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GRAVE CONTRADICTIONS IN THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

November 27, 1979

Dear Friends:

Were it not for the Iranian Revolution that was -- and may still resume and deepen, as it is by no means over, despite the counter-revolutionary stage now being carried out by the Imam demagogue, Khomeini, whose insanities are being matched by Carter's saber-rattling -- this would be the time for saying one thing and one thing only: "A plague on both your houses."

I

Because, however, of the remembrance of the Iranian Revolution as it overthrew the Shah's barbarous regime backed by U.S. imperialism; because of the remembrance of Women's Liberation's refusal to wear the chador, challenging Khomeini's attempt to turn the clock backward and reduce women to a feudalistic state; and because of the continuing rebellion of the Kurds as well as the Arab oil workers in Khuzestan against Khomeini, along with the other minorities' struggles for self-determination⁽¹⁾ -- it is necessary to take a second look at the new form of the occult which is coming out of Khomeini's Iran and calling all others, and not only U.S. imperialism, "mussed fi ai-Ard" ("the corrupt of the earth"). It is imperative to practice dialectics, rather than to act on first reaction, as if tailending Khomeini's opposition to the U.S. is genuine opposition to American imperialism.

Of course the hatred of the Iranian people for that butcher, the Shah, and their opposition to U.S. imperialism, which had put him into power and kept him there, is not only real and justifiable for Iranians, but was real and justifiable for the many Americans who both exposed the truth of the Shah's tortures of the Iranian people and expressed their solidarity with Iranian revolutionaries. Of course the Carter Administration was well aware of the opposition not only in Iran but in this country to granting any asylum to the Shah, and for a while -- a very short while -- Carter was forced to resist the pressures of Nixon, Kissinger and David Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan Bank to bring the Shah to the U.S. But following the tune of that new Pied Piper, Khomeini, against "infidels" and "satanic domination" is anything but struggling either against U.S. imperialism or showing solidarity with the Iranian Revolution.

All one has to do to see the degeneration of the so-called Revolutionary Council in Iran is to see the new "left-covering" given by the current acting foreign secretary, Bani-Sadr, who is trying to institute an Iranian version of Pol

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Potism. Listen to the interview Bani-Sadr granted to Eric Rouleau in Le Monde (11/10/79): "Tehran is a monstrous parasitic city, which absorbs by itself one-half of the national consumption ... we will empty it of some of its people by creating in the countryside industrial and agricultural production units."

Unfortunately, even the more recognizable Left -- Trotskyism, far from practicing any revolutionary dialectics, is busy tailoring Khomeini's Iran.⁽²⁾ The Intercontinental Press (IP) of 11/19/79 and 11/26/79 keeps talking of a "New Upsurge in the Iranian Revolution." It even sees anti-U.S. imperialism in Khomeini's phrase "satanic domination" in the arrogant message Khomeini sent to the equally arrogant Pope, telling the latter that the way the "Christian world (can) redeem itself" is by following Islamic Iran's fight against "infidels." It is impossible not to ask whether there isn't a coincidence between this and the one democratic gesture by Khomeini which allowed some of the banned papers to reappear, including Kadar (Worker), the paper of the Iranian Socialist Workers Party (HSK). In any case, the very first issue, 11/17/79, of Kadar to reappear cited Khomeini's statement to the Pope as proof of "how anti-imperialist" Khomeini was.⁽³⁾ Furthermore, continued IP, the holding of American hostages by the Iranian students (who, not so incidentally, call themselves "Followers of the Imam") "re-emphasizes the people's historic demand for political and economic independence from world imperialism."

In what proletarian revolution, exactly, was the taking of hostages -- and not the rulers, but some fairly low Embassy personnel -- held to be a revolutionary tactic? Since when has war and revolution been made synonymous? Isn't it about time that Marxist-revolutionaries labelled Khomeini's endless repetition of "we are men of war" "looking forward to martyrdom" for what it is, by citing Marx who wrote that Napoleon, the ultimate counter-revolutionary, "substituted permanent war for permanent revolution"?

In Iran today we have a demagogue, openly lying that "U.S. imperialism and its corrupt colony, Israel" were involved in the occupation of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, where no infidel -- and all except Muslims are infidels -- is even permitted to enter. He kept repeating this brazen lie even after his fellow Muslims, the Saudi Arabian authorities, not only denied any U.S. and/or Israeli involvement, but showed that the sacrilegious act was perpetrated by a fanatical sect of the Muslims whose leader claimed, himself, to be the Messiah. Even then Khomeini proceeded to stress the Big Lie's impact ^{by} expressing "great joy" at the

fact that the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan had been put to the torch and two Americans killed.

But the Trotskyists continue with their fairy tale Leftism, since they do support the Kurds' struggle for self-determination. However, what they play up is that some Kurds supposedly supported Khomeini, and what they cover up is that none less than the two most important Ayatollahs after Khomeini -- Montazeri and Behesti -- called the Kurd leaders "agents of Savak, Zionists and corrupt sources." Since it was just at the period when Khomeini was trying to claim that the whole of Iran was for him, he took to the air and said that this statement by the Ayatollahs was a "personal view." But these "persons" are not just any persons. They hold the positions of President and Vice President of the Assembly of the Experts that has just completed the draft Constitution to be shoved down the throats of the Iranian people on Dec. 2 and 3. Indeed, many believe they undoubtedly were the two who instigated the occupation of the Embassy by the students.⁽⁴⁾

II

What the media has not shown is that during the demonstrations in front of the U.S. Embassy, there was also a storming of the Ministry of Labor⁽⁵⁾, in which the mass of unemployed -- and there are no less than two million unemployed in Iran now -- were demanding jobs. Nor are they reporting the continuing struggles of the Kurds, much less the fact that some Marxists have gone underground to continue a truly revolutionary struggle against Khomeini's usurpation of the fruits of their revolutionary overthrow of the Shah.

Another of the many events unreported in the mass media at the time it happened (and still kept from the regional TV) are the bloody riots Khomeini instigated against the present rulers of the island of Bahrain in August, demanding the establishment of a "pure" Islamic government, the abolition of all "Western ways," especially TV, and the re-establishment of the separation of men and women in all public places. The riots were put down by the current rulers, but so worried are they about Khomeini's influence, his ability to foment rebellions against other Muslims who do not wish to unite "as one" against "the West" -- and the East -- and whom Khomeini then accuses of "crimes against God," that they have hushed up the August riots.

This is only part of Khomeini's own type of imperialism. Besides the claim to Bahrain, he has retained -- despite a challenge by Iraq -- the Shah's

1971 occupation of the three islands of Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tumb. These islands are situated near the Straits of Hormuz, through which passes nearly half of the West's oil imports.

Furthermore, Khomeini has lashed out against any Iranian who dares to say that he is for Iran first and for Islam second. He calls that "blasphemy." At the same time, when the PLO suggested that the Persian Gulf be renamed as either the Islamic or the Arabian Gulf, Khomeini rejected the suggestion at once. His insistence that Islam -- his interpretation of Islam -- must always come first, does not in any way mitigate his disdain for Arabs. Not only was he adamant that the Persian Gulf retain its name, but his opposition to the Arab oil workers and any claim for self-determination, is total. Arafat was quickly brought down to size when he tried to intercede for the American hostages. That doesn't mean that either Arafat or all the Arab state rulers meeting in Tunisia had anything to say for Khomeini -- with the exception of Libya, and even their pro-Khomeini stance did not take priority over selling Oil to the West.

And in Iran, itself, the so-called Revolutionary Council is itself faction-ridden with pro-Libyan, pro-Syrian, pan Islamic factions; and though they each bow to Khomeini now, it doesn't mean that would hold if other Muslim countries act out their dissent. At the same time, Hussein of Iraq has no intention whatever of bowing to Khomeini. Indeed, he has already once threatened an invasion and is, at the moment, arming some Kurds to start a revolt within Iran.

III

And what, exactly, is being prepared for the Iranian people once this month of mourning, the Muharram, is over? Well., they are to engage in a referendum to approve the Draft Constitution which the Ayatollahs Montazori and Behesti have drawn up. Anyone who has any illusions that this Constitution bears any resemblance whatsoever to the one that was inspired by the First Russian Revolution of 1905-1907, when the first Shah was overthrown, or even as the Mullahs amended that Constitution when they brought the Shah back, should take a look at the new institution of the Office of Religious Guardian which has the right to vote over everything and anything passed by the state rulers and is also the supreme commander over the armed forces.

The point is that the Constitution does nothing but try to legitimize Khomeini's usurpation of the victory of the workers who achieved the actual over-

throw of the Shah. It cannot solve the crisis in Iran, anymore than staged demonstrations before the U.S. Embassy and the sacrificial use of hostages can stay the hand of U.S. imperialism.

The greatest danger now lies in the momentum gained by Khomeini's demagoguery, which might trigger Apocalypse Now! That is the brink at which the world now stands. Khomeini and Carter may not flinch as they prepare for such a confrontation. But the world must do everything to stay the hands of both rulers.

In the imperative struggle against the savage racism in this country against Iranian students, we must never forget that the underlying racism that has always been shown against the Blacks has actually been directed also against revolutionaries and minorities, though in depth it has been differently expressed racially. What I am saying is that not only must we remember the horror of U.S. concentration camps against Japanese-Americans during World War II, at the very time when no such atrocities were committed against Nazis in this country. The case against each white fascist was treated as an individual case. We must remember ^{that} the fact that American revolutionaries have long fought this, have long fought U.S. capitalism-imperialism and its wars, does not mean that we accept, as a revolutionary gesture, the opposition to American capitalism by another capitalist or religious fanatic, any more than we accepted Nazism or Japanese military opposition to American capitalism as anything but an inter-imperialist fight.

Of course the mailed fist of Carter must be stopped, and his is also the hand that can release a nuclear holocaust, which would put an end to civilization as we have known it. Revolutionary opposition against American imperialism can be carried through only if we raise a banner of what we are for. And what we are for is not turning the clock back to some form of occultism.

Anyone who tries to gild a neo-fascist occultism, forgetting that the "masses" that Hitler mobilized were mobilized for counter-revolutionary purposes; anyone who tries to say that Khomeini's constant references to the "disinherited masses" is akin to Mao's "Cultural Revolution", should be made to remember that -- though Mao was once a revolutionary, and though Mao did labor under the illusion that making Russia "Enemy No. One" (like Khomeini's making the U.S. "Satan") was the way to fight for world socialism -- Mao ended by rolling out the Red Carpet for Nixon. (6) As we said then, the "revolutionary" Maoist apologists who

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were willing to forgive Mao every crime on earth and leave a few blanks for those he might create later, were revealing that one and only one organic trait characterizes them all: tailorism to a state power. This is the exact opposite to what Marx's Marxism is -- the struggle for a totally new, classless, social order, based on totally new human relations. Anything short of that spells out betrayal.

Yours,

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FOOTNOTES

- (1) See my Political-Philosophic Letter, "Iran: Unfoldment of, and Contradictions in, Revolution", March 25, 1979, published by News & Letters.
- (2) And if a Trotskyist should dare to say that following Khomeini is like "following" Father Gapon in 1905, they should at least have learned from Trotsky that, far from any Bolshevik or Menshevik or Social Revolutionary or even Liberal following Father Gapon, the truth was that Fr. Gapon himself turned against the Tzar and for the movement after the army fired on their demonstration.
- (3) Remembrance, historic remembrance, has a way of repeating itself as if it were an ongoing element in every crisis. Nothing seems more relevant now than Trotsky's analysis of the Big Lie Stalin perpetrated by staging the infamous Moscow Frame-up Trials, 1936-38, against the "General Staff of the Revolution", including Tukhachevsky, whom Stalin accused of nothing short of dealing with Nazi Germany. The needed revolutionary attitude, when such a lie is perpetrated, Trotsky told me, is that it is not enough just not to believe the Big Lie. The fact is, he continued, that the reason the Big Lie is so much more monstrous than the ordinary lie is because its premeditation hides the sinister motivation that would have put everyone on the alert, had they known the truth. What Stalin was accusing Tukhachevsky of, he explained, might very well be what Stalin himself was doing or planning to do. The trial balloon towards that end, which directs hatred towards the accused, calls for a great deal more than just a defense of the wrongly accused. He must be prepared to fight some new "poppery dish" that Stalin is readying -- perhaps a deal with Hitler. That was precisely what happened the following year, the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939.
- (4) See Christian Science Monitor 11/16/79: "Constitution Gives Clergy Control in Iran" by Geoffrey Godsell.
- (5) Christian Science Monitor, 11/21/79
- (6) See both the chapter on "The Thought of Mao Tse-tung" in my Philosophy and Revolution (Dell, 1973) and "Mao's Last Hurrah", Political-Philosophic Letter, Feb. 27, 1976, published by News & Letters. Since the designation of Russia as "Enemy Number One" is the one Mao legacy the post-Mao leadership is scrupulously following out, see also "Post-Mao China: What Now?" in Now Essays (News & Letters, 1977).

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