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The events which are taking place in the Moslem countries must be seen in the light of dialectical and historical materialism, from Reflections on the Middle East, 8 Nëntori Publishing House, Tirana; 1984; pp 355-392

The international situation is very tense at present. In many regions of the world and mainly in the large zone of the oil-producing countries, especially those of Asia, the struggle between the two imperialist superpowers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union, not excluding imperialist China and the other capitalist powers, over the division and re-division of markets and spheres of influence, as they try to elbow one another out, has reached new, major proportions just as our Party correctly predicted long ago. Their pressures and plots are accompanied with diplomatic efforts and a propaganda clamour about -agreements and compromises- allegedly to preserve the peace and the balance of power. In fact, as recent events have shown, we see that agreements and compromises are still the basic principle of their policy towards each other regardless of their very acute rivalry. One day, however, the rivalry between them may reach such a point that they can no longer overcome it and settle matters except through military confrontation. The consequences of such a confrontation will descend upon the peoples, just as has occurred in previous imperialist wars.

The most recent result of this rivalry is the military aggression of the Soviet social-imperialists against Afghanistan, the occupation of that country through armed force by one of the imperialist superpowers. The fact is that what is now being done openly by the Soviets through their armed forces against the sovereignty of the Afghan people had long been prepared by the Soviet social-imperialist chauvinist politicians and military leaders and their Afghan agents. In order to arrive at the present situation, both the former and the latter exploited the overthrow, first of King Mohammed Zahir Shah in 1973 and, later, of Prince Daoud in 1978. They also exploited for their evil aims the desire of the Afghan people for social liberation from the oppression they suffered under the absolute monarchy and its foreign friends, first of all, the Soviets, who financed the monarchy and kept it in power. So, irrespective of the -"alliance". which they had with the king of Afghanistan, the Soviet social imperialists worked and acted for his overthrow. In order to disguise their imperialist aims, at first they brought their men, allegedly with more progressive sentiments, to power. Later, these, too, were changed one after the other, through actions in which blood was shed, by means of putsches and tanks, and Noor Mohammed Taraki and Hafiz Ullah Amin were sent to the slaughter.

Nevertheless, no foreign occupier, however powerful and heavily armed, can keep the people, against whom aggression has been committed, subdued for ever. In every country which is invaded the people, apart from anti-national and anti-popular cliques of agents, receive the foreign aggressors with hatred and resistance, sporadic at first and later with more organized revolts which gradually turn into popular uprisings and liberation wars. We are seeing the proof of this in Afghanistan, where the people have risen and are fighting fiercely in the cities, villages and mountains against the Soviet army of occupation. This war of the Afghan people enjoys the support and sympathy of freedom loving peoples and revolutionary forces throughout the world. Our people, too, support it with all their might. The war of the Afghan people against the Soviet social-imperialists is a just war, and therefore it will triumph.

The current war of the Afghan people against the Soviet military aggression and the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist, anti-American uprising of the Iranian people must make us reflect somewhat more profoundly, from the political, theoretical and ideological aspects, about another major problem which, in the existing situation of complicated developments in the world, is becoming ever more prominent: the popular uprisings of "Islamic inspiration", as the bourgeoisie and the revisionists like

to describe these movements, simply because the Moslem peoples of the Arab and other countries have placed themselves in the vanguard of the liberation movement. This is a fact, an objective reality. There are insurrectionary movements in those countries. If we were to examine and judge these movements and uprisings of Moslem peoples in an over-simplified and very superficial way as movements simply of an Islamic character, without probing deeply into the true reasons which impel the broad masses of the peoples to advance, we could fall in the positions of the revisionists and imperialists, whose assessments of these movements are denigrating and conceal ambitions to enslave the peoples.

We Marxist-Leninists always understand clearly that religion is opium for the people. In no instance do we alter our view on this and we must not fall into the errors of "religious socialism", etc. The Moslem religion is no different in this regard. Nevertheless, we see that at present the broad masses of the Moslem peoples in the Arab and other countries have risen or are rising in struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism for their national and social liberation. These peoples, who were deliberately left in ignorance in the past and remain backward in their world outlook to this day, are now becoming aware of the great oppression and savage exploitation which were imposed on them by the old colonizers and which the new colonizers and the internal feudal-bourgeois capitalist cliques continue to impose on them. They are coming to understand the political-economic reasons for their oppression and, irrespective that they are Moslems and have been left in backwardness, they are displaying great vitality and making an important contribution to the anti-imperialist bourgeois-democratic revolution which opens the way to the proletarian revolution. Those who have adopted and exploited the Moslem religion to exert social oppression over these peoples and to exploit them in the most ferocious ways are the anti-popular oppressive regimes and the reactionary clergy. They have protected and continue to protect their blood-thirsty power through the weapons and support which they have received from abroad, that is, from the imperialist powers, the neo-colonialist robbers, as well as through inciting and developing religious fanaticism. Thus, the development of events is more and more confirming the Marxist-Leninist thesis that the internal enemies collaborate closely with the external enemies to suppress their own peoples and that they use religion as a weapon to oppress the peoples and keep them in darkness.

The events taking place before our eyes show that the Moslem Arab peoples are fighters. Their anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist and anti-feudal struggles and uprisings are accompanied with and result in armed clashes. These struggles and uprisings have their source in the savage oppression which is imposed on these peoples and in their freedom-loving and progressive sentiments. If you are not progressive and freedom loving you cannot rise in struggle for freedom and national independence against the two-fold internal and external oppression.

Another social cause and powerful impulse to anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist and anti-feudal uprisings is the grave economic situation of these peoples, the burden of hunger and suffering under which they live. Hence, we cannot fail to take into account their political awakening and, to some extent, also their social awakening.

Looking at the whole struggle of the peoples of Moslem belief, we notice that there are marked differences in its level of development: there are periods when it mounts, but also periods of decline or stagnation, the latter caused by various factors and especially, by the pseudo-progressive bourgeoisie which places itself at the head of these peoples.

In Morocco, for example, there has been some movement, but the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist movement of the people of that country is not at the same height as that of other countries. On the contrary, the monarchy and feudalism dominate the Moroccan people, through violence and liberal pseudo-reforms, as well as by exploiting their religious sentiments.

In Algeria the people waged the national liberation war against the French colonialists and, although it was not led by a Marxist-Leninist party but by the national bourgeoisie, the war for national liberation ended with the withdrawal of the foreign occupiers, but it was carried no further...

In Tunisia the people seem to be asleep and very apathetic, are showing little sign of awakening, but they are not all that backward. Recently there was talk about a trade-union movement there and the general secretary of the trade-unions was arrested, but nothing more happened.

In 1952 there was a revolt in Egypt, too. The monarchy was overthrown without bloodshed. King Farouk was expelled from Egypt by a group of officers. Those who removed him from the throne accompanied him to Alexandria, gave him money, put him on board a ship and helped him to get away and save his neck. In other words, they told the monarch he had better leave of his own accord and save his skin, because he could no longer stay in the country, he no longer had any basis there.

Thus, the group of officers, headed by Nasser, Naguib and Sadat, carried out what you might call a bloodless military coup against an utterly degenerate monarchy and seized power. What was this group of Egyptian officers that carried out the putsch and what did they represent? These officers were of the bourgeoisie, its representatives, they were anti-British, but amongst them there were also pro-Hitlerites. As I have mentioned, Anwar el Sadat himself declares he collaborated with the "Desert wolf", the Nazi field-marshal Rommel.

This event, that is, the removal of Farouk from the throne, was exaggerated to the point of being called a "revolution". However, the Egyptian people, the working masses of that country, gained nothing from this whole affair. Virtually no reform to the benefit of the people was carried out. The so-called agrarian reform ended up in favour of the feudals and wealthy landowners. Under the disguise of the unity of Arab peoples the newcomers to power tried to bring about the "unification" of Egypt with Syria. However, every effort in this direction was in vain because in Syria, too, at this time the capitalist bourgeoisie in the leadership of the state had simply changed their horses and their patron. The imperialist Soviet Union had replaced France. It sabotaged this baseless "unification" and established itself firmly in that country.

As is known, in 1969 there was a revolt in Libya, too; the dynasty of King Idris was overthrown and a group of young officers, headed by Qaddafi who poses as anti-imperialist, came to power. We can describe this revolt, this movement, as progressive at first, but later it lost its impact and at the moment it has fallen into stagnation. Qaddafi who came to power and claims to be the head of Islam, exploited the Moslem religion to present Libya as a "progressive", country and even called it "socialist", but in reality the great oil wealth of the country is being exploited for very dubious adventurous and sinister aims. Of course, for purposes of demagogy and because the income from the sale of oil is truly colossal, some changes have been made in the life of the people in the cities, while the poverty-stricken nomads of the desert remain a grave social problem. As we know, Qaddafi was a disciple of Nasser's in politics, ideology and religious belief, as well as in his aims.

A somewhat more advanced and more revolutionary uprising against the monarchy took place in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, in 1958. It ended with the killing of King Faisal and his prime minister, Nuri Said. The "communists" took power there together with General Kassem, a representative of the liberal officers. Only five years later, however, in 1963, there was a coup d'etat and Kassem was executed. He was replaced by another officer, Colonel Aref. In 1968 General Al-Bakr came to the head of the state and the "Baath" Party, a party of the reactionary feudal and comprador bourgeoisie, returned to power.

The events which are occurring in Iran and Afghanistan are a positive example for the peoples of neighbouring states, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the Emirates of the Persian Gulf, Syria, Egypt and

many others, but they also constitute a great danger to the ruling cliques of some countries in this region. Hence, the whole Arab world is in ferment, in evolution.

The echo of this anti-feudal, anti-imperialist uprising of the Iranian people which is shaking the economic foundations of imperialism and its ambitions for world hegemony extends as far as Indonesia, but there the movement is weaker than in the countries of Central Asia, the Near and Middle East or even North Africa, where the Islamic religion is more compact and the assets are greater. In those regions, for instance in Iran, there is a progressive awakening of the masses, which for the moment is led generally by religious elements who know how to exploit the sentiments of these peoples for freedom and against oppressive imperialism, the monarchist leaders and rapacious feudal cliques of robbers and murderers, etc., etc. Therefore, we must make a Marxist-Leninist analysis of this situation. We cannot accept the tales that the bourgeois revisionist propaganda, American imperialism and world capitalism are spreading that Ayatollah Khomeini or this one or that in Iran are people who do not understand politics or are just as backward as Imam Ali, Imam Hassan and Imam Hussein were. This is not true. On the contrary, the facts show that people like Khomeini know how to make proper use of the existing movement of these peoples, which, in essence and in fact, is a progressive bourgeois-democratic and anti-imperialist movement.

Employing various ways and means, the different imperialists and social-imperialists are trying to present themselves as supporters of these movements and win them over for their own aims. At present, however, these movements are in their disfavour, are against them. So true is this that the Soviet social-imperialists were obliged to send their tank regiments and tens of thousands of Soviet soldiers into Afghanistan, in other words, to commit an open fascist aggression against an independent country, in order to place and keep in power their local puppets who were incapable of retaining power without the aid of the bayonets and tanks of the Soviet army, the armed forces of the Soviet Union.

Obviously, this event, this Soviet armed occupation of Afghanistan, was bound to have repercussions and cause concern in international public opinion, to arouse great anger and indignation among the freedom-loving peoples and progressive forces and, from the strategic standpoint, to provoke the anger of their rivals for hegemony, especially of the United States of America. In fact we see that these days the American president, Carter, seems to want to make a move, apparently to create difficulties for the Soviet Union and to strengthen his own positions which are growing steadily weaker, wants to take measures to prevent a possible Soviet invasion of Pakistan, or rather, to stop the Soviet social-imperialists from exploiting the anti-imperialist revolutionary sentiments of the Moslem people of Pakistan for their own ends.

The Pakistani people nurture sympathy for the anti-imperialist movement of their Iranian neighbours, and what is occurring in Iran could occur there, too. Precisely to forestall this eventuality, the United States of America, through President Carter, has proposed to the Pakistani government to dispatch 50,000 soldiers to Pakistan and to increase the supplies of arms, allegedly to cope with the Soviet danger. The United States of America sent its Secretary of Defence to China to concretize and activate the Sino-American alliance. During this visit both sides expressed their concern over the extension of the Soviet social-imperialist expansion in this region and, in connection with this, their determination to defend their own and each other's imperialist interests. The United States of America promised China the most sophisticated modern armaments.

Is there really a Soviet threat to Pakistan? Yes, there is. However, in Pakistan the anger against Zia-ul-Haq, accompanied by sympathy for Khomeini, might erupt even without the intervention of the Soviets. In order to escape the Soviet pressure and the uprising of the Pakistani people, Zia-ul-Haq himself might link up with the Soviets and thus enable them to justify their intervention in Pakistan. That is why the United States of America is revising its military agreements with Pakistan.

For his part, Carter is trying to preserve the balance, because an intervention of the Soviet Union in Pakistan constitutes a threat to American imperialism in that region of the world. Carter must have influence in Pakistan, also, because that country has a "defence treaty" with the United States of America. Apart from this, in the new situation which has been created in these times in Central Asia, Carter also sees other dangers, such as the return to power of Indira Gandhi who is pursuing her pro-Soviet policy. If the Soviets are able to strengthen their position in India, which is in conflict with Pakistan, the latter country might be more vulnerable from the Soviet side, in other words, the penetration of Soviet influence there would be made easier and would increase. That is why the American imperialists want to forestall the eventuality of a military intervention or the build-up, of the Soviet influence in Pakistan. On the other hand, the United States of America is very concerned about the possibility of Soviet pressure on Iran under the pretext of aid against the threats made to that country by American imperialism.

It is clear that the peoples of this region are Moslems and when we say this we have in mind the fact that the majority of them are believers, but their belief is relative and does not predominate over politics. There are also progressive people there who believe in and respect the Koran and religion more as a custom and tradition. When we speak about the overwhelming majority, we have in mind that part of the people to whom the Moslem religion has been presented as a liberal progressive religion which serves the interests of the people and to whom everything preached in its name "is for the good of the people", because "to wash, to pray and to fast is for the benefit of the health, the physical strengthening and spiritual satisfaction of man", etc., etc. In other words, people are told that the rites of this religion are "useful" not only for this life but also for the "next life", after death. This is preached openly. However, the poverty and oppression, schooling and a certain political development have shaken the foundations of this belief.

In general, from all these events and developments, we see that the imperialists and the social-imperialists are in difficulties in these regions of the world. It is understandable that their puppets, likewise, are in difficulties. Both for the former and for the latter it is the progressive, anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist and anti-feudal revolutionary movement of the popular masses of the Moslem Arab peoples, whether Shia or Sunni, that is the cause of these great difficulties. The whole situation in this region is positive, good, and indicates a revolutionary situation and a major movement of these peoples. At the same time, though, we see efforts made by the enemies of these peoples to restrain this movement or to alter its direction and intensity.

Hence, we must regard these situations, these movements and uprisings of these peoples as revolutionary social movements, irrespective that at first sight they have a religious character or that believers or non-believers take part in them, because they are fighting against foreign imperialism and neocolonialism or the local monarchies and oppressive feudalism. History gives us many positive examples in this direction when broad revolutionary movements of the popular masses have had a religious character outwardly. Among them, we can list the Babist movements in Iran 1848-1851; the Wahabi movement in India which preceded the great popular uprising against the British colonizers in the years 1857-1859; the peasant movements at the time of the Reformation in the 16th century which swept most of the countries of Europe and especially Germany. The Reformation itself, although dressed in a religious cloak, represented a broad socio-political movement against the feudal system and the Catholic Church which defended that system.

When the vital interests, the freedom and independence of a people are violated, they rise in struggle against any aggressor, even though that aggressor may be of the same religion. This is what occurred, for example, in North Yemen in 1962 when Nasser sent the Egyptian army allegedly to aid that country. Later he was compelled to remove the troops he had sent to Yemen, because a stern conflict began between the people of that country and the Egyptian army, irrespective that both

sides professed the one religion.

In South Yemen, with a population of Moslem believers, there was a popular revolutionary movement against British imperialism which owned the port of Aden. Britain would never have left the port of Aden voluntarily, because it constitutes a very important strategic key to the Indian Ocean and the entrance to the Red Sea, but it was the anti-imperialist struggle of the people of Yemen that compelled it to clear out, because remaining there became impossible. After this, in 1970 a "popular democratic" regime which gradually came under the influence of the Soviet social-imperialists, was formed in South Yemen. The revolutionary movement against Soviet social-imperialism is bound to flare up there, if not today certainly in the near future.

Throughout the Principality of Oman there is an anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist revolutionary movement which is also opposed to the ruling Sultan. A similar situation will develop in Ethiopia, Somalia, the countries of the Persian Gulf, etc.

The peoples of the countries of this region are all religious, believe in the Koran and Mohammed, and link the question of the struggle against imperialist oppression with their religion. This is a reality. Obviously, however, we cannot come to the conclusion that it is religion which is causing these revolts and this revolutionary awakening. By no means. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that these peoples believe in the Moslem religion and, at the same time, are fighting heroically for their national and social liberation against imperialism of every hue.

Before Liberation there were people who professed the Moslem religion in Albania, but there was no fanaticism. In the Arab or Moslem countries of Central Asia, too, the classical fanaticism of the past cannot exist, especially today. Such fanaticism can exist neither among the Moslems nor among the Catholics, the Calvinists and other schisms of Christianity. We must not forget the epoch in which we are living. We cannot fail to bear in mind the great development of science today, the growth and strengthening of the revolutionary proletariat and the spread of the ideas of Marxism-Leninism. Today the reactionary religious leaders, lackeys of the feudal order and oppressive monarchies linked with them, who want to keep the people in ignorance and bondage and to combat their liberation movements, incite fanaticism in its classical sense in those countries.

In regard to Khomeini, he is a religious leader, a dedicated believer and an idealist philosopher. He may even be a fanatic, but we see that, at the same time, he is in accord and united with the revolutionary spirit of the Iranian people. Khomeini has taken the side of the opponents of the monarchy. The imperialist bourgeoisie, the supporters of the Pahlavi monarchy and other reactionary forces in the world say that he wants to become a monarch himself. Let them say this, but the fact is that the anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist and anti-feudal liberation movement in Iran is in the ascendancy and Khomeini still maintains a good stand in regard to this movement.

What is occurring in Iran might occur also in Pakistan or in the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, it may spark off a revolutionary situation in some other neighbouring country and even in the Soviet Union itself, because social-imperialism and revisionism carry national oppression everywhere and, as a consequence, arouse the national liberation sentiments of the peoples. Socialism and the Marxist-Leninist theory alone provide a just solution to the national question. Today the national rights of nations and peoples have been violated and trampled underfoot in the Soviet Union and wherever American imperialism and international capitalism rule. There is great oppression there, logically, therefore, there will certainly be movement.

We must examine and analyse the present events in Iran as they take place and draw conclusions from them on the basis of the teachings of our Marxist-Leninist theory. In the vanguard of the active forces in the uprising against imperialism and the monarchy in that country, are the religious

zealots, the student youth, the workers and intellectuals. So, neither the proletariat nor a genuine Marxist-Leninist party is in the leadership of the movement. On this question we must also bear in mind the fact that we do not really know the strength and the basis of the different political currents in that movement. We know from experience that in our country, too, the working class was not developed, nevertheless, since the objective and subjective factors existed in the conditions of the occupation and the National Liberation War, the Party led the people to victory by basing itself on Marxism-Leninism, which means it put the working class and its vanguard, in other words itself, in the leadership. This is not the case in Iran. In that country there is a Marxist-Leninist party, the Workers and Peasants' Communist Party of Iran, a young party which, has just been formed, but it is still small, untempered, not linked with the working class and the masses, etc., while the revisionist "Tudeh" Party has existed legally and illegally, is now legal again, but is a tool of the Soviet Union. Hiding behind Marxist-Leninist slogans, this party is sabotaging the anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle of the Iranian people and trying to bring Iran into the sphere of influence and under the thralldom of the Soviet Union. That is why the Moslem people of Iran, who have risen in revolution, are not acquainted with Marxism-Leninism either as a theory or a revolutionary practice. The students who are studying at Iran's Moslem universities with great traditions and of the Shia Moslem sect, are both believers and non-believers in religion. In regard to the secular progressive elements there are those who believe in and are fighting for a liberal bourgeois-democratic state, those who believe in a "progressive" capitalist but anti-communist society, and those who still think that the Soviet Union is a socialist country which represents and applies Leninism. This is one of the reasons that genuine Marxism-Leninism has still not won acceptance in Iran, therefore the people there are fighting for liberation from the yoke of American imperialism and from Soviet influence, but under the banner of Islam. This means that the Shia Moslem clergy are in the leadership, in the vanguard of the uprising, but we have no illusions and know that they are for a bourgeois capitalist regime with religious predominance, hence, a theocratic regime. As to what course the movement against American imperialism and the barbarous compradore monarchy of the Pahlavis will take in the future, this depends mainly on the seething internal forces.

What general definition can be made of these forces?

In the present world situation and at the existing stage of the movement of the peoples for their national and social liberation, the popular revolution in Iran represents a new stage. Regardless of what others do or say, we must document this stage more carefully and make a critical Marxist-Leninist analysis of it.

Iran is a country very rich in oil, hence, has a working class comprised of oil workers and other industrial workers, but also has artisans. Of Iran's 33 million inhabitants about 17 million are in the countryside and work the land. They are poverty-stricken, oppressed and exploited to the limit by the mullahs, the religious institutions, the big-landed bourgeoisie in the service of the Pahlavis, by the wealthy mercantile and money-lending bourgeoisie linked with the monarchy. Of the total population of Iran 99 per cent are of the Moslem religion and the majority of the Shia sect.

The Pahlavi regime was one of the most barbarous, the most bloodthirsty, the most exploiting, the most corrupt of the modern world. It employed bloodshed and terror to suppress any progressive movement, any even mildly liberal demonstration, any protest or strike of workers or students, and any attempt to develop a small-scale, auxiliary subsistence economy. The savage dictatorship of the Pahlavis was based on the big feudal landowners, the wealthy property-owners that the regime created, the reactionary army and the officer caste which ran it, and on SAVAK, the secret police, which the Shah himself described as "a state within a state". The Pahlavis ruled by means of terror, robbed the people, enriched themselves in scandalous ways, were the personification of moral and political degeneration, were partners with and sold out to British and American and other imperialisms. The Pahlavis had become the most heavily armed gendarmes of the Persian Gulf

under the orders of the CIA.

Iran was oppressed, but the people were seething with revolt, although wholesale executions were carried out every day. The ayatollahs who were discontented with the regime began to move. In 1951, Mossadeq, a representative of the bourgeoisie, supported by the mullahs opposed to the Shah, and by the "Tudeh" Party, seized power. In 1953 the Shah was driven out, but his overthrow and departure were not final, because the CIA organized a putsch, overthrew Mossadeq, brought the Shah back to Iran and restored him to the throne. Thus, Iran became the property of the Americans and the Shah and its oil became their powerful weapon.

It is characteristic of the revolt of the Iranian people that, despite the great terror, it was not quelled, but continued spasmodically, in different forms and in different intensities. This revolutionary process steadily built up in quality and overcame the stage of fear of suppression.

Despite the great terror, in 1977 the opposition to the Shah began to be displayed more forcibly, became more open and active. If we follow these trends opposed to the Shah and his regime separately we shall see that they are to some extent autonomous but have a common strategy. Thus, we see the opposition of Mossadeq's supporters, the resistance of the religious forces, the actions and demonstrations of the students., the stands of intellectuals, officials, writers, poets and artists against the regime expressed at rallies, in the universities and in other public places, etc., and together with all these currents we also see the self-defence and resistance of the working class and the whole oppressed and exploited people. SAVAK attacked mercilessly, but the suppression and executions only added to the anger of the masses. This resistance turned into a permanent activity.

In the same period we see the re-awakening of the political opposition of Mossadeq's supporters in the National Front. One of the elements of this current was Shapour Bakhtiar, who became prime minister on the eve of the overthrow of Shah Pahlavi. This was the last shot of the Shah and the American imperialists against the Iranian anti-imperialist revolution and Khomeini.

In the course of the development of this political opposition, the "Movement for the Liberation of Iran", the "Iran Party", and the "Socialist League of the National Movement of Iran", broke away. The "Movement for the Liberation of Iran", which was headed by Bazargan, who became prime minister after the departure of the Shah, was closer to Khomeini and the other imams.

We must always bear in mind that neither this political opposition, nor the religious opposition to the Pahlavis was united. Some of those who comprised this opposition were against the so-called agrarian reform, against the right of women to vote, etc. This section, which comprised conservative clergy, was steadily losing its influence amongst the masses, who were moving closer to that part of the clergy who openly fought the dictatorship of the Shah on the basis of the Shia principles of the Moslem religion. One of these was Ayatollah Khomeini, who was imprisoned, tortured, imprisoned again, and sent into exile and his son murdered. This enhanced the influence of the imam among the people, in the "Bazaar" (the main market centre of Tehran), hence, amongst the merchants, and also amongst the workers. In the rising tide of agitation and the great demonstrations against the Shah, the masses demanded the return of the Imam to the homeland. The death of his son and of a political personality, Ali Shariat, in mysterious circumstances led to the emergence of the religious elements in the forefront of the clashes and the whole people united with them, especially in Tabriz on February 18-19, 1977, as well as in Tehran, Qum and other Iranian cities. All this testifies to the fighting spirit of the people of Iran. As a result the Pahlavi monarchy was quite incapable of resisting the repeated waves of the onslaught of the insurgent people.

Hence, in this climate of progressive insurgency against feudalism, the monarchy and imperialism, the Marxist-Leninists must analyse the various political trends, the orientations of these trends, the



alliances and contradictions between them inside Iran and with the capitalist revisionist world outside that country.

At present we see an active and militant unity of the uprising against American imperialism and the Shah and, to some extent, also against Soviet social-imperialism, and, at the same time, we also see increased vigilance and opposition towards all other capitalist states, though not so open and active as against the Americans. This situation will certainly undergo evolution. We see that the universities in Iran have become centres of fiery manifestations with both political and religious tendencies, and likewise see that the religious opposition and the political opposition are uniting. Thus, despite the contradictions which exist between them, it seems that the supporters of Mossadeq and those of Khomeini are moving closer together. In Tabriz, which has an important working class, apart from the oil workers, we can say that this unity has been brought about. Similar things are taking place at Abadan and the other regions where there are oilfields and refineries.

The Iranian Marxist-Leninists must, in particular, submit the strength and orientations of the working class to a Marxist-Leninist analysis and then their party must base its activity on this analysis, go among the working class, educate it and clarify it politically and ideologically, while tempering itself together with the working class in this revolutionary class struggle which, far from being ended, has only begun and will certainly assume diverse aspects. The revolutionary activity of the working class and the Marxist-Leninist ideology alone must become the factor deciding the correct directions which this anti-imperialist revolution must take. Certainly, in the present situation in Iran much can and must be gained from the revolutionary force of the Iranian working class, by the progressive elements, and especially by the students and the poor and middle peasantry.

The Marxist-Leninists will be committing a mistake if they do not understand the situation created and do not utilize it in the right way, if they come out as anti-religious fighters and thus damage their anti-imperialist and anti-feudal unity with the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini and the followers of Mossadeq's, Bazargan's or others' anti-imperialist bourgeois-democratic and movements.

Although anti-religious in their principles, the Iranian Marxist-Leninists must not for the moment wage a struggle against the religious beliefs of the people who have risen in revolt against oppression and are waging a just struggle politically, but are still unformed ideologically and will have to go through a great school in which they will learn. The Marxist-Leninists must teach the people to assess the events that are taking place in the light of dialectical and historical materialism. However, our world outlook cannot be assimilated easily in isolation from the revolutionary drive of the masses or from the anti-imperialist trends that are trying to remain in the leadership and to manoeuvre to prevent the bourgeois-democratic reforms of the revolution. The Iranian Marxist-Leninists and working class must play a major role in those revolutionary movements, having a clear understanding of the moments they are going through; they must not let the revolution die down. The working class and its true Marxist-Leninist vanguard should have no illusions about the "deep-going" bourgeois-democratic measures and reforms which the Shia clergy or the anti-Shah elements of the old and new national bourgeoisie might carry out. Certainly, if the working class, the poor peasantry and the progressive students, whether believers or non-believers, allow the impetus of the revolution to ebb away, which means that they do not proceed with determination and maturity towards alliances and activities conducive to successive political and socio-economic reforms, then the revolution will stop halfway, the masses will be disillusioned and the exploitation of them will continue in other forms by pseudo-democratic people linked in new alliances with the different imperialists.

These special new revolutionary situations which are developing among the peoples of Islamic religious beliefs must be studied, conclusions must be drawn from them and new forms of struggle,

action and alliances must be found. These revolutionary situations are much more advanced than those in Europe and Asia and, to some degree, even Latin America, where the revolutionary movements have assumed a petrified form, linked with and led by reformist and counter-revolutionary social-democracy and modern revisionism.

For instance, we do not see such revolts of a marked revolutionary political spirit occur in Europe where there is a big and powerful proletariat. For what reasons? For all those reasons which are known and have to do with the grave counter-revolutionary influence and sabotage of social-democracy and modern revisionism. The question is not that there is no exploitation on our continent and therefore there are no movements. No, here, too, there is exploitation and there are movements, but they are of another nature. They are not "very deep-going, Marxist-Leninist revolutionary movements", which are waiting "for the situation to ripen", etc., as the social-democrats, revisionists and other lackeys of the capitalist bourgeoisie describe them. No, the capitalist bourgeoisie itself and its lackeys do not permit such situations to ripen, do not permit such occurrences as are going on at present in the Arab-Moslem countries, where the revolutionary masses rise in struggle and create difficult situations for imperialism, feudalism and the cosmopolitan capitalist bourgeoisie.

Some claim that the Arab peoples and the peoples of the other Moslem countries are moving, because they are "poor"! Indeed, they are poor. But those who say this must admit that they themselves have become bourgeois and that is why they do not rise against oppression and exploitation, while the truth is that capitalism barbarously oppresses and exploits the people everywhere, without exception.

It is claimed, also, that in the countries of Islamic religion, the "masses are backward", therefore, they are easily set in motion. This means that those who support this reasoning have degenerated and are not for revolution, because at a time when capitalism is in decay, honest people must be revolutionary and rise in struggle against capitalism, aiming the weapons they possess against it. Here, in Europe, however, we do not see such a thing. On the contrary, we see the "theory" of adaptation to the existing situation being preached.

Political debates are organized all over the capitalist countries. It has become fashionable for the social-democrats, the Christian-democrats, the revisionists and all sorts of other people in these countries to talk about "revolution" and allegedly revolutionary actions, and each of them tries in his own way to confuse and mislead the working masses with these slogans. The "leftists" scream for "revolutionary measures", but immediately set the limits, "explaining" that "revolutionary measures must not be undertaken everywhere and in all fields", but that only "certain changes must be made", that is, a few crumbs must be thrown to the masses, who are demanding radical revolutionary changes, in order to deceive them and to hinder and sabotage the revolutionary drive of the masses.

We must analyse these situations and phenomena in theoretical articles or in other forms and with other means of our propaganda on the Marxist-Leninist course, with the aim of explaining the essence of the revolt and uprisings of peoples against imperialism, neo-colonialism and local rulers, of explaining the question of the survival of old religious traditions, etc. This does not rule out our support for liberation movements, because such movements occurred even before the time of Marx, as mentioned above. To wait until religion is first eliminated and carry out the revolution only after this, is not in favour of the revolution or the peoples.

In the situation today, the people who have risen in revolt and believe in religion are no longer at the stage of consciousness of Spartacus, who rose against the Roman Empire, against the slave-owners, but they are seething with revolt against the barbarous oppression and exploitation and policy of

imperialism and social-imperialism. The slaves' revolt led by Spartacus, as Marx and Engels explain, was progressive, as were the beginnings of Christianity.

In these very important situations we see that the other peoples of Africa have risen, too, but not with the force and revolutionary drive of the Arab peoples, the Iranians, etc. This is another problem which must be examined in order to find the reasons why they, too, do not rise and why they are not inspired to the same level as the peoples that I mentioned. It is true that the African peoples are oppressed, too, indeed, much more oppressed than the Arab peoples, the Iranians and others. Likewise, Marxism has still not spread to the proper extent in Africa, and then there is also the influence of religion, although not on the same scale as in the Moslem countries. Work must be done in Africa to disseminate the Marxist-Leninist theory more extensively and deeply. That is even more virgin terrain, with oppressed peoples, amongst whom the sense of religion is still in an infantile stage. There are peoples in Africa who still believe in the heavenly powers of the sun, the moon, magic, etc., they have pagan beliefs which have not crystallized into an ideology and a concrete theology such as the Moslem religion, let alone the Christian or Buddhist religions and their sects. Although there is savage oppression and exploitation in Africa, the movement in this region of the world is developing more slowly. This is because the level of social development in Africa is lower.

If we take these questions and examine them in unity, we shall see that at the present stage of development, Islam as a whole is playing an active role in the anti-imperialist liberation struggles of the Moslem peoples, while in the European countries and some other countries where the Catholic religion operates, preaching the submissive Christian philosophy of "turn the other cheek", its leaders take a reactionary stand and try to hinder the movement, the revolt, the uprising of the masses for national and social liberation. Of course, in those countries the oppressive power of the bourgeoisie and capitalism, social-democracy and modern revisionism is greater, but the Catholic religion, too, serves to suppress the revolutionary spirit of the masses in order to keep the situation in stagnation.

From the stand-point of economic development the Moslem peoples have been held back; as a consequence of colonialist occupation and colonialist and neocolonialist exploitation in past decades the Moslem religion in those countries was suppressed by the Catholic or Protestant religions which were represented by the foreign invaders, a thing which has not passed without consequences and without resistance, and herein we might find a political and ideological-religious reason for the anti-imperialist revolution of the Moslem peoples.

The question presents itself that we should look at the present stage of development of the Moslem religion as compared with past centuries. The development of human society has exerted an influence that has made the Moslem religious belief less and less functional. That is, it has been infiltrated by a certain liberalism which is apparent in the fact that, while the Moslem believer truly believes in the Islamic religion, today he is no longer like the believer of the Middle Ages or the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Today the veiled women in the Moslem countries have those same feelings which our veiled women had before Liberation, as for example in Kavaja, [town in Central Albania] although, of course, not completely those of women as progressive as ours were. Nevertheless, the feelings of revolt exist deep in their hearts, and are expressed to the extent that public opinion permits. Today the Iranian women are involved in the broad movement of the Iranian people against the Shah and imperialism.

Hence, we see that religious oppression exists in the countries with Moslem populations, too, but the religion itself has undergone a certain evolution, especially in its outward manifestations. Let me make this quite clear, religion has not disappeared in those countries, but a time has come in which the spirit of revolt, on the one hand, and the liberalization of the religion, on the other, are

impelling people who believe in the Islamic dogmas to rise against those who call themselves religious and want to exercise the former norms of the religion in order to suppress the peoples and keep them in poverty. Their struggle against imperialists, whom they continue to call infidels, that is, their enemies, enemies of their religion, is linked precisely with this. These peoples understand that the foreign occupiers are people of Catholic or Protestant beliefs who want to oppress both countries and religions. The westerners call this religious antagonism, which also contains the class antagonism against foreign occupiers, simply a religious struggle, or apply other incorrect denigrating epithets to it. This is how they are treating the liberation struggles of the Moslem peoples of Arab and non-Arab countries in Asia and Africa today and even the liberation struggle of the Irish people, most of whom are Catholics, against the British occupiers who are Protestants. At the same time, we see incorrect manifestations also among the Moslem peoples who have risen in revolt. They, too, say: "The Giaours, unscrupulous people who are against our religion, are oppressing us", etc. In this way they link the question of national liberation with the religious question, that is, they see the social and economic oppression which is imposed on them by imperialism as religious oppression. In the future the other Moslem peoples will certainly reach that stage of development which the people of Algeria, Syria and some other countries have reached on these matters.

These struggles lead not only to increased sympathy for the peoples who rise in revolt, but also to unity with them, because they are all Moslems. If a people rise against imperialism and the reactionary chiefs ruling their country, who use religion as a means of oppression, this uprising destroys the sense of religion even among those who believe in it at the moment. When a people rise in insurrection against oppression, then the revolutionary sentiment is extended and deepened and people reach the stage which makes them think somewhat more clearly about the question of religion. Until yesterday the poor peasant in Iran said only "inshallah!" and comforted himself with this, but now he understands, that nothing can be gained through "inshallah!". In the past all these peoples said, "Thus it has been decreed", but now the masses of believers have risen united and come out in the streets, arms in hand, to demand their rights and freedom. And certainly, when they demand to take the land, the peasants in those countries will undoubtedly have to do battle for the great possessions of the religious institutions, that is, with the clergy. That is why the sinister forces of reaction are making such a great fuss about the fanatical aspect, about the question of putting the women back under the veil, etc., etc., because they are trying to discredit the Iranian revolution, because imperialism and world capitalism have a colossal support in religion. This is how matters stand with the Vatican, too, with the policy of that great centre of the most reactionary world obscurantism, with the mentality and outlook of Catholics. But the revolution disperses the religious fog. This will certainly occur with the Arab peoples, with the other Moslem peoples, who are rising in insurrection, and with the peoples of other faiths, that is, there will be progress towards the disappearance, the elimination of religious beliefs and the religious leadership. This is a major problem.

Here we are talking about whole peoples who are rising in revolt in the Moslem countries, whether Arab or otherwise. There are no such movements in Europe. On this continent social-democratic reformist parties and forces operate. The number of Marxist-Leninist parties here is still small, while there are big revisionist parties, which operate contrary to people's interests and sentiments, have lost credibility among the masses, and support capitalism, imperialism and social-imperialism. The Moslem peoples of the Arab and non-Arab countries trust neither the American imperialists nor the Soviet social-imperialists, because they represent great powers which are struggling to oppress and plunder the Moslem peoples; also, as Moslems they put no trust in the religious beliefs of those powers.

As a result, the uprising which is developing in Iran and Afghanistan is bound to have consequences throughout the Moslem world. Hence, if the Marxist-Leninist groups, our comrades in these and

other countries of this region properly understand the problems emerging from the events in Iran, Afghanistan and other Moslem countries, then all the possibilities exist for them to do much work. However, they must work cautiously there. In those countries religion cannot be eliminated with directives, extremist slogans or erroneous analyses. In order to find the truth we must analyse the activity of those forces in the actual circumstances, because many things, true and false, are being said about them, as is occurring with Ayatollah Khomeini, too. True, he is religious, but regardless of this, analysis must be made of his anti-imperialist attitudes and actions, which, willy-nilly, bring grist to the mill of the revolution.

This whole development of events is very interesting. Here the question of religion is entangled with political issues, in the sympathy and solidarity between peoples. What I mean is that if the leadership of a certain country were to rise against the revolt of the Iranian people, then it would lose its political positions within the country and the people would rise in opposition, accuse the government of links with the United States of America, with the "giaours", because they are against Islam. This is because these peoples see Islam as progressive, while the United States represents that force which oppresses them, not only from the social aspect but also from the spiritual aspect. That is why we see that none of these countries is coming out openly to condemn the events in Iran. Another obstacle which reaction is using to sabotage the revolution of the Iranian people is that of inciting feuds and raising the question of national minorities. Reaction is inciting the national sentiments in Azerbaijan, inciting the Kurds, etc., etc., in order to weaken this great anti-imperialist and "pro-Moslem" uprising of the Iranian people. The incitement of national sentiments has been and is a weapon in the hands of imperialism and social-imperialism and all reaction to sabotage the anti-imperialist and national liberation wars. Therefore, the thesis of our Party that the question of settling the problems of national minorities is not a major problem at present, is correct. Now the Kurds, the Tadjiks, the Azerbaijanis and others ought to rise in struggle against imperialism and its lackeys and, if possible, rise according to the teachings and inspiration of Marxism-Leninism. The Kurds, the Tadjiks and the Azerbaijanis who live in the Soviet Union and are oppressed and enslaved today, must rise, first of all, against Russian social-imperialism.

In broad outline this is how the situation in these regions presents itself and these are some of the problems which emerge. The events will certainly develop further. Our task is to analyse these situations and events which are taking place in the Moslem world, using the Marxist-Leninist theory as the basis, and to define our stands so that they assist a correct understanding of these events, and thus, make our contribution to the successful development of the people's revolutionary movement.