

From the Editors

In a note in the first issue of *Urgent Tasks*, the editors wrote, "In our opinion, no existing national communist organization embodies a workable revolutionary strategy. . . . The ideas and individuals which might make up such an organization exist, but only as a general trend, not as a clear political tendency."

We did not exclude the Sojourner Truth Organization from the above calculation. Consequently, from the beginning we have conceived *Urgent Tasks* not simply (or even mainly) as the voice of our "line" but as a vehicle to break new ground and advance the debate among revolutionaries which must lead to the emergence of a comprehensive strategy.

Toward this end, we are publishing in this issue a number of critiques of articles that have been published by STO, in *Urgent Tasks* and elsewhere. (Paradoxically, this commitment to open, public debate is an important part of our line.)

The article by Joel Jordan, a member of Workers Power, a group of comrades who have recently left the International Socialists, is a basic challenge to the prevailing positions of STO as they have been expressed in *Urgent Tasks* numbers one and two and in "White Supremacy and the Afro-American National Question" by Don Hamerquist, published as a pamphlet.

The article by Linda Phelps, a member of STO, is a critical response to a two-part article by Alison Edwards, also a member of STO, which was entitled "Women and Modern Capitalism" and which was published in numbers five and six of this journal.

The speech by Ashraf Dehghani is the viewpoint of an important sector of the armed revolutionary movement of Iran that contrasts sharply with views presented in the documents from Iran translated and published in our last issue. It is also implicitly critical of our last editorial, "In Defense of Iran," though we would not sharply counterpose our line to either fedayee position without further study of a political debate that is not yet available in English translation.

The article by Martin Glaberman and the response by Ken Lawrence carry forward a debate on the character of U.S. slavery and the slaves which began with the publication by STO of Lawrence's pamphlet "Marx on American Slavery" in 1976, and which was continued in numbers one and six of *Urgent Tasks*.

In addition, we are publishing three letters from readers, one a criticism of Edwards' article mentioned above, the others critical of a review of theories of armed struggle, written by STO member Beth rienson and published in issue number five.

Rounding out the issue are STO member [name withheld at author's request] analysis of events in Afghanistan and a "guest editorial" on nuclear issues from Fight Back that we are pleased to present to our readers.

We have been criticized by several readers for the tone of *Urgent Tasks*, which has been described as "clubby" and accessible only to those on the inside, as well as for occasional lapses into snottiness toward our opponents. We think there is some validity to these criticisms. We recognize that to continue these errors will undermine our ability to carry out serious, reasoned debate among revolutionaries. In the future we shall try to avoid a style which opens us to such criticism.

In Place of an Editorial

RACISM AND NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY

The following statement was written by Fight Back, an organization of Black workers based in New York City. It was presented to a meeting in Washington, D.C., of the Committee for a Non-Nuclear World and was rejected by that body. While we might draw slightly different programmatic conclusions from those contained in the paper, we are in total and unreserved agreement with the ideas presented in the body of the text, and express our solidarity with it by publishing it here, in place of an editorial.

Nuclear militarism and power are advanced forms of technology that embrace every facet of society. Highly advanced monopoly capitalism and big, politically powerful government have made real these forms of technology. All sectors of society are profoundly affected, directly and indirectly. The natural environment, air, water, and land, have already been altered and will be altered more as a result of nuclear technology. Humanity stands at the crossroads. Can nuclear technology be checked, contained, and controlled, or will it destroy human society? How has such a ques-

tion, an unprecedented challenge, been allowed to develop among an unquestioning and unsuspecting people? How, with the fate of humanity in the balance, has there not been an enormous and massive outcry to stop the drift toward nuclear annihilation? What has happened to our sense of human outrage threatened by nuclear war, waste disposal, accidents, and contamination? How explain this form of dehumanization in the face of this form of technology, with its accompanying human peril?

At the beginning of these United States the historic process of capital accumulation was initiated by "The Founding Fathers" in the decimation of the Indians and enslavement of Blacks. Thereafter the most fundamental division of the American working class has been racism, the systemic practice granted to whites over Blacks in every sphere of social life, in the interest of accumulating surplus value owned and controlled by the bourgeoisie. Not only in the objective world of economic relationships based on the capitalistic mode of production was racism structured, but also in the subjective realm of ideology, social and cultural values, religion and philosophic beliefs, education and attitudes related to the totality of institutions, racism has played a pervasive and determining role in shaping the social mentality of the American people. The decimation of the Indians and enslavement of Blacks laid the basis for the exploitation and dehumanization of the masses of whites. American humanity was betrayed at the inception of the United States. Thereafter, wave after wave of immigrants came to these shores, moved up the economic ladder by accepting racism already systemic—structured and operating throughout society. The ongoing price of this brutalization and dehumanization is embodied in one of the most highly developed forms of technology that threatens the very society out of which it developed.

The recent theft of Indian lands where uranium deposits have been discovered and bribing Native Americans to work in uranium mines provide further evidence of the meshing of racism and nuclear technology. These attacks on Native Americans demand the most forceful condemnation by anti-nuke activists and progressives in general. Such condemnation and active support for the Native American people has yet to emerge.

It is also important to take note of apartheid and nuclear militarism and power in South Africa, a country heavily supported by and invested in by the U.S. government and transnational corporations. South Africa is one of the main sources in the world of uranium. It provides imperialism with uranium mined by Blacks. South Africa itself is one of the major nuclear arsenals in the world. It poses a threat not only to Africa, but the world. Where in America do we hear an outcry?

In short, the highest development of technology motivated by the incentive for increased profits

contains within itself racism that contributed to its development and the social impact it has on society completes the historical process of dehumanizing most people trapped within a decaying social system. Nuclear militarism and technology are not only a clear expression of racism, they resolve the question of racism by dehumanizing the totality of human society. There is a completion of the American historical process of class exploitation. We are helpless, objectively and subjectively, to reverse the course of our own social perdition, since we can scarcely perceive the historical basis for our impotence. Racism is writ large in the greatest and most profound contradiction ever confronted by human society, but it is scarcely perceived.

How, then, given time, can those few who do perceive, carry forward a class resolution of the contradiction brought on by nuclear power?

Mired in racial bigotry, the American working class has never perceived itself as a class, has never been conscious of itself as a class exploited by a ruling class. Herein is the crux of our problem. How to make our class conscious, to infuse it with political awareness? To find the answer we must look to the long struggle waged by Black people in the U.S. Their inability to cope with their oppression and exploitation is explained by the ruling class's continuing use of the working class to maintain the oppression of Blacks while continuing the exploitation of whites. We remain a historically divided class unable to politically fend in our own interests at the most advanced stage of class society, the stage of state-monopoly capitalism.

With the American ruling class intensifying its exploitation of the American people, conditions are ripe for a massive educational and political campaign to combat racism and unite workers in their class interests. There is no issue more overwhelming and all-embracing than nuclear technology—militarism and power. Furthermore, the outcome of this struggle can well determine the future course of the human race.

What, then, must be done?

Anti-nuke forces must:

1. Give active and full support to the struggles of Blacks on all fronts.
2. Carry out educational programs to inform the workers how racism undermines their struggles for economic, political, social, and cultural betterment.
3. Give special attention to the encouragement of Blacks to play an active and leading role in the anti-nuke movement. The more whites see Blacks speaking out on this matter the better.
4. Enter into electoral politics with candidates who can express themselves on 1 and 2.
5. Begin to build an independent political party as an ongoing political organization that can fight for the necessary changes in American society around the slogan of "A Non-Nuke Future — The Only Path for Humanity!"

Documents of the Iranian Revolutionary Movement

Ashraf Dehghani is one of the best known of the guerrilla leaders who waged the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the shah's regime in Iran under the banner of the Organization of Iranian People's Fedayee Guerrillas (OIPFG). She became a symbol of resistance, admired even by many who opposed her communist organization, for her refusal to break under torture by the SAVAK after her arrest in May 1971, and for her daring escape from prison in March 1973. Her memoir, Torture and Resistance in Iran, is one of the most stirring revolutionary messages ever penned.

Last May the public became aware of a political split of Dehghani and her followers from the OIPFG after the publication of an interview in which she explained her views. Since that time a debate has ensued in the pages of Kar, the OIPFG newspaper, and various publications by the People's Fedayee Guerrillas, as her supporters are known. (In this speech, Dehghani refers to the OIPFG as "the Organization" and to her own group as "People's Fedayee Guerrillas.") To our knowledge, the political documents of this split have not yet appeared in English translation.

The following speech was delivered in Mahabad, a city in Kurdistan, on February 9, 1980, to commemorate the ninth anniversary of the Siahkal insurrection—the action that heralded the resurgence of armed struggle in Iran after a period of disarray among revolutionary forces. It was translated for Urgent Tasks by comrades at Mississippi State University, Starkville, who support Ashraf Dehghani and the People's Fedayee Guerrillas.

By Ashraf Dehghani

Greetings to all the revolutionary people of Iran in general, and to the Kurdish people of Iran in particular. What words can I use to express my feelings to you? Actually, I cannot do it with words, and I promise just one thing: I and my existence are devoted to the path of our revolution. I dedicate my life to all the different revolutionary peoples of Iran who are struggling for independence and revolution. I know very well that your feelings and affections are not only for me but also for the revolutionary movement and for those revolutionaries who struggle tirelessly. Your affection is for all the People's Fedayee Guerrillas.

Greeting! Greeting to those fedayen who were martyred and to

those who are dedicated and ready for any self-sacrifice. Your love is for all the martyrs of Siahkal. Nine years ago this same day they answered the oppressing system with the roar of machine guns and sent their message to the people of Iran. Today those martyrs are not alive to see the result and consequences of their action; they are not among us to see how their struggle resulted in the mass uprising of February 11 and 12, 1979. Our comrades who launched the Siahkal attack were sincere and truthful people who were martyred on the path to victory. But even though they are not now among us, their memory will remain with us, and the clover which they planted will become a garden—one martyr will give birth to 100 new revolutionary guerrillas. It was love for the oppressed

people that motivated our comrades to be martyrs. They had no hope but the hope that we follow their way.

Let us ask ourselves, what kind of day was February 9, 1971? Siahkal was the starting point of armed struggle in Iran. Nine years ago this very day the comrades whose names are well known among our people attacked imperialism and its puppet, the shah's regime, by attacking the police station in the village of Siahkal in the northern part of Iran. Our comrades believed that armed struggle was the only way to drive imperialism from Iran. They believed that the only way to construct a free and independent Iran, in which people govern themselves, is through armed struggle. This judgment has been validated by history.

Consider all the revolutions that have taken place in different countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In all these revolutions we can see that armed struggle was the only way to kick imperialism out of the country. You all know that hundreds of our comrades were martyred while waging the armed struggle; these struggles were going on when strangulation and dictatorship ruled in Iran and every movement was violently suppressed by our enemy. In that situation, those political organizations or parties who claimed to be the vanguard could not have any effect on revolutionary developments, because they did not realize the proper method of struggle.

The Tudeh party had been the dominant leftwing vanguard party before Siahkal, but because of its deviant perspective and its revisionist policies, and because of its treachery against the interests of the people^ it had lost the confidence of the majority of the people. But armed revolutionaries, both Fedayen and Mojahedin, changed that situation. Our comrades, through self-sacrifice, sincerity, and truthfulness, proved that those people who had named themselves communist were actually treacherous. Since real and truthful communists are those who are ready for self-sacrifice, you could see after Siahkal how people supported our organization, and how people followed the leadership of our organization; all these were the result of our comrades' struggle. You could see that people who were oppressed and suppressed by the oppressor regime's agents were looking for fedayen to help them. This showed that people had recognized the real vanguard and relied on them.

Unfortunately the Organization which grew up and blossomed from the blood of our comrades is today a home for opportunists; they are actually following the same path as the Tudeh party. The Organization consciously understands this and has deliberately chosen to take the

revisionist road under the glorious name of fedayee guerrillas. At the same time, all of their attempts were destroying the trusted name of fedayen. I do not want to get into specifics here, but I will say one thing: as you know, I'm a member of People's Fedayee Guerrillas of Iran, but enemies and opportunists try to reflect the reality differently. They do not want to confess the existence of true People's Fedayee Guerrillas, so they repeat only my name.

Here in Kurdistan, who destroyed the reputation of the Organization? At the beginning of the Kurdish movement all the Kurdish people followed the Organization, but after only a short time people realized they were not real fedayee guerrillas, they who have confiscated the name of the Organization in people's minds, because instead of helping men, women, and children when the current regime bombs and attacks them, and instead of giving their facilities to them, they went in the wrong direction by joining and supporting Khomeini's Peace Commission. I just want you to know that these people who are named the Organization of Iranian People's Fedayee Guerrillas are not real fedayen, and are deceiving people.

Anyway, I was saying that the masses supported the fedayee organization. The most conscious and truthful workers followed our organization, and even in remote villages they knew us. This was the result of our comrades' armed struggle. At the beginning of the revolution, when mullahs wanted to motivate people, they talked about fedayee guerrillas, but after the movement was victorious the situation changed, so now it is sinful to mention the name fedayen. They are so afraid of revolutionaries that they even changed the name of a street which people had named Golsorkhi Street to Laleh Street. [Golsorkhi, which means rose, was the name of a fedayee guerrilla who was killed by SAVAK; Laleh is the name of a different flower.] They are even

afraid of the word fedayee to the extent that they changed Fedayee Street to Dehkadeh Street. They tremble because they want to preserve their class and status, and they don't want the names of places, streets, and other monuments to remind people of revolutionaries, and thereby endanger their existence. But this is their stupidity, because by changing these names they won't be able to erase the memories of revolutionaries from the people's minds.

Yes, memories of fedayee guerrillas will remain with us and their ways will continue. Some may ask, what are their methods that you want to continue? Isn't the revolution over? We should ask ourselves, when can we say the revolution is over? To answer this question we should see if the wills of the people who participated in the revolution have been satisfied or not.

When our revolutionary movement was rising up, it was the strike by workers that crippled the comprador bourgeoisie. But in the end, instead of appreciating the workers, the government invited all the owners of industry back and called the workers "troublemakers." When the capitalists say "troublemaker" it means "patriot" or "struggler." When the refinery workers went on strike and Mr. Bazargan, as mediator, asked them to go back to work, they said they would return to work on the condition that when the revolution is over they would get their own representatives in government. But Bazargan didn't keep his promise, and there isn't a single working class representative.

We have three million unemployed, and still we have government puppets who are getting salaries in the tens of thousands of rials, just as in the shah's era. And when people questioned the authorities about their salaries, they told them to keep quiet or they would be branded counterrevolutionaries and punished.

Whenever people asked questions about the bombardment of Kurdish

villages they were answered with bullets. This is the way they treat our workers. Some of our workers are still waiting patiently, hoping that time will bring a solution, but we don't think so. Because of its ties with imperialism, this regime cannot solve the workers' problems; this is why we have strikes, which are getting more frequent now.

The biggest problems we are facing are inflation and the lack of housing. The government's approach has only made things worse. We have a lack of housing at the same time we have many vacant apartments, those abandoned by the rich people who fled the country. People even have to pay for electricity and water. So we see that nothing has really changed; the rich are still getting richer.

Now let's look at the peasants. The deposed shah's agricultural policies destroyed the agricultural system and drove the peasants from their villages into the cities where they had to live at the minimum subsistence conditions. Those who owned a piece of land and stayed in the villages became the debtors of financial institutions, and had to pay anything they earned to the banks. One thing they could do was to come into the cities and demonstrate against the regime. They realized that this regime would not uproot feudalism and establish land reform. When peasants rebelled against these conditions during the shah's regime, they were massacred by the oppressor regime's agents. In the shah's time, his police agents killed the peasants, and that way continued their oppression forever. But what about the existing regime? This regime also came and suppressed peasants who complained about their living conditions. But they claim that the regime today is much better than the shah's regime. But if this situation continues, it will be very dangerous; we have already lost so much blood. So many mothers have lost their sons; so many children are fatherless. But for what? Nothing! Only to say that this regime is



Ashraf Dehghani

better than the shah's.

For example, this Mr. Chamran who was designated as the representative of the prime minister came to Kurdistan and suppressed the Kurdish people. The government named him defense minister as his reward for suppressing the Kurds. And he really showed that he is a good criminal—death to him! Really, if he were not in Iran to suppress the Kurds, where would he be? It is obvious—at the service of his imperialist masters. The same Chamran who suppressed the Kurds is the person who participated in

the imperialist crimes in Tal Zaatar the site of the heroic struggle of the people of Palestine. Really, if our revolution were won, could these people be in these same positions? You saw that shortly after this government assumed political power, and soon after Bazargan was chosen prime minister, we cried and shouted, as People's Fedayee Guerrillas, that this is a dependent capitalist government. We said that there has been a compromise: not only did these people reject the expansion of people's struggle, they also

are restoring the dependent capitalist institutions that the revolutionary people had damaged. They rebuilt the reactionary anti-people army of the shah's regime and made it ready to suppress the people under the name of the Islamic Republic's army. If we really look at the functions of this and the shah's regime in regard to the people, we can see there is no difference in function. The Islamic Republic has the same function in different form. But the exercise of power in this regime is quite different from the shah's. The shah was put in power by the English and the Americans, and the Americans saved a lot of money by putting him in power. But this new government compromises with America and misuses the people's movement. Finally America accepted the new regime as the government of Iran. Now this government, like its predecessor, carries on the political mission of imperialism.

Before U.S. imperialism's puppet was responsible; now its executives are those who talk from an Islamic point of view. So in this sense there is no difference between the previous regime and this government. They are cheating the people and lying to them, but the Iranian people are aware of what's going on and do not believe in political games any more. They will surely continue their struggle on to victory. Now I have talked about many problems that prove my claim. One of the most important problems of the Iranian revolution is the existence of those people who fight for their freedom based on their nationality. The shah put them under political and economic pressure because of imperialism. One example is the Kurdish people who are fighting for autonomy— not independence, we are all one Iranian people and we want to live together. All the Iranian people fought for freedom, but imperialism's puppets tried to stop them. We believe all people are equal; Kurdish people are the same as everyone else. So if all people get

together, we can fight against the bourgeoisie and imperialism, and as a nation we can live together on the basis of equality and brotherhood. But imperialism and its puppets try to continue their exploitation. If the revolution were truly won, we would have a revolutionary government in which the peoples of Iran would make the decisions about their own lives.

The government claims it is a government of the people, but that isn't true, because our problems can't be solved by words. If exploitation remains, and nothing changes culturally and economically, if they don't even let people speak their own language, then nothing has changed.

I talked about what the government did and is doing; I said this government is essentially the same as the previous one. You yourselves saw how this government killed the Kurdish people, reminding us of what the U.S. did in Vietnam or what Israel does to the Palestinian people. What they did should be called murder, just as the shah did before.

The government was defeated several times, and for that reason called for discussions. I don't talk about this problem. Talk is not necessarily bad, but it isn't good. It depends on the situation, but I'll tell you something and I want to emphasize it: The Kurdish people must be conscious. They must make themselves strong and prepare for the future war. The government is trying to strengthen its position by talking to the Kurds, but they should be ready for an unwanted war with the government. If they want to win, the Kurdish people need to know what is going on. Revolutionary leadership must educate the people politically and prepare them for the future unwanted fight. How? That depends on how the people's organizations prepare and arm them.

I remember that I read about a lieutenant who massacred children, young and old, men and women, in Vietnam. When this was revealed,

the pressure was so great that the United States was forced to prosecute its own lieutenant. Now compare that with what happened in Gharna [a Kurdish village] where a massacre took place. In Vietnam an imperialist government was forced to admit the atrocity and to prosecute the perpetrator, but in Iran the so-called revolutionary government ignored the incident completely. This puppet of the imperialists remained silent. It accuses the Kurdish brothers of working with imperialism, the shah, and his SAVAK agents. The next day the so-called revolutionary government sits down at a table and tries to compromise with them; this shows they know that the Kurdish brothers are not SAVAK agents; they are talking sense. But the government manipulates public opinion to keep the people from knowing the truth.

History is a mirror of the past. Through it people finally release themselves from the chains and burdens of imperialism. The Kurdish people know that without bloodshed they will never be free, so they fight to the last drop of their blood for freedom. One of the most important factors in a revolutionary movement is good leadership. A leader must care for the people and never work for his own sake. If a person lacks this character, he can never lead the people to victory, no matter how devoted he may be. It is important at this very moment that the Kurdish movement have good leadership to face a clever enemy. The enemy is trying to create splits between different groups in Kurdistan, in order to prevent the goal of a free Kurdistan. The so-called revolutionary government accused the Kurdish people of wanting independence and separation from Iran. Finally, after the so-called revolutionary government could not destroy the will of the Kurdish people, it began these discussions.

[The last few minutes of the speech are unintelligible on the tape.]