What Has Happened to the Iranian Revolution? Has It Already Run Out of Steam? Or Can It Still Be Saved and Deepened?

June 29, 1979

Dear Friends,

As the call of October 29, the Central Committee of the Democratic Party of the Iranian Revolution (the DPTIR) has issued the following statement:

1. The government of Bani-Sadr has given guarantee for the release of all political prisoners and has ordered the authorities to make the necessary arrangements. This is a significant step forward.

2. The DPTIR is committed to the principles of the October 29 revolution and will continue to fight for them. We will continue to work for a democratic and independent Iran.

3. The DPTIR supports the workers' movement and will work to improve their living conditions. We will continue to fight for workers' rights and against exploitation.

4. The DPTIR will continue to support the struggle of oppressed peoples around the world. We will continue to fight for justice and freedom for all peoples.

5. The DPTIR is committed to the principles of the April 1978 revolution and will continue to fight for them. We will continue to work for a democratic and independent Iran.

6. The DPTIR supports the struggle of the working class and will work to improve their living conditions. We will continue to fight for workers' rights and against exploitation.

7. The DPTIR will continue to support the struggle of oppressed peoples around the world. We will continue to fight for justice and freedom for all peoples.

8. The DPTIR is committed to the principles of the April 1978 revolution and will continue to fight for them. We will continue to work for a democratic and independent Iran.

9. The DPTIR supports the struggle of the working class and will work to improve their living conditions. We will continue to fight for workers' rights and against exploitation.

10. The DPTIR will continue to support the struggle of oppressed peoples around the world. We will continue to fight for justice and freedom for all peoples.

Signed:

[Signature]

The Central Committee of the Democratic Party of the Iranian Revolution

[End of statement]
there. Let us see what can be done to transform the present reality.

II. A LOOK BACK INTO HISTORY AND FORWARD FROM THE PRESENT GLOBAL REALITY

Let’s begin at the beginning, at the installation of a new power that has been so characteristic in Iran from the time of the Shah to the Islamic Republic of Iran, at the turn of the century. It is the coalition of the clergy with genuine revolutionaries in throwing out a Shah who was dedicated to a foreign power—Russia, in the case of the 1906-1911 revolution. This certainly distinguishes the Iranian clergy from priests who generally align with the reigning power. But, once a democratic Constitution was created, the clergy began burdening it with the type of amendments that restored most powers to the Shah once the foreign enemy was thrown out. That didn’t prevent the counter-revolution in Russia, which just crushed its own revolution, from returning to Iran and crushing theirs.

The second chapter of that first revolution, as the second chapter of this era’s 1979 Revolution, was begun by women liberationists. Indeed, in 1906 the Iranian women were the first in the whole world to establish women’s anjenens (soviets), and their main demand was for continuing with the democracy of the Majlis. Did Bani-Sadr’s call for democracy mean as much? Not quite. Then, in 1939, Women’s Liberation—like he not only kept quiet as Khomenei moved against the movement, but set up an alternative paper, The Muslim Women, edited mainly by men.

With Iraq’s invasion of Iran, the war naturally became the main preoccupation, but that didn’t mean, as the IRP is insinuating, that Bani-Sadr was bringing back the hated military machine, which Khomenei and the IRP had never fully dismantled! Actions speak louder than words, but the IRP clearly didn’t follow Bani-Sadr and is now speaking out against him; in a word, they showed they know how to stick to the rulers that win.

Most fantastic, then, that the abysmally opportunistic Trotskyists are so anxious to be “in” that they actually fabricated a “proletarian” ground for Bani-Sadr’s ouster from his Army post:

Those workers who have returned from the war front have tended to blame Bani-Sadr for the situation in the army and for the lack of any decisive victories in the war. They are aware of Bani-Sadr’s strong base of support among the hated army command (Intercontinental Press, June 22, 1981).

So strong that not a single army commander came to Bani-Sadr’s defense. The Trotskyists “must know the truth but just like the Tudeh, they are so busy trying to work out a way to remain ‘legal’ that all else takes a subordinate position. All this appears in an article, ‘The Drive to Oust Bani-Sadr’, which opposes the ouster, at least insofar as it means “repression”, especially since they know very well the vast network also against them, and that their paper was among the six that were immediately shut down. That isn’t the only thing repression means to the clergy. Along with the threat against the Left they threaten each other to work out a compromise with Iraq. Let us not forget that, just as soon as the mullahs saw that Bani-Sadr was not involved in the release of the hostages, they moved to do exactly that in quite callous ways. And now that Bani-Sadr is not involved with the Army, they will try to put a deal with Iraq.

As for the Fedayeen, some factions accepted anti-imperialist as much at face value as did the Tudeh, as if it means only anti-U.S. and not anti-Russia—which is equally imperialist. Indeed, Russia is still hoping that the ideological void—opened up by the fact that revolutionaries have not been armed with Marx’s own Humanism, the genuine philosophy of liberation—will create room for Russia to enter the Iranian scene.

The Mujahadeen showed themselves to be as courageous and became deeply involved in the demonstra- tions, which would have been impossible even if Bani-Sadr was not the center, but defending Bani-Sadr against Khomenei and the IRP must not mean uncritical support. Which is why he showed not only how ambivalent was Bani-Sadr’s conception of democracy, but how he was himself an instrument of the mullahs, who still believe in the importance of women’s liberation, but that it couldn’t have been otherwise once Islam came first and “socialism” came “later.”

This is not the first time, historically speaking, that some theoreticians tried to dilute Marxism by a strange admixture with religion, be it the Buddhist religion of the Aleister Crowley’s Le Plume Vegetarianism (4); whether it is Senghor’s admixture of Christianity with Marxism which he calls African Socialism, or Polish Catholicism with a “new” socialism, or Islam’s “Marxism.” The truth is that the theocratic rush is for total power, single party rule, single ideology, or single religion which is in fact a deeper false consciousness than is bourgeois ideology. This whole concept of a single Leader with veto power and a direct line to “God” is not even in the mainstream of Sunni Marxism, as also the Third World’s Hamas under Mohammad’s son-in-law, Ali, 14 centuries ago (5). The strange admixture of religion and Marxism has not worked before and will certainly not work now. For that matter, it didn’t work even in the “Enlightenment” and the new continent of thought and revolution—Marx’s Humanism—with Existentialism.

We must under no circumstances leave out of sight the global context of this, not only against the Middle East problem. Nor is it just a question of U.S. imperialism. There is another nuclear titan, Russia. And both of these fighting for a single world hegemony mean to have the last word. That is something that must not be permitted them. Thus, while Russia did not, with its invasion of Afghanistan, aim for the Gulf as the U.S. imperialists aim, Russia is certainly pressuring itself to be at the ready for an opening into the region. The opening they would prefer is to gain power from within, and the Tudeh Party is not without successes as was shown when it received the votes of so-called “Mujahadeen Guards” showed his preference for that party by being “ag— or saying he believed—that Tudeh is a “follower of the line of the Imam.”(6)

As for U.S. imperialism, it has never given up its hunger for the oil of that region. How do you sup- pose it got so solid an enemy as Iraq (at a time when Iraq certainly hadn’t only the whole Arab world with it, but literally the whole world in its total opposition)? Is this not a singular, unilateral strike against its nuclear reactor to work out with the UN’s representative Kirkpatrick so mild a Resolution of condemnation of Iraq that it didn’t even ask for any concrete acts against Iraq? I can’t help but feel that the many double-crossing deals circulated in the UN now by the U.S. representative include one to arm Iraq in its war against Iran. After all, that’s where U.S. imperialism is most concerned. It couldn’t help but arm Iraq because Iran held the U.S. hostages. More important still, and of this there is no doubt, the Iranian revolution has opened up the U.S. empire and its perspectives for the Gulf. Never before now, the mullahs have turned away from revolution, the irreversible fact established by the Revolution, far from getting its U.S. own out of the line of non-alignment. A hawk’s eye is needed to follow the global conflict and not signal off the Iranian Revolution.

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BY WAY OF CONCLUSION: THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION IS NOT YET DEAD

The Iranian Revolution is the one world factor that no one in the U.S. establishment would like to bury. So would the Arab World with the Soviet-Arab alliance in the foreground; and China, which can see only Russia as Enemy Number One and is in the process of helping U.S. imperialism. Maniat revolutionaries must never forget their absolute opposition to capitalism, imperialism, the powers-that-be; and therefore must not in any way fall into the trap of burying the Iranian Revolution prematurely. The truth is that there are plenty of forces in Iran who made the revolution. There is the Kurdish insurgency, which has by no means been put down and will not go away with the ouster of Bani-Sadr. On the contrary, the Peshmergas have never been deeper and the masses have never suffered more than now. Let’s not underestimate the great experience that the Iranian masses have had in overthrowing the Shah. That experience must not be allowed to be stultified by the mullahs. On the contrary, as the capitalists in Iran, especially the oil monopolies, will proceed with their drive for more production and lower wages, the class struggle will inevitably lead to a new wave of protests that will estimate the dissatisfaction of the peasants that, after all the promises of agricultural reform, has yet to witness any redistribution of the land. Moreover, the economic conservatism of the mullahs will be deepened as their political repression, as witness the Khomenei declaration: “I must tell you that during the previous dictatori- al regimes, strikes and sit-ins pleased God. But now...” The Khomenei then proceeded to declare that “the phenomenon of strikes is now a manifestation that “the enemy is plotting against us.”(8) Furthermore, let us not forget that Khomenei’s early opposition to the Shah was because the Shah was feared as a potential mild-socialist “White Revolution” because he wanted no disturbance of the feudal relations on the land.

Iranian revolutionaries are experiencing in under- ground activities. Iranian revolutionaries know not to give up their arms when the IRP first demanded it. The Women’s Liberation Movement, like labor, like the national minorities, like the youth, have begun a chapter of its own.

PUT SUCCEKTLY, THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION IS NOT YET DEAD, NOT BY A LONG SHOT, NEW REVOLUTIONARY FORCES—FROM THE PROLE- TARIAT TO THE PEASANTRY; FROM THE MINORI- TIES, ESPECIALLY THE KURDS, HUNGRY TO DETERMINE, TO THE WOMEN’S LIBERATION MOVEMENT; FROM REVOLUTIONARY INTELLEc- TUALS FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS TO THE YOUTH WHO HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THE YOUNG GUARD IN THE REVOLUTION—are bound to unfold new powers against their own rulers. The IRP must allow it to remain only opposition to the foreign enemy. All these forces can merge into full civil war, this time armed with a philosophy of revolution that would initiate the step to a CLASSLESS SOCIETY on truly NEW HUMANIST BEGINNINGS. THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION HAS NOT YET RUN ITS COURSE. THE IRANIAN MASSES HAVE NOT HAD THEIR LAST WORD.

Let us keep our eyes open and have our international solidarity at the ready.

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PS.—June 28. In the three days between writing the let- ter above and its mimeograph, the news comes that the IRP headquarters has been blown up, and included in the outrage is the death of Beshleh. No doubt the IRP
will now blame Bani-Sadr, who has never indulged in any terrorist act, but whom they dared characterize as "an agent of American imperialism." In truth, however, the terror that will be unleashed will not be against American imperialism but against the Iranian Left. At the same time, the terrorist acts perpetrated by the extreme right, who consider themselves the "purest" because they insist the mullahs should not engage in politics, have been covered over. Whatever chaos results now, it will not in any way change the analysis made above, and above all the need for international solidarity with the true Iranian revolution.

NOTES

1. See my Political Philosophic Letter, Dec. 17, 1979, "What is Philosophy? What is Revolution?", which had concentrated on the April Thesis, pointing to the fact that it was the concept of State and Revolution which was the ground on which Lenin reorganized the party, preparing for social revolution. What is important here, however, is the dimming, between the first draft as "Marxism and the State" which was written before April, and the final draft which was written after the Month of Slander, which forced Lenin to flee to Finland. It was that final version as State and Revolution which was circulated to an actual revolutionary group, and hewed out the path to November. See especially N.N. Sukhanov, The Russian Revolution, 1917.

2. See the Spring 1980 pamphlet, Iranian Women, The Struggle Since the Revolution, published by the Iranian Women's Liberation Group in London (Box No. 7, Sisterwrite, 190 Upper Street, London N1, England), which quotes a TV-radio interview with Bani-Sadr from which it is clear that he not only didn't disagree with their Muslim reactionary, mythical view on women now passing for "science"—"Men's level of sexual urges and needs are much higher than women's and this is because of certain sex hormones in man's body, whereas there are no sex hormones in woman's body"—but saw that his alternative group should set up its own paper, The Muslim Woman, that was edited and run mainly by men.


4. See my Weekly Political Letter of Nov. 13, 1969, "Israel, Burma, Outer Mongolia and the Cold War."

5. See Christian Science Monitor, June 18, 1981, "Iran Races Toward Total Mullah Rule."

