

The communist workers' underground

Today's Iran is giving the world one of the most brutal examples of capitalist tyranny. Lumpen gangs and storm troopers called "revolutionary Islamic guards" have been unleashed against the working people. The scope of mass executions and the use of torture against the left wing and other opponents has outdone the Shah and his infamous CIA-trained SAVAK.

What's more, on top of these "normal" methods of extreme capitalist repression, the mullahs are waging a religious inquisition. "Infidels" are stoned to death. Vials of acid are tossed in the faces of women for failing to wear the veil.

But there is something else going on in this land of death and terror. Iran is providing an example of the amazing

Report from Kurdistan

as their vacillations had opened a breach in their security. And these organizations were also to a large extent broken.

Then there was the question of which class forces on which to base the struggle against the regime. The populist views prevalent in the left downplayed the independent organization of the working class.

This was also connected to a tendency to view revolutionary organization as being detached from the life and struggles of the workers. There was a wrong conception of the relationship be-

being isolated and attacked. The security of the organization also required the spread of communist politics in the midst of the life and struggle of the masses.

Linked to the Workers

The exceptionally savage repression has imposed severe limits on the scope of the organizational work. There are a number of party functions and structures, which today are either impossible or require too great a risk, that will become both possible and essential as the mass upsurge gains strength and the regime loses its grip. At present the underground party is many small units, or cells, based in the work places and workers' communities.

The recent growth of capitalism in Kurdistan has brought the wage laborers together in the factories, work shops, fields, and workers' districts. The communists are making use of these natural connections among the workers to build their units. One obstacle is that many Kurdish workers travel to do seasonal work in brickyards or construction projects across Iran. But the units can maintain a degree of continuity, as the workers often travel together in large groups.

To avoid exposure to the regime, big meetings are impossible; even small formal meetings can be dangerous; and a unit may have few if any direct links to other party organizations. That means that a party unit has to be ideologically and politically equipped to take initiative and carry out the work on its own.

the units shut themselves off. Quite the opposite.

The units operate within wide and loose networks of the militant workers. They are also in the midst of the mass struggles: the conflicts at the work place; the demands of villagers for water or other needs; the mass actions against conscription and the Iran-Iraq war; or the protests against the persecution of women.

This bond with the life and struggles of the masses becomes the Party's best defense. Every worker who stands up for his or her rights or every mother who protests against the forced conscription of her son becomes identified with Komala. This makes it that much harder to strike at the communist organization itself.

Shielded by the Open Work

The clandestine work is reinforced by what's known as the open organization, which gives Komala an open face among the working people.

The armed peshmarga forces play an important role in this political work. Special peshmarga teams (known as city units or village organizing groups) hold mass meetings to consult with the workers and villagers and popularize the views of the communists. Such meetings are held right under the nose of the authorities: in a neighborhood that the peshmargas temporarily control, or sometimes in a brickyard or other work place, or in the village square or local mosque.

These armed units also reproduce and distribute literature. Still, the spread of the literature only goes so far given the repression and the high level of illiteracy. This means that the widest sections of the people know the views of



Recording a program in the sound room at Komala's radio "Voice of the Revolution." The radio provides guidance and transmits coded messages to the underground activists.

resilience and courage of the oppressed and exploited. The bourgeois liberals and petty-bourgeois groups may be gripped with impotence and despair. The working class, however, has shown bold initiative. And the Marxist-Leninist communists are in the center of the workers' revolutionary underground.

This winter a medical team of the MLP travelled to the mountains of Kurdistan on the Iran-Iraq frontier at the invitation of Komala, the Kurdish organization of the Communist Party of Iran. There it visited Komala's mountain camps. These are bases for what's known as Komala's "open organization": hospitals and clinics, radios, and Komala's peshmargas (armed communist fighters). Much of the work of this open organization provides support to the secret, clandestine organization rooted among the workers and toilers. This workers' underground is the backbone of the revolutionary movement.

A member of the MLP team prepared this report based mainly on discussions with comrades involved in the underground organizing in Kurdistan. Similar work is underway in the rest of Iran. It is most advanced in Kurdistan where there are armed peshmarga forces and other favorable conditions.

The Regime Unleashes Terror

By the summer of 1981, the Khomeini regime had unleashed a holy terror against the left forces. Thousands were executed and many more thousands were rounded up and imprisoned. This put the left organizations to a severe test. The repression was particularly ferocious. At the same time, there were a number of additional reasons for the extent of the setbacks to the left forces.

First of all, there was lack of vigilance towards the regime. Some, like the Tudeh Party (pro-Soviet) and the Fedayeen majority (Castroist) carried this to the point of criminal cooperation with the regime in cracking down on the left, but this still did not save them from the blows of reaction. Others, like the Fedayeen minority, were by this time taking a more honorable stand and opposed the regime. But they were too late

tween the organization and its mass base, tending to reduce the revolutionary to something of an isolated guerrilla.

These views hampered the building of stable organization in the factories and work places, organization that would have been much more difficult for the Islamic guards to dislodge. This helps to explain why an organization such as Peykar, which was hostile to the regime but which was also influenced by Maoist and populist ideas, was hit so hard by the terror.

Communist Organization

How is it that Komala and CPI have been able to stand up to the blows of the Khomeini tyranny? The answer lies with their working class policy.

Along with the Union of Communist Militants and other Iranian Marxist-Leninists, Komala undertook a criticism of populism which had shown its impotence in the revolution. This criticism was part of the process that led to forming of the CPI in 1983.

Komala was a revolutionary organization that combatted illusions in the Khomeini regime from the outset. At the same time, some of the populist ideas about organization and its class basis also had their impact on Komala, and the comrades had suffered blows because of this. As Komala cast off these ideas, the center of gravity of its politics shifted to organizing the working class itself as the force for revolutionary change. In 1982-83 there was an extensive discussion on communist methods of work, and the work was reorganized.

Stress was now placed on building stable organization in the work centers and neighborhoods. The clandestine organization was no longer viewed as a rearguard for the armed peshmarga forces outside the city; the political work of this organization was now given its own importance. And the security of the organization became rooted in its political work. Security was no longer viewed as principally a technical matter; safe houses and security techniques alone could not guard the organization from



Komala's heavy 120 mm. mortar pounds "enemy" position in military exercise.

Part of the guidance for this comes from Komala's radio *Voice of the Revolution*. It broadcasts special programs about the tasks of the underground activists in the cities and villages, as well as coded messages and directives to particular units and activists.

There is also a system of clandestine literature. The underground produces dozens of special pamphlets on Marxism-Leninism and the policies of the Party. The Party's papers are reprinted in miniature for greater security. And cassette tapes of the literature are distributed for the workers who can't read. Direct organizational links between the Party units and other militant workers also have to be restricted and require a lot of care. But that doesn't mean that

Komala by way of the radio.

All of this makes the work of the police that much harder. A piece of communist literature doesn't expose the local organization because the passing peshmargas have given it to everyone. Knowledge of Komala's politics doesn't reveal contact with the underground because it is broadcast over the airwaves with hundreds of thousands of daily listeners.

May First in Sanandaj

The influence of the communist underground was demonstrated in the May First actions in the major Kurdish

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Communist radio cuts through Khomeini's darkness

Report from Kurdistan

During its recent trip to Kurdistan, the MLP medical team spent several days at the mountain camp from which the Communist Party of Iran (CPI) and its Kurdish organization Komala prepare and transmit their radio broadcasts. The MLP team prepared the following report.

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Khomeini and the mullahs have tried to put Iran in a cage. They have built a fence of terror against all literature, all media, all culture that doesn't glorify their dictatorship of religious bigotry and capitalist exploitation.

However, they can't fence off radio waves. The radios of the communist workers reach all corners of Iran and Kurdistan. Each day hundreds of thousands of listeners tune in. They hear the news of the struggle and receive the views of the revolutionary communists from the radio "Voice of the Communist Party of Iran" and from Komala's "Voice of the Revolution."

The radio camp is made up of tents and small cement block buildings wedged in a steep mountain valley for protection from shelling. The transmission equipment has been broken down and carried across the mountains by mule pack without ever missing a daily broadcast. It has been pieced and patched together since the original components were confiscated from the regime in the early days of the revolution. Nonetheless, the radio broadcasts a powerful signal for 10 or more hours a day. And the programs are quite professional.

The radios are a tool of revolutionary organizing. The programming is aimed at educating, mobilizing and organizing the working people against the Khomeini regime and the exploiters.

Half of the daily programs are news reports. Our team sat in on one of the weekly meetings where the entire staff of the radio gets together to review the breaking news stories. The comrades read dozens of reports of workplace actions, village protests and other struggles of the workers and toilers. Most of this information comes from messages from the underground organization.

There is also stress on news about the



Part of the meeting of the radio staff to discuss news reports and the programming for the coming week.



Communications work at the radio camp.

struggles of the workers and oppressed around the world. The meeting planned reports on the Palestinian uprising on the West Bank and on a strike by Brazilian gold miners. The main source of world news in these remote mountains comes from monitoring radio reports. They also make use of the working class press from other countries that is sent in, *The Workers' Advocate* in-

cluded.

The other half of the program is regular features to popularize the politics of the Party. These vary with the needs of the struggle. In summer, when the seasonal workers have gone to the brickyards and construction projects across Iran, and when the Komala peshmargas (armed communist fighters) are most active, Komala radio pays close at-

tention to the day-to-day workplace issues and the operations of the fighters.

In winter, when workers have more time for study, more stress is put on education. The weekly program *Lessons of Marxism* was presenting, for example, a popular exposition of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

On Fridays, the weekend in this part of the world, the radio presents short stories, poetry and songs. These programs are on working class and often international themes: for example, on the life and songs of the militant American working class organizer Joe Hill.

The comrades explained that the cultural broadcasts are especially popular because the mullahs have attempted to purge Iran of all poetry or songs that don't fit their morbid religious doctrine. Songs are banned for having a woman's voice or even a happy or uplifting spirit.

We asked if it was a danger to listen to the communist radio. It was pointed out that in most of Iran there is some risk. However, in Kurdistan if the regime were to jail listeners of Komala's radio they would wind up jailing most of the population. It is part of the fabric of society that the Islamic guards can do little about. Workers even make demands in their employment contracts that lunch breaks coincide with Komala's radio programming.

A major function of the radios is to serve the underground. They are a means to guide the clandestine cells of the CPI and Komala. There are two weekly programs *Directives to the Urban Party Activists* and *Directives to the Rural Party Activists* that address the special tasks of the underground work. Moreover, at the end of every broadcast, the radios transmit coded messages to the comrades in the underground across the country.

The communist radios are a sharp thorn in the side of the Khomeini regime. The radios have been the target of bombs and shells. And the comrades wage a daily guerrilla war against the attempts of the regime to jam the signals. The underground monitors the signals during every broadcast and communicates back if frequency changes are needed to foil the jamming. The communist workers keep winning these skirmishes of the airwaves. □

UNDERGROUND

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city of Sanandaj last year. The workers' general assemblies and trade unions played an important role.

The metal workers union is an independent and militant union, the first such union that has gained a degree of legal status from the regime. Militant metal workers took on the task of organizing May First celebrations. They rallied other workers, including tailors and bakers who have been saddled with unions imposed by the regime.

A committee was set up. Speeches and a workers' play were prepared. A workers' guard spent the night in the union hall to safeguard against bombings or other attacks. The night before May First the workers climbed a hillside on the outskirts of the city and set tires on fire in the shape of a huge "11" (May First comes on the 11th in the Iranian calendar). Meanwhile, the underground issued a May First leaflet and the armed peshmargas distributed May First literature in the city and neighboring villages.

Thousands of workers came out to this meeting, which became a real workers' holiday. The music of Komala was played. Banners were raised "Long Live May 1st!" and "Workers of All

Countries, Unite!" The workers shouted "Long Live Socialism!"

A general meeting of textile workers also decided to hold a May First celebration. The management said that there could be no cookies served and no speeches made because of a religious holiday (Ramadan). But the vast majority of the 500 workers in the mill came out to celebrate the day of their class with cookies and militant speeches.

At the same time, women in Sanandaj held a meeting under the guise of a birthday celebration. Speeches were given, songs were sung, and funds were raised for Komala. From this meeting a street demonstration was launched that took the regime by surprise.

Thousands of workers took part in many other May Day meetings throughout the city, as well as in six nearby villages.

This open display of defiance was unprecedented in Khomeini's Iran. Its impact was felt throughout the country. It was another signal to the Iranian people that it is the workers' communist underground that is paving the way for the open struggle — the new uprising — that will bring liberation from their present hell of exploitation, tyranny and war. □

