

would have strangled the nascent and still weak bureaucracy and restored the soviets to their original form. Their vigilance against a new Stalin would have been heightened. In any case, Trotsky never aspired to play the role of dictator. He recognised repression as a necessary revolutionary act, but no more. Even Kronstadt was a question of conscience, the necessity for which he admitted reluctantly. He was not personally responsible for the attack on the naval base held by rebellious sailors led by anarchists and enemies of the Bolshevik revolution, it was a collective decision, though he always maintained that it was necessary if the revolution was to survive.

Frankland's conclusion, which alleges that Trotsky would have been just as bad as Stalin, is as slanderous as much of the rest of his article. It amounts to saying that a workers' revolution is bound to degenerate, to end in the Gulag, to use the fashionable expression. It is thus trotted out in different forms for popular consumption just at the time when workers are turning towards revolution, in order to discourage and demoralise. Marxist theory and a study of history are the best inoculation against these attempts to spread the old poison.

The Spartacists and the Iranian Revolution

by A. Dragstedt

1979

The Marxism of today has now the responsibility of bringing the slowly and painfully gathered theoretical acquisitions of the past into the present, as the struggle to construct the leadership which the working class must have in order to conquer state power. There is no event of greater revolutionary significance than the overthrow of the Shah's regime, and therefore no event which tests the claims of political organisations of the working class to be genuine, scientific socialists more profoundly than this political revolution. In the explosive development of the world revolution, old forms are filled with new content and there arise many new and unanticipated forms; and, without a method which can see through these appearances to the fundamental class content of these forms, an organisation can only express its revisionist disorientation.

Organisations sailing under the colours of the Trotskyist movement have been tested for seaworthiness by their positions on Iran, and one can gauge the intentions and competence of their pilots with reference to the storms coming down upon the American working class right now. The dimensions of the revolution involved are indicated by the nationalisation of banks and of the main bastions of imperialist power, the oil companies. If these are not what Lenin meant by the 'commanding heights' of the economy, what is? By every Marxist assessment, one can say that the reconstitution of imperialist relationships would require full-scale counter-revolution.

Of course, the capitalists never simply give up. Asked what the impact of the 'Iranian situation' would be on Standard Oil of Indiana, the Chairman of the Board replied that: 'We can't forecast the actual impact, because we still don't know the final outcome in Iran. Our

own net loss in Iranian production is about 180,000 barrels a day, and we don't know when we will be permitted to resume our operations there.' (SPAN, 1979, no.2). Imperialist property has been expropriated. That is fundamental, and it is on that basis that Bolsheviks have decided what nations are to be defended: not on the basis of the ideology moving the peoples thrown into political movement, and certainly not on the basis of how speedily conditions are created for the broad provision of democratic rights, since this depends on the nature of the counter revolution.

This is the context in which to appraise such revisionists as the Spartacist League, which has been making its debut among the 'left' organisations who have become specialist operators in finding just the Marxist words with which to oppose any forward movement of the oppressed peoples. Priding themselves on their 'unique' positions, their slogan 'Down with the Shah, Down with the mullahs' appears to have been too much for some of their own tendency to swallow. In the *Spartacist* (Winter, 1979), on p.22, we find that at a meeting of their 'International Executive Committee,' a motion authored by their German group was unanimously endorsed. The motion states that the notorious slogan 'implied an equivalency between the shah and the mullahs. In the hands of revolutionary Marxists the slogan was used to express the correct programme; in other hands it could be used to mask a sectarian programme. . . . Consequently the Spartacists decided on a change: 'Down with the Shah. No support to the mullahs', avoids the pitfalls of other slogans, says their resolution.

This meeting is said to have had a 'substantial representation' from the Spartacist League in Britain. Curious. In their newspaper (December), on p.7, we read that 'Authentic Trotskyists would seek to split the anti-Shah mobilisation.' It is obvious that no event has altered the political terrain more than the overthrow of the Shah since the defeat of imperialism in Vietnam. The SL reveals itself as a splitter.

From a perspective of splitting the anti-Shah forces SL has had to retrench at a new line of defence as the world revolution advances: as so often they buttress themselves behind the little word 'But', which enables academic sophists to grant as much as is required with the left hand ('we shed no tears for the Shah's torturers', etc.) but take it all back with the right. Just as the question of perspective emerges at a very concrete level, Spartacist flees into the abstract: 'It is not to the mullahs that we look, but to the Iranian working class.' (*Young Spartacus*, Summer '79). This is Spartacists' critique of the fact that the SWP's Iranian section sent condolences on the occasion of the

assassination of the Ayatollah Morahari, member of Khomeiny's Revolutionary Council. The battling lachrymal glands of Spartacist no more shed tears for 'the Muslim reactionaries' than for the torturers of the Shah. The assassination was claimed by the 'Forghan Fighters', whom Spartacist terms 'shadowy'. Now what is going on here? Does Spartacist mean by 'shadowy' that there is *doubt* about whose interests such 'fighters' serve? All assassins have to be shadowy most of the time, but Spartacist means to use this term in order to avoid taking an explicit position in support of 'Forghan', although Forghan's activities are *equally legitimate* with the trials and executions of SAVAK agents by the Komiteh, by the logic of Spartacists's own policies. What appears in black and white is staggering enough: 'From Tehran to Kurdistan, Fight Khomeiny's bloody terror.' Khomeiny's aims are no secret. He openly proclaims his programme of turning the clock back denouncing anyone who even calls for a "democratic" republic! (*Workers' Vanguard*, July 6). This is a call for counter-revolution against the 'butcher' Khomeiny. (WV June 23).

Such State Department rhetoric is for the pathology laboratory, as evidence of the political decomposition of Robertson's Spartacists, the inevitable consequence of their opposition to internationalism and the fight for dialectical materialism of the International Committee. From the point of view of the living class struggle, such positions have come to play a role along with that of the SWP in blocking the approach to a Marxist perspective on Iran, by seeming to represent the 'left' to the SWP's reformism. Spartacist is no longer the Children's Crusade of the past, as they step out in support of the nine arrested members of the HKS. What has happened is that SL is demanding 'the immediate release' of HKS members, with the slogan, 'Free Jailed Iranian Leftists'. However, the charges are not that they are *leftists*, but that they are *not real* leftists, they are 'masked leftists in the service of international imperialism'. SL does not even want an investigation: it carries out a division of labour with the SWP, to confuse the real role of a revolutionary party within a successful national liberation struggle. This role has nothing to do with being *closer* to organisations purporting to be working-class than to those with middle-class leadership. The Bolshevik party gives *complete* support, without second thoughts or provisos, to the struggle of an oppressed nation as it tries to free itself from the toils of neo-colonialism.

The 'modernisation' carried out by the Shah gave more than half the budget to military and police, as it created middle-class sectors completely parasitic on an Iranian economy committed to aiding the capitalist countries.

With the help of an armada of white-collar mercenaries — American, British, German and French — the government has been dumping incredible amounts of money into projects that are inappropriate and often contrary to the interests of the rural and urban masses. In the midst of a buzzing hive of entrepreneurs, speculators and middlemen of all sorts, in strict legality and at the highest levels, Iran's oil income is being drained away.

The Shah's motto is simple: to create in Iran an industrial society analogous to those of the capitalist countries. In a complete break with the former modes of production, he has imported the outward appearances of development. By juxtaposing outposts of modernism (such as agrobusiness installations, super markets, or steel plants), the government imagines that it is gradually creating the organic links that make up the framework of an industrial-type economy. But all these outposts have remained unconnected to each other, each one completely dependent on foreign sources for its creation, maintenance, and supply. They in no way constitute 'poles of development', but financial abysses into which the government pours vast amounts of money in order to give its gigantic projects the *appearance* of economic viability. (*Iran Enrapt*. A collection edited by Ali-Reza Nobari. Dec. 1978, Stanford University).

An entire social formation, evolved under the special neo-colonial conditions which the US was able to impose during the post-war boom, is what the Iranian masses confronted. The execution of less than 400 persons in the aftermath of full-scale massacres of thousands of defenceless civilians, perpetrated by elites, trained by the gangster bureaucracies of imperialism: that is an incomparably small price to pay for such an historic overturn. The grotesque political contortions of Spartacus and its disgusting apologies in favour of imperialist agents in Iran are a direct reflection of the death agony of imperialism and — as in Vietnam — express the malicious hatred and fear of the imperialist ruling classes and their middle-class lackeys for the uprising of the colonial oppressed.

The myth of the Chinese road to socialism

by Tom Kemp

The victory of the Chinese Revolution thirty years ago was, next to the Russian Revolution of 1917, the major historical event of the twentieth century. A blow to world capitalism, and especially to Britain and the United States who had looked upon China as a captive market and field for investment under the so-called 'open door' policy, that is to say without ruling it directly, it gave new hope to the colonial slaves of imperialism everywhere and turned the scales in favour of the national liberation movements. In China itself, the destruction of landlordism, the expropriation of imperialist interests and the comprador class, together with the nationalisation of the means of production, opened the way for an attack on the inherited problems of backwardness, stagnation and mass poverty which made China one of the poorest countries in the world.

A full balance sheet of developments since the proclamation of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949 cannot be drawn here. Although Chinese statistics are noted for their paucity and inaccuracy, foreign economists with no reason to exaggerate China's achievements estimate that overall output has grown by 6 to 7 per cent on the average since 1950 and that industrial production has grown by at least 10 per cent per annum. It would show, undoubtedly, that the revolution has made possible rapid growth and endowed China with a more powerful industry than it had before. Much of the increase in production, however, has been swallowed up by the growth in population, now probably moving towards 1,000 million. But the coming to power of the Chinese Communist Party opened the way for the rise of a bureaucratic caste, itself a product of international Stalinism, which adhered to the Stalinist theory of 'socialism in one country'. A