat, it was necessary to show inner continuity, the coherence of worker communism, that the new issues were in harmony with the old ones. Bahman Shafiq declares that he evaluates the list provided by Mansoor Hekmat as Marxist and that he is critical only of the last texts in the list, writing:

“Comrade Nader [Mansoor Hekmat] says, why don’t you come to discuss about past positions? I consider the list given by Comrade Nader [Mansoor Hekmat] to be Marxist and I have been a supporter of it. It is the subject of these three recent debates that I call non-Marxist.” [5] [Our translation]

Both Bahman’s argument and that of those who resigned were that the positions of this current in the past was Marxist, which prevented those who resigned from moving towards communist positions; instead, they had continued their counter-revolutionary and anti-communist positions with a radical turn of phrase. Reza Moghaddam and Majid Mohammadi were two figures in worker communism who were active in the labour movement, representing the same argument from the left of capital, that Stalinism after the fall of the Berlin Wall was the weak effect of “workerism”. Both assess the lack of class transition,

namely, the non-relation between worker communism and the labour movement, as the reason for the leadership's deviation from worker communism, a position which was influenced by inverted "workerism". Majid Mohammadi was not a critic of worker communist ideology as a bourgeois ideology, but rather of the fact that the party had abandoned worker communism, writing:

"I don't think anyone still believes in the issues of worker communism, even though they remain in this party. Sooner or later, they will go. I don't think anyone thinks of influencing the labour movement but staying in the party will sooner or later not be an option. ... I wish the party, although it had abolished the banner of worker communism, had acted as a party in the protests and movements of the aforementioned arenas [against religion, against sex discrimination etc.]." [6] [Our translation]

Although Majid Mohammadi was anonymous, Reza Moghaddam was one of the founders of the Worker Communist Party with an active background in the workerism tendency. Moghaddam was apparently supposed to be the author of the manifesto of those who resigned, especially as he considered the class transition to be a departure from the party's basic positions on worker communism. Bahman stated that, with the release of Moghaddam's manifesto, the worker communist movement experienced a fundamental rift, leading to a profound split in worker communism. Bahman supports this manifesto:

"With the public release of the manifesto from Reza Moghaddam, all these scattered fronts were involved in a great struggle, facing each other ... What was beyond these arguments, and perhaps long before, was a fundamental rift in worker communism. It was a deep split in this movement. The manifesto of Reza Moghaddam announced the dimensions of this split in its shortest and most concise lines. I support this manifesto and belong to this movement, which this manifesto represents." [7] [Our translation]

But Bahman did not join the Reza Moghaddam manifesto wing; the majority of those who resigned went their separate ways, with only a very small minority, together with Reza Moghaddam, forming a unity of socialist workers. As noted earlier, the main body of the party was not aware of the issues on the Central Committee; it only became aware of the crisis as resignations began, with the crisis infection the main body of the party soon after. Finally, after the collapse of the worker communist force, despite the will of the leadership of the party when the crisis became public, the continuation of the debate was not about political positions, but rather the form of a renewed allegiance with the leadership for the faithful and breaking the allegiance for those who had resigned. Even after the crisis unfolded, leaders of worker communism did not want party members to engage actively in the discussions but stated that they could read the documents if they wished; neither active involvement in the discussions, nor the study of discussions was compulsory. Party officials wrote:

"The texts by comrades on the Central Committee and its advisors are sent to you following recent discussions on the Central Committee. Party members can read these documents or

any part thereof as they wish. The following should be strictly observed when distributing these documents via party committees:

- 1- The files related to these posts should not be sent to anyone via the Internet.
- 2- A number of these writings is reproduced, with a copy for every 10 members. It is clear that studying these documents as well as discussing them is not mandatory. If comrades are interested in reading them, they will be provided by the Central Committee. After copying the required number, please be responsible comrades and delete these files from your computers.
- 3- These versions should be numbered and no comrade should copy them.
- 4- After two months, collect these documents and destroy all copied examples.” [8] [Our translation]

Later, Mansoor Hekmat pointed to an undeniable fact that the members and body of the party were unable to defend worker communism. This is also quite natural; one cannot expect anything less when members do not go through the discussion channels and when leaders decide for them, given that the members have become disciples. If Hekmat’s authority had not been in place, the crisis of worker communism in 1999 would have been much wider and more destructive than it appeared. Hekmat said:

“In the case of the resignations (April 1999) that came in, if it wasn’t for me, the party would have literally disappeared at that time. It would have become a sect. There was such confusion in the organization that no one could have put it back together ... There was no one else except the great Mansoor Hekmat who could say to these five people that you were not worker communist.” [9] [Our translation]

Worker communism and not being on the line

One of the strengths of worker communism has been its spread to Iraq; but, according to one of the leaders of worker communism, the Iraqi Worker Communist Party only accepted the ideology while failing to emerge as defenders of worker communism. For this reason, the Iraqi Worker Communist Party has not been able to have a serious impact on Iraqi society, despite being in that society. But, activists in the Iranian Worker Communist Party are defenders of worker communism, despite being far from the society in which they operate. They have also managed to become the most distinctive left faction in Iran. The leader of worker communism who came after Mansoor Hekmat writes:

“The experience of the Iraqi Worker Communist Party has shown how overwhelming the difference between accepting ‘all the topics of worker communism’ and appearing in this role can be. Contrary to the experience of the Iranian Worker Communist Party, it revealed itself to be a party outside the community in which it was active. But, it has had great effects, and we have become the most distinctive force on the Iranian left. Therefore, the formation of an international by the Iranian and the Iraqi Worker Communist Parties will not be more than a caricature in the present situation.” [10] [Our translation]

Shortly before his death, Mansoor Hekmat complained to the Fourth Plenum of the Worker Communist Party that no cadres could be nurtured within the organization. The fuhrer of worker communism had apparently forgotten this little nugget when he had encountered such precious gold as this:

“Thousands honorable man rounding up to the party that they don’t know Lenin is eatable or drinking [phenomena] and Marxists and senior workers in the party should not indicate this as their less esteem but see that their own success.”[11] [Our translation]

By this stage, only a few hundred rather than thousands were gathered around him and believed in the worker communism of the prophet. Worse still, they were unable to melt before the leader and defend the ideology of worker communism. This does not represent a problem on the part of the disciples, but rather a reflection of the sectarian relations in the religion of worker communism which the leader himself played a major role in shaping. Believers who have believed in this religion “don’t know Lenin is an eating and drinking [phenomenon]” once this was the sign of success concerning this manner. As Mansoor Hekmat complained:

“The cadres are not created inside this organization. The cadres are the same cadres we got from the earlier blast. We’re coming with them. The seeds are getting tired; our cadres are getting less and less. The new cadre that is being added is through an election to a country committee, based on its own opinions. It does not belong to this history, it does not necessarily belong to these views, nor can it explain the party to the people sat alongside it. Our new cadre not necessarily belong to this movement. Is an activist someone who has been active in a place simply for himself? Did he come to take part in action, but has now joined the committee. This person does not belong to any particular form of worker communism.” [12] [Our translation]

Mansoor Hekmat was aware that the ideology of worker communism had failed to foster a layer of cadres, let alone cadres that would dominate worker communism. After Hekmat’s initial treatment and short return to party work, before his cancer returned, he practically admitted that he had failed in fostering a layer of cadres which could promote worker communism and the Worker Communist Party in line with worker communism. At a meeting of the politburo, he said:

“Even though I am, the party is not in line [with worker communism]. All of my political life has been about a group that does not need to be convinced to go in this direction, a group that is unafraid and wants to work hard. But it doesn’t work hard; it’s not like that the Worker Communist Party in my presence is aligned with worker communism. It is not! As I will argue in the leadership debate, this has nothing to do with the line of Mansoor Hekmat and Hekmatism. The line of Mansoor Hekmat in the Worker Communist Party is a pressure group.” [13] [Our translation]

Hekmat appears here as a prophet with an idea of the absolute, always trying to guide his disciples towards the right path and, despite years of trying to be a saviour by guiding his disciples, they still failed to follow the path of the prophet. Hekmat contemptuously stated that the Worker Communist Party was not aligned with him or and Hekmatism, with Hekmatists either in the lower layers of the party or outside the party. He did not explain why the leaders and cadres of worker communism failed to appear in the form of theorists of worker communism. These rumours were stated by someone who earned the title of the Marx of his era because of such eloquent words. Mansoor Hekmat depicted such a sad picture:

“If these people were on the line, I wouldn’t have to run this much. Someone managed its congress, another its plenum and someone else brought out its publications. I also did some of the work. There were 50-60 in the anti-populist struggle; we were all working, and I was also doing something. The Unity of Communist Militants (UCM) was led by people like Hamid Taghvaei, Khosro Davar, Habib Farzad, Mehdi Mirshahzadeh and others. I was also an activist in the anti-populist movement and a proponent of revolutionary Marxism. I was also one of only a few of them. But that organization was full of activists with their own lines. I was a revolutionary and I was also trying. But, as much as it is now, everything wasn’t tied to me. No one was feeling lonely. If you were tired, you could be sitting in your car, but the UCM would continue to work. The reason for this is that the Worker Communist Party is not aligned with worker communism and the leadership does not care about it ... Those who espouse the view that “Hekmatists represent our movement” are either in the bottom ranks or outside the party and not represented at the top. Many who have had their life changed through my writings are in the bottom ranks or outside.” [14] [Our translation]

At the 14th Plenum of the Worker Communist Party, Mansoor Hekmat appeared as Christ among his apostles, as if he had had no choice but to demonstrate this virtue and this sophistication, and as if he been elected to the prophetic mission as the sole thinker of worker communism. He reiterated that worker communism no longer ruled the Worker Communist Party at that time, so it could not rule after it; but he was worried about whether the party would continue to function, stating:

“I said at a meeting of the politburo: I don’t have problem with the Worker Communist Party being aligned [to worker communism] after me. It is not in line now, then so be it. Worker communism is not ruling now, then so be it. Unity and continuing its work are important.” [15] [Our translation]

Mansoor Hekmat was aware of the power struggle for control of the party in the absence of his authority as well as the kind of generation he had raised. At the last meeting of the politburo of the Iranian Communist Party before his death, he stated that the leadership broke up the party from above:

“[Mansoor Hekmat] addressed the politburo saying: ‘You, leadership, will break up the party but the bottom ranks will likely stay. The party will be torn apart at the top.’” [16] [Our translation]

The split in the Iranian Worker Communist Party

The split is the product of the inner contradictions of the worker communist system of thought. The dissolution and demise of worker communism are not due to the absence of the ideologue of worker communism, as some of the disciples declare it; rather, it is the product of the inner contradictions of worker communism. If the ideologue of worker communism was alive, the split in worker communism would have taken place; but, because of the authority of Hekmat, the split would have taken on a different form, as in the 1999 split, which more closely took the form of decomposition and the loss of force.

Internal disagreements had manifested themselves since Hekmat's hospitalization and, in the preceding discussion, we saw how he had stated that the party was falling apart at the top. In the first plenum after his death, disagreements arose over the party's leadership, political situation and tactical policy. The Modaressi wing insisted that the party should have a leader, claiming that the leader's plan had been raised in a battle for political power and that the leader's role is not merely an organizational post but essential to the debate on "the party and society" and "the party and political power". The Taghvaei wing advocated for collective leadership. It seems that the Modaressi wing won the first round because, after the death of Hekmat, Modaressi became the leader of the party. But, in the plenum held after the Fourth Congress in December 2003, Hamid Taghvaei took over as the leader of the party. Another triumphant victory for the Taghvaei wing was the election of Azar Majedi (wife of Mansoor Hekmat who at that time belonged to the Taghvaei wing) as head of the politburo.

Following the electoral success for the party officials on the Taghvaei wing, the power struggle took on an acute form. The climax of the power struggle came when 21 members of the pro-Modrasi Central Committee issued a statement about the power struggle (internal disagreements). Following this statement from the 21 Central Committee members on behalf of the Modaressi wing, the rival wing, the Taghvaei wing, called it a Cold War statement. Hamid Taghvaei, leader of the Worker Communist Party, on 22 August 2004, just two days before the announcement of the split, in an attempt to form the Hekmatist Party, informed party members about party leadership differences. Since there were only two more supporters from the Modaressi wing on the Central Committee than from the Taghvaei wing, Taghvaei himself proclaimed that the task of determining the fate of the party (power struggle) would not take place via the plenum, but by means of an extraordinary congress, set for 18-19 September 2004. Two days later, on 24 August 2004, the formation of the Worker Communist Party was announced, and Hekmatism was unleashed. In this power struggle, the Taghvaei wing proclaimed itself the true continuation of worker communism, while the Modaressi wing declared that its wing was the true defender of Hekmatism. One of the previous leaders of worker communism in relation to the power struggle between the wings' leaders and how they split offers the following description:

"On this date, we can clearly see that the two 'characters' were 'on the sidelines' long before the start of the dispute and since the period of Mansoor Hekmat's death. This is a fact in the history of worker communism. Furthermore, a rational evaluation was immediately sought by

the existing layer of cadres of the Communist Party, before reaching a state of limbo during that period. This layer accepted and agreed to hand over the fate and powers of worker communism to those two marginalized characters. It is thus clear about the extent to which the layer of cadres in the Worker Communist Party was 'in line' with the policies and foundations of worker communism. Obviously, that layer was long been associated with the 'line' of marginal elements, and Mansoor Hekmat and the foundations of his worker communism, a critical tendency and pressure group in the 'minority'. The death of Mansoor Hekmat eliminated that critical tendency from the minority and allowed for the emergence of 'mainstream' communist marginal elements on the basis of the active 'cadres' of those lines." [17] [Our translation]

Apparently, Hekmat had been part of a critical pressure group, of course, in the minority, in the Worker Communist Party. The question that must be asked of the worker communist leader who has currently chosen to sit in a lonely corner is, why did he become a sympathizer of one of these marginalized figures (Modaressi) during the aforementioned disagreements and not continue to defend the positions of Mansoor Hekmat? During the split, the Worker Communist Party did not split into two, but it led to the loss of force, in the form of individuals and circles, which were mostly loyal to Hekmat. After the crisis, the Worker Communist Party and the Hekmatist Party declared themselves true defenders of worker communism and Hekmatism and considered the other to be heretical to these ideologies.

Worker communism and the acknowledgment of failure

Worker communism was supposed to revive communism and Marxism, not only in Iran but in the world. It was referred to as the "greatest project of communism in modern world history since the Russian Revolution of October 1917". But the disintegration of worker communism into sects, as well as the inaccuracy of its policies during social events and the dismantling the framework of worker communism, eventually forced some of the leaders of worker communism to admit defeat and propose the formation of communist parties. Mr Modaressi, who once described the Worker Communist Party as the greatest project of communism in modern world history, later wrote:

"In my opinion, the space is open for the formation of other new parties in Iran and in particular in the context of the communist committees that have been formed. Those who have decreed that only those who are the product of the Iranian revolution can organize communism are often practically or mentally exiled. The Hekmatist Party, in my opinion, has so far provided the best platform for the formation of a working-class communist party, and as long as its line and activities remain at least official at this level, there should be more chance for this to happen." [18] [Our translation]

The post-Hekmat leader of worker communism provides further explanation of the conditions and characteristics needed to form the party in question. He writes:

“Since the 1980s, for the first time, we are returning to internal party organization, and we want to rebuild the party with the new vision we have created in the last 20 years. We should note that we are creating the party in the context of traditional existence, in which people come together outside of their social environment, and our activities are essentially meeting and discussing, with the ultimate goal being to broadcast or encourage participation in those activities.” [19] [Our translation]

The leader simply states that we must rebuild the party, while admitting that all the propaganda we produced to revive communism and Marxism was nothing more than demagoguery. He accepts that worker communism had nothing to do with the worker. Rather, it indulged in political charlatanism to justify defeat. But another worker communist leader grabs his collar and asks, after 22 years of not saying how the leadership of worker communism would deliver communism: “Why is it now you claim that worker communism has nothing to do with the worker? You were the leaders of this movement.” He writes:

“What do they expect from us? In order to explain this current situation, they echo the same observations and explanations made 22 years ago at the worker communism seminars run by Hekmat. They don’t tell us what they have you been doing for the past 22 years, relying on the topics of worker communism? It looks like history has been frozen during this time and nothing happened and nothing changed. We created the Hekmatist Party seven years ago, but don’t ask Koorosh Modaressi, myself and the leadership of the Hekmatist Party why your party and yourself as leader, why you have not taken any serious steps to resolve these problems? ... They say your communism was supposed to be a big no-no to the whole history, they who spoke in the name of communism after the defeat of the October Revolution about the ideas that were raised in the name of communism and the camps, which were set up in the name of communism. What is it that you have raised from the remnants of this process? A voice that is unrelated to the worker and to the life of the worker, and to the interests of the worker?” [20] [Our translation]

Not only are the practices and policies of the Worker Communist Party and later the Hekmatist Party called into question, but also the programme of worker communism, namely, the “Programme for a Better World”, for which Mansoor Hekmat received the title of the Marx of his era. The internal contradictions of worker communism once again manifested themselves in the Hekmatist Party. The Hekmatist Party demonstrated its crisis in the form of losing force before its split, which we will refer to later. One of the activists of the Hekmatist Party after separating from it wrote:

“At the seminar of Azeri Madrasi, Mozaffar’s friends, in declaring the inadequacy and the ‘lack of relevance of the “Programme for a Better World” for the worker’, openly and incidentally spoke with anger and hatred, and everyone heard that one preached of communism’s inefficiencies during the past thirty years, while another said that ‘our nerves were crushed and this form of communism couldn’t do anything’... The question that was posed also goes far beyond this issue, including all talk of the ‘uselessness’ of the

‘Programme for a Better World’ for the worker and worker movements.’ [21] [Our translation]

A former member of the Central Committee of the Worker Communist Unity Party, Kamran Pader, assesses the currents that call themselves worker communism, claiming they are nothing more than sects which have never been part of the communist and worker movements during their lifetimes. The statements of a former member of the Central Committee illustrate the fate of those disillusioned by worker communism, despite being loyal to Mansoor Hekmat. He writes:

“This is a continuity story of illusion which repeats the sequence as well as the vain and existential nature of existing sects, which claim that worker communism is reminiscent of Mansoor Hekmat after his death. But the reality is that the Worker Communist Party and both Hekmatist currents, all three are deviant and ... The three currents that have claimed to belong to worker communism throughout their lives have been linked to everything, except workers and communists. The nature and function of these currents, whether in the days of division and separation and throwing slime online, or in the golden age of coincidence and convergence, have been or continue to be irrelevant to the communist movement and the worker movement at all times.” [22] [Our translation]

The practice of worker communism is bourgeois communist by type

It had been propagated for years that, outside of worker communism, no one seeks socialism and communism. It had also been propagated for years that the practice of worker communism had sought to influence the social life of workers. It had been claimed for years that worker communism had gifted communism with a class transition, in other words, worker communism had moved communism away from being a bourgeois movement to a working-class movement. Finally, a member of the Central Committee of the Hekmatist Party declares that their party was not the source of any effect on the social life of workers and the dominant tradition of day-to-day work, operations, behaviours, roles or influence; rather, its practice has been consistent with the type of left and bourgeois communism found in Iran. He writes:

“I do not forget that I am a member of the Central Committee of the Hekmatist Party. I consider this party to be closer to the worker than any other communist or leftist political organization in Iran. With all this in mind, our party, in social practice up to this moment, except for the historical moments in universities in previous years, has not had any effect on social life. Our party, despite the fact that most of its major policies are correct, has had no impact on the dominant tradition of day-to-day work, operations, behaviours, roles or influence, while its practice has been of the type associated with the left and bourgeois communism in Iran. For this reason, as far as it relates to the working class, as in the rest of

the left, no protest tradition in the labour movement sees itself being on the same horizon as the Hekmatist Party and engaged in a joint war.” [23] [Our translation]

Subsequent crises

Following the split in the Iranian Worker Communist Party and the formation of the Hekmatist Party, the worker communist parties in Iraq chose to support the Hekmatists. In reality, then, the Iranian Worker Communist Party lost its base in Iraq. Thus, the Iranian Worker Communist Party sought to gain a new foothold in Iraq. It was in line with this policy that it encouraged dissidents from the Iraqi worker communist faction to form a new party, which became the Left Worker Communist Party of Iraq.

Following discontent within the Iranian Worker Communist Party, dissidents first formed a faction in December 2006 and then, on 9 June 2007, set up the Worker Communist Unity Party.

The “permanent board political-practical platform” was adopted by the majority of the politburo of the Hekmatist Party in December 2011, the party had departed from the fundamentals of the Mansoor Hekmat line and must change its course with major changes and return to these fundamentals. A minority of the politburo saw it as a seismic shift in the official policies of the party and considered it to be a criticism of the official line of the Hekmatist Party. Meanwhile, most of the politburo accused the minority of lacking principles and behaving like brigands. The Hekmatist Party was divided into two branches. Following the split of the Hekmatist Party into two wings, namely, the majority (Rahman Hosseinzadeh wing) and the minority (Modaresi wing), the Iraqi worker communist parties favoured the minority wing, which was the biggest blow to the wing led by Rahman Hosseinzadeh. Following the separation of the Modaresi wing from the Hekmatist Party, the Worker Communism Unity Party merged with the Hosseinzadeh’s Hekmatist wing.

Eventually, following the rise of discontent in the Hekmatist Party (Hosseinzadeh’s faction), some dissatisfied members of the party left and later formed the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Iran. Although this party aligns the “Programme for a Better World” with its own programme and refers to Mansoor Hekmat, it does not align itself with any other worker communist party.

Splits have also been associated with the loss of force in the form of individuals or small circles. Most of these individuals or circles, while rejecting non-worker communist parties, still adhere to the ideology of worker communism, Mansoor Hekmat and Hekmatism.

Last word and conclusion

A political current’s appearance and formation reflect the historical conditions which surround it. Students who supported the *Azarakhsh* magazine would later form the Sahand circle. Sahand emerged as a Stalinist circle. It was strongly influenced and fed by Maoism

during its formation and evolution, although the founding of “worker communism” stems from the crisis of the “third current” and the need to reintegrate it.

The Unity of Communist Militants (UCM) denigrated the leader of Iranian bourgeoisie, Khomeini, and also the clergy of the petty bourgeoisie, but at the same time they believed that the petty bourgeoisie was a revolutionary class. The logical consequence of this reasoning would be that the leader of the bourgeoisie and a criminal such as Khomeini was a revolutionary. Only two months remained until the bloodiest massacres in the modern history of Iran. The bourgeoisie villains declared that there were to be no ‘wounded’, and that the soldiers should just ‘kill in the street’. In such circumstances, in April 1981, the UCM had the only communist programme in the world still obstinately calling for a “petty-bourgeois leadership”.

The Unity of Communist Militants (UCM), with fiery anti-imperialist and anti-American sentiments, appeared in the political milieu as an anti-imperialist movement. According to the beliefs of the UCM, other revolutionary classes are interested in the overthrow of imperialism and the elimination of its intense exploitation and fierce dictatorship. As the working class was not the only class demanding democratic changes, the UCM put forward the slogan “For a people’s democratic republic!”, ensuring that the interests of other classes are taken into account. In other words, the working class, simply in terms of numbers, must be at the service of the objectives of other classes. The UCM turns workers into cannon fodder under the guise of defending the gains of the revolution in the war between Iran and Iraq.

The UCM used all its efforts to assert that the disgraceful Islamic Republic had failed to overthrow the revolution. In its coup, the bourgeoisie had also failed to suppress the revolution and, despite all the problems, the train of the revolution had continued at pace, thus forcing the bourgeoisie to resort to its operant, Iraq, to suppress the revolution. Workers participating in the war must defend their revolution.

The UCM, with the facilities of Komala, had succeeded in rebuilding the Line 3 under the concept of revolutionary Marxism.

The formation of an aggregation under the name of the Communist Party of Iran, with the ideology of revolutionary Marxism, effectively prevented the radicalization of these critiques, in practice, preventing them from raising questions about the left of capital. If the blood-bath of the Islamic bourgeoisie had not gone away, if the left of capital had not poisoned the political milieu with its seemingly radical and counter-revolutionary ideology, if the critics had continued to criticize, then it might have been possible to go beyond the critique of these circles and to move towards internationalist positions (communist positions).

The UCM pointed to the revisionist rule of the Soviet and Chinese Communist Parties, which led to the defeat of the world working class by its two major strongholds in these countries. It spoke of Khrushchev’s revisionism and defended socialism in one country. It claimed that,

even in Ghana, socialism alone could be established, albeit reduced to the level of state capitalism.

Worker communism, under the name of national movements, sent workers to face imperialist slaughter in Iranian Kurdistan and turned workers into cannon fodder in imperialist conflicts. Worker communism has made every effort to cover up its reactionary and capital-friendly positions in relation to the unions, while dressed in radical clothing. Worker communism accuses internationalists of losing their vision and not seeing the reality of the trade union struggle. In short, worker communism did what it could do, to present unions as worker organizations.

All the nonsense from worker communism about revolution and overthrowing the state machine is no more than demagoguery. Worker communism wants to get into the game of political power. Mansoor Hekmat claimed that, through elections, the chances of worker communism to win political power were greater.

In parliamentarism, parliament is not at the service of communism, but communism is used to legitimize parliament. In parliamentarism, parliamentary representatives play a major role, and the working class plays the role of the infantry for parliamentarism. Parliamentarism is reinforcing the illusion among the working class that others are able to advance struggle on their behalf. This is what worker communism preaches.

The necessity to overcome the crisis of “revolutionary Marxism”, the alienation of the working class from the Communist Party, the inefficiency of the so-called Communist Party, the dilemmas arising from the Iran-Iraq War ceasefire, the dilemma of people living in camps and their social status etc. created the background to the emergence of the ideology of worker communism: in other words, the crisis of revolutionary Marxism, and how it came about, raised the need for an alternative to worker communism.

The rise of the working class as a **social class** raised the necessity for scientific communism (Marxism). But, unlike Marxism, the starting point for worker communism was the response that Mansoor Hekmat himself had received. Apparently, he had discovered a new “elixir” with which to skilfully resolve, albeit temporarily, the crisis of revolutionary Marxism or, more likely, to postpone it again. He succeeded in transmitting the crisis of revolutionary Marxism to worker communism, which then manifested itself in the crisis of worker communism.

Hekmat wanted to gain political power on the backs of the people and through the people, not through the working class. He claimed that a labour party, despite being a minority, could gain political power and become a majority: that equated to about 1.5% of the Iranian population at that time he made this claim, i.e., not the working class. Of course, Hekmat elsewhere explained what he meant by the process of overthrowing the Islamic Republic and gaining political power. This overthrow could be the result of a US military strike similar to the overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan, of Saddam in Iraq, and so on.

Certain conditions, such as World War II or liberation movements and the like, which created a chance for worker communism, prior to coming to power, would provide more solid grounds for presenting a new kind of ideology such as Hoxhism, although not as important as in the case of Albania. However, ideologists of worker communism made great efforts to put forward the ideology of “Marxism-Hekmatism”, and Mansoor Hekmat himself played a significant role in its introduction.

Worker communism was supposed to revive communism and Marxism, not only in Iran but in the world. But worker communism itself collapsed because of its internal contradictions; it was no longer possible to delay the crisis of worker communism. In the last plenum of the Worker Communist Party before his death, Hekmat appeared as Christ among his apostles, as if he had had no choice but to demonstrate this virtue and this sophistication and been elected to the prophetic mission as the sole thinker of worker communism. He reiterated that worker communism was not ruling the Worker Communist Party at that time, so it could not rule after it; but he was worried about the party continuing to work.

It had been propagated for years that, outside of worker communism, no one seeks socialism and communism. It had also been propagated for years that the practice of worker communism had sought to influence the social life of workers. It had been claimed for years that worker communism had gifted communism with a class transition, in other words, worker communism had moved communism away from being a bourgeois movement to a working-class movement. Finally, a member of the Central Committee of the Hekmatist Party declares that their party was not the source of any effect on the social life of workers and the dominant tradition of day-to-day work, operations, behaviours, roles or influence; rather, its practice has been consistent with the type of left and bourgeois communism found in Iran.

Not only are the practices and policies of worker communist parties called into question, but worker communism’s “Programme for a Better World” itself is as well. Remember, this was the programme for which Mansoor Hekmat had acquired the nickname of the Marx of his era. In defence of Marxism and against the sliming of proletarian goals and aspirations by the left wing of capital, we studied and examined worker communism, from the formation of its circle to the collapse of worker communism and to the parties and circles, and we have shown that this intellectual tendency, as the left wing of the bourgeoisie, in all social incidents has been against the working class and the class struggle. The fact is that, when capitalism entered the age of its decline, this ushered in the era of communist revolutions and imperialist wars. The bourgeoisie has lost its progressive role, while its most radical conscience is in the service of wage slavery and is embarrassing in favour of the existence of wage slaves. Imagine if, during World War I, the majority of working-class parties working under the name of social democrats had joined the bourgeoisie camp forever, whereas the currents that were loyal to proletarian aims worked as communist parties. Following the defeat of the tide of world revolution and in the process of the decline of the Communist International, this time, the parties operating as “communists” joined the bourgeoisie camp forever.

The advent of the wave of world revolution - and, with it, those problems that challenged the advance of world revolution - prepared the material context for the communist left. The signs of the defeat of this wave of world revolution led to the isolation of the October Revolution, which soon showed signs of degeneration. The decadent process of the October Revolution had an impact on all communist parties and revolutionary currents. In such a context, the necessity for the existence of the communist left was more and more prominent. Internationalists from Bulgaria to Germany, from Russia to America, from Britain to the Netherlands, from Italy to ... rose to defend communist positions. But, in three countries where the Marxist tradition was strong, namely, in Russia, Germany and Italy, the communist left turned out to be strong and coherent. In short, the reaction of the communist left was a global response. Now, the task and honour of defending communist and proletarian positions have been given to the communist left.

M. Jahangiry
December 2020

Notes:

- [1] Party and Society: From a pressure group to a political party
- [11] Mansoor Hekmat in his article "Goodbye, comrade" on 20 April 1999
- [2] Koorosh Modaressi - The Necessity of Fundamental Changes in the Hekmatist Party Structure and Practice
- [3] Mansoor Hekmat - To Comrade Bahman Shafiq, Copy to Comrades of the Central Committee Regarding the Text of Comrade Bahman Shafiq, from the "Crisis Documents" 1999
- [4] Mansoor Hekmat - Stop! Check Your Brakes, from the "Crisis Documents" 1999
- [5] Bahman Shafiq - The King Is Naked, from the "Crisis Documents" 1999
- [6] Majid Mohammadi - To Party Members and Supporters, from the "Crisis Documents" 1999
- [7] Bahman Shafiq - Beginning of Another Era, from the "Crisis Documents" 1999
- [8] From Headquarters to the Committees and Party Officials, from the "Crisis Documents" 1999
- [9] From the speech of Mansoor Hekmat at the meeting of the politburo of the Iranian Worker Communist Party, 7-8 July 2001
- [10] Koorosh Modaressi - The text addressed to the comrades of the Central Committee and comrade Bahman during the crisis 1999
- [11] Mansoor Hekmat in the article Goodbye Comrade, 20 April 1999
- [12] Mansoor Hekmat - Report and Evaluation of the 14th Plenum of the Party
- [13] See [9]
- [14] See [13]
- [15] Mansoor Hekmat at the 14th Plenum, September 2001
- [16] Evaluation of battles and branches of the worker communism in Iran, part 3, Majid Hosseini, 18th January 2008
- [17] Iraj Farzad - Caught in a Fire and the Light
- [18] Koorosh Modaressi - The Working Class and Organizing the Communist Party
- [19] Koorosh Modaressi - Communist Committees - Part I
- [20] Hossein Moradbigi in Critique of the Seminar on the "Working Class and Organizing the Communist Party"
- [21] Abdullah Sharifi - Avoid Giving an Answer
- [22] Kamran Sustainable - On the Worries of Kazem Nikkhah!
- [23] Mohammad Fattahi - The Problem with Iranian Communism is not sectarianism but the Bourgeois Nature of its Political Traditions!