

The War of the Kurdish Masses is a War of the Oppressed

Statement by the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

Today not a single Kurdish village has been left standing in Iraq. The Iraqi regime, freed from its eight-year-long debacle with Iran thanks to a cease-fire arranged by the same imperialists who pushed Iraq into the war in the first place, sent in 150,000 troops to subdue this rebellious people. When these highly-armed, battle-trained troops could make no headway against the Kurdish peshmerga guerrillas, the government poured chemical bombs down on the villages. Helicopter gunships strafed streams of people who were trapped as they flowed towards the Turkish border. Iraqi troops moved in to level the houses left behind in the empty villages so that they could never be inhabited again.

Thousands of Kurds were killed. Perhaps 100,000 fled over the border to Turkey, a country whose large Kurdish population is not allowed to speak Kurdish and where even the name of the people is banned. The Turkish government has long turned the Kurdish area of Turkey into an armed camp; under a mutual anti-Kurd pact with Iraq, Turkish troops crossed the border to attack Kurds in Iraq earlier this year. At first the Turkish regime tried to keep the refugees from escaping the death meant for them in Iraq. But if these Kurds had been forced to stand and fight the Iraqi army to the end instead of fleeing across the border, the situation might have turned into more than the Iraqi government could handle, and even undermined Turkey's political stability. This did not suit the interests of the U.S.-bloc imperialists, with their major military installations dug into the soil of the Kurdish part of Turkey. So NATO's mascot dog "generously" allowed the Iraqi Kurds in — only to disarm them and to force more than half of them out right away, driving them back into Iraq or

dumping them onto the mercy of the Iranian government, which like Iraq has taken advantage of the ceasefire in the Gulf war to send another 100,000 soldiers to join the 200,000 already occupying the Kurdish part of Iran to contain the rebellion.

The U.S. and its allies uttered a few pious words against chemical weapons. Then the Western governments turned around and insisted that since no Western bigshots actually saw the bombs fall, the horrible chemical burns on the faces and bodies of Kurdish children and adults could not be taken as "proof" that Iraq had used chemical weapons. Soon the whole affair was dropped from Western sight. The Soviet Union, seeking to maintain whatever influence it can with the region's reactionary regimes, maintained a discrete silence about this slaughter.

What the imperialists found objectionable, to the extent that they found anything wrong at all in this picture of carnage, was that Iraq's attacks could misfire at both ends, setting off an explosion of contagious anger in one, two, three or four of the reactionary states in which the Kurdish people are imprisoned and threatening the imperialists' arrangements in the region even further. In addition, their momentary pose of stern anger at the Iraqi regime was meant to remind it who it depends on for its weapons and its very life, despite the Gulf ceasefire. But both the chemical massacres and the phony imperialist "concern" were meant to work together to serve imperialist politics.

Since the beginning of this century, the imperialists who arranged for the Kurdish nation to be carved up between four different countries and their various local reactionary flunkies have unleashed countless attempts to subdue or exterminate this people. Kurdistan's rivers have often run red with blood. But these most recent events are not just more of the same crimes. This genocidal attack has been shaped by the ever-growing problems and contradictions the imperialists East and West face as each side reaches for decisive and deadly advantage over the other in preparation for a final confrontation. The Gulf is an extremely strategic and volatile region for which each side would do anything to entrench itself at the expense of its rival. Brutal testimony to this fact is the million dead in the Iran-Iraq war the U.S. and Soviet-led blocs both kept going with unlimited arms and other inducements as long as it suited them.

Iraq's genocidal attack was launched at the behest of the U.S., which is coordinating anti-Kurdish policy between Iraq, Turkey and Iran. The USSR, for its own reasons, has gone along with it. No matter what ploys and demagoguery the imperialists might resort to, the bloody threads tying together the military and political moves of all the region's reactionary regimes and their imperialist masters in assisting the Iraqi regime's genocidal campaign reveal the fear that the spectre of all-out Kurdish revolutionary struggle for national liberation and social emancipation strikes into all their rotten hearts.

A little taste of this potential was given when revolutionary Kurdish masses in Iran liberated large areas of the countryside and major cities after the Shah's fall. Since then the Kurds have waged unceasing war against the Islamic Republic of Iran, which now, facing its most desperate hours, looks with terror at the prospect of having to fight decisive battles in Kurdistan. Western imperialist authorities are calling the influx of Kurds into Turkey "a recipe for disaster" as far as the Turkish regime's stability is concerned. The region's reactionary states have in common Kurdish blood on their hands and the common fear that the existing imperialist-erected political geography could get blown apart by a revolution spreading out from Kurdistan.

But the Kurdish struggle has long been hindered and repeatedly betrayed by its bourgeois and feudal leadership who have been manipulated by different reactionary states in the region and their imperialist masters. Thus the means through which they seek to pursue the struggle undo the very aims of the Kurdish struggle. For instance, Jalal Talabani, head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (in Iraq), has lent its services to the Islamic Republic at the very moment it is slaughtering Kurds in Iran. He crawled to the U.S. to meet representatives of the U.S. government, which has provided bullets and bombs to all the executioners of Kurds, in order to ask the U.S. to "prevent the annihilation of the Kurdish people". In the same way, Masood Barzani, a feudal chief-

tain whose family has been on the CIA payroll for many years, and for years has been selling his mercenary services to the Islamic Republic of Iran, now is singing hymns of praise to the Kurd-murdering Turkish reactionary government.

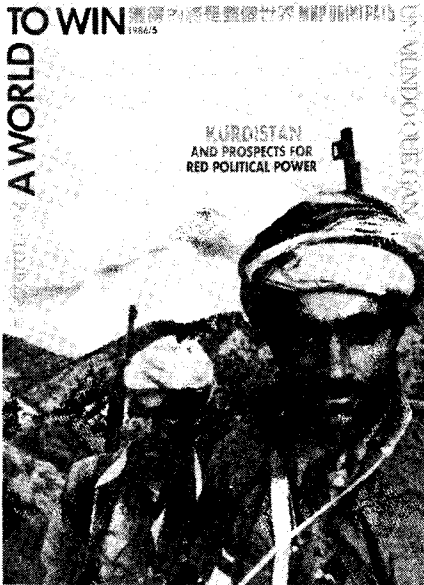
Such vacillating and capitulationist forces within the Kurdish struggle have enabled imperialists and their flunkies to use dual tactics against the Kurds. While principally unleashing their murderous vassal states against Kurdistan, using the latest in modern imperialist-designed barbarism such as chemical weapons, they have not neglected to make phony promises to Kurdish leaders to lure and corrupt them, spread demoralisation among the masses and promote surrender. Even the way the Voice of America, BBC and Israeli radio broadcast the news of the West's "concern" about the use of chemical weapons into Kurdistan was to proclaim the helplessness of the masses in the face of overwhelming weapons, in order to make the point that despite their resistance so far, now the Kurds cannot continue without "powerful friends."

The likes of Talabani and Barzani repeat the humiliating refrain strategists in the imperialist capitals have placed in their mouths: "The Kurds are weak and what they need is strong friends." Talabani has even gone so far as to congratulate himself for his "diplomatic success" in getting Iran and the U.S. to "support" the Kurds. This slogan means that the Kurds must rely on one or another of the region's reactionary regimes for modern arms and money and that the only salvation for the Kurdish masses is for "powerful friends" (i.e. imperialists) to one day step in to grant Kurdistan autonomy — as though the imperialists themselves were not the main ones behind carving up Kurdistan in the first place and keeping it oppressed.

Nevertheless for 90 years neither murder nor deception has been able to subdue the Kurdish people. Their struggle cannot be wiped out; it can only be suppressed temporarily, only to spread and erupt like a subterranean fire across borders.

For today's favourable conditions to be turned to advantage, and to really wield the strength the Kurdish masses have so long given proof of, the Kurdish fighters must be able to sum up the historic experience of decades of heroic struggle and break through the forces sowing capitulation and confusion. They must wield the truly invincible weapon of the proletariat and oppressed, Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, and apply it to chart the strategy for people's war. Instead of the present bankrupt non-revolutionary fronts, what is needed is a party that can really lead a united front in a revolutionary war. There is no other way that the heroic Kurdish national resistance can be transformed into something more, into decisive defeat of their enemies. What other outlook and line other than that of the revolutionary proletariat, the class that has nothing to lose, could truly rely on the masses of Kurdish people and really mobilise them by leading them in a war to the end in unity with the Kurdish people's real friends, the proletarians and oppressed of the four countries between which Kurdistan is divided, the region and the world? Looking at the harsh lessons of history in Kurdistan and the world as a whole, what other friends, really, can the Kurdish people count on? What good has dependence on imperialist illusory promises and reactionary "friends" ever done anyone fighting for emancipation?

The war the Kurdish masses have been waging is not just a Kurdish war, but a war of the oppressed against four reactionary regimes which are key to imperialism's neo-colonial set up of plunder and domination in the Middle East and beyond. Both the bestial ferocity and methods employed in this most recent genocidal attack and the accompanying imperialist dual tactics reveal the dire necessities and fears driving the imperialists and their local hangmen. Amidst blood and gunfire, current history has raised the revolutionary masses of Kurdish people to the stature of a principal actor in the Middle East who can play a major role in tearing a major piece of the world out of the bloody hands of imperialism. The hundreds of millions of not "powerful" but ordinary friends of the Kurdish people, the proletarians and oppressed masses of the world, need such a victory and would support it. This would be a powerful contribution to world proletarian revolution.



For the full, path-breaking article on Kurdistan send for AWTW 1986/5.

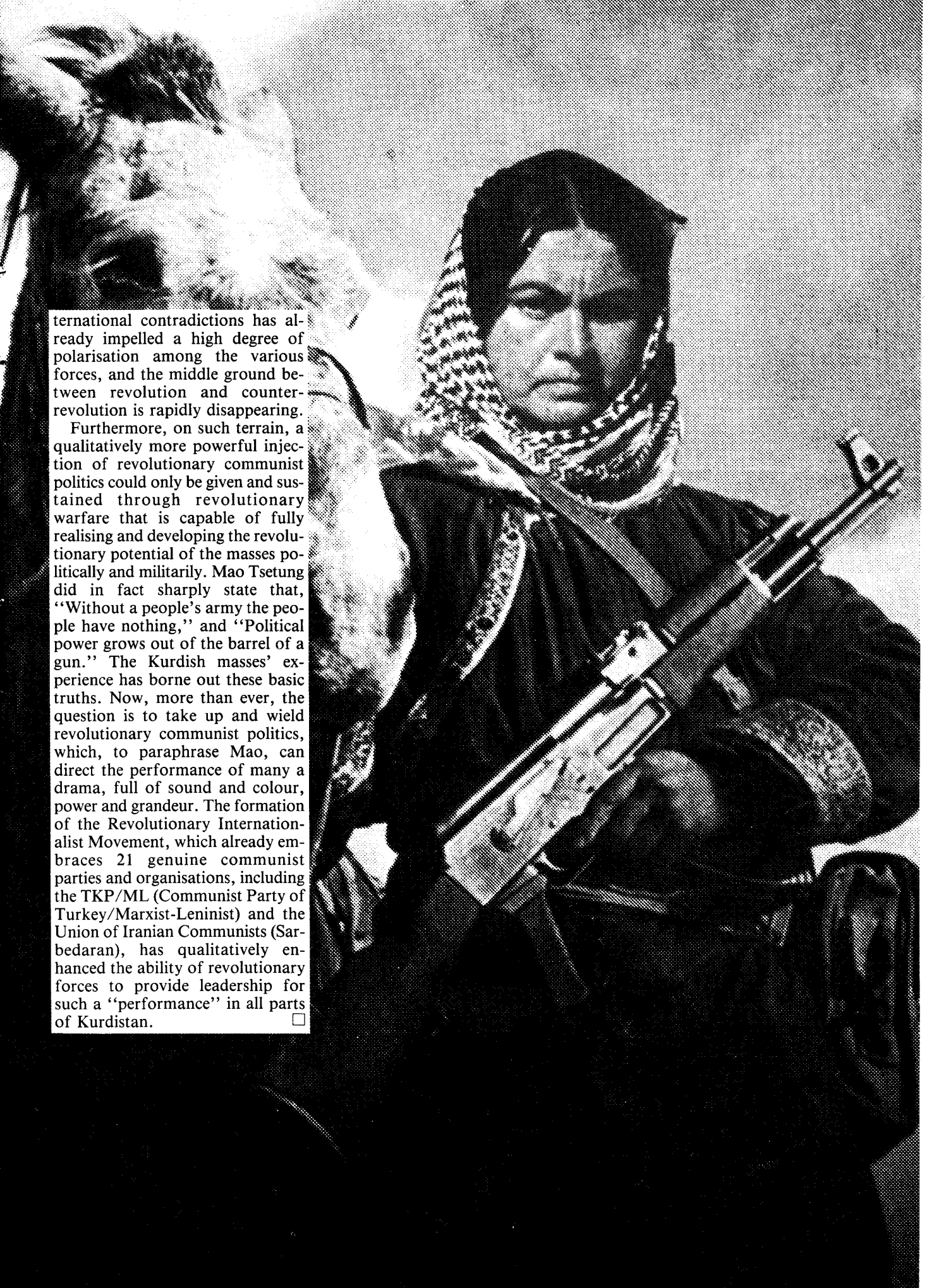


Excerpts from Kurdistan and the Prospects for Red Political Power

Considering the highly charged terrain in Kurdistan, where all contending political forces with their corresponding ideologies are being compelled to deploy and manoeuvre troops amid increasing tension and where issues have a long history of being settled by force of arms even though not often commanded by revolutionary proletarian politics, it has become absolutely imperative for the genuine proletarian forces to establish and fortify a decisively stronger presence. The objective conditions are more than favourable for this since the proletariat alone is capable of taking and fighting for the consistently revolutionary stand that is required to unite and lead the vast majority of the Kurdish masses, especially today. The history of the national and revolutionary struggle in Kurdistan is itself forceful testimony to the necessity of proletarian leadership for the victory of the liberation struggle. Powerful upsurges as well as bitter setbacks experienced by the Kurdish people in the past along with the currently despicable and patently counter-revolutionary practices of some of the forces there have awakened among the masses a keen sense of yearning, even if in a spontaneous form, for truly revolutionary politics and ideology. Only the class-conscious proletariat and the revolutionary communists with the science of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought can respond to and satisfy this yearning and thereby unleash the masses to gener-

ate a tremendous fighting capacity, both politically and militarily, that can transform the Kurdish landscape into an unsuppressable red base area for the world proletarian revolution. That can and will be a thunderous blow to the imperialist and social-imperialist war preparations and to the ongoing strife for strategic entrenchment which has taken on particularly feverish dimensions in the region.

All the reactionary intrigue and sanguinary measures employed against the revolutionary forces in Kurdistan by imperialism and its regional puppets reveal their deep-seated and well-founded fear that the emergence of red political power in any part of Kurdistan would inexorably spread its influence not just throughout the Kurdish territory in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey but through the whole of these countries and even beyond. That is the fear that sends chills down the spines of these reactionaries at the sight of a peshmergas (the Kurdish word for fighter), particularly one armed with the science of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. The material basis for this agonising fear is yet to be fully appreciated and acted upon by the revolutionary forces. A vigorous presence of the proletarian internationalist line is both possible and desirable. Moreover it would induce a new alignment of forces, particularly among the revolutionary and progressive elements active there. The current intensification of the in-

A black and white photograph of a woman in a headscarf holding a rifle, with a horse's head visible on the left. The woman is wearing a dark headscarf and a patterned shawl. She is holding a rifle across her chest. The horse's head is on the left side of the frame, looking towards the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

ternational contradictions has already impelled a high degree of polarisation among the various forces, and the middle ground between revolution and counter-revolution is rapidly disappearing.

Furthermore, on such terrain, a qualitatively more powerful injection of revolutionary communist politics could only be given and sustained through revolutionary warfare that is capable of fully realising and developing the revolutionary potential of the masses politically and militarily. Mao Tsetung did in fact sharply state that, "Without a people's army the people have nothing," and "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." The Kurdish masses' experience has borne out these basic truths. Now, more than ever, the question is to take up and wield revolutionary communist politics, which, to paraphrase Mao, can direct the performance of many a drama, full of sound and colour, power and grandeur. The formation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, which already embraces 21 genuine communist parties and organisations, including the TKP/ML (Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist) and the Union of Iranian Communists (Sarbedaran), has qualitatively enhanced the ability of revolutionary forces to provide leadership for such a "performance" in all parts of Kurdistan. □