

# Armed workers against the Khomeini regime

During this past December and January a medical team of the MLP, USA travelled to Kurdistan in the mountainous, war-torn border region between Iran and Iraq. The team was invited by Komala, the Kurdish organization of the Communist Party of Iran.

In Komala's camps the MLP team had the opportunity to meet with hundreds of Komala's peshmargas (armed fighters) — battalion commanders, veteran fighters, and new recruits. The following report on the armed struggle of the revolutionary communists in Kurdistan has been prepared by a member of the MLP team.

## A New Quality to the Kurdish Resistance

Generations of Iranian Kurds have felt the lash of persecution at the hands of the government in Tehran. This oppression has repeatedly given rise to armed resistance. It is something of a tradition in Kurdistan for young men to take to the mountains and become guerrilla fighters against the central authorities. Such fighters are known as peshmargas, which roughly translates from the Kurdish as "those who go before death."

Hearing about armed resistance in the mountains of Kurdistan may conjure up pictures of the classic peasant guerrilla, of men with only vague notions of why they are fighting and who are mobilized by the chieftains of clans and other exploiters and traditional figures. The peshmargas of the bourgeois nationalist KDP (Kurdish Democratic Party) resemble such a force.

Today, however, the peshmarga movement has taken on a new quality with Komala and the CP of Iran. Komala's peshmargas are armed with light weapons; they are intrepid fighters who move quickly by foot across the rugged Kurdish mountains; and their sun-scorched faces carry the scars of years of harsh struggle. But beyond that they are a far cry from what one might think of as your typical guerrilla in this part of the world. This is an army that is part of the revolutionary workers' movement, an army of workers and toilers motivated by a scientific, socialist world outlook.

## Armed Contingent of Revolutionary Workers

During the winter snows, the big formations of peshmargas come into the border camps to recuperate from long military campaigns and to strengthen their training in Marxism-Leninism. This gave the MLP team opportunity to meet with hundreds of these fighters in the camps where we were pressed with questions about the struggles of the American workers. They wanted to know the details of the working and living conditions of the workers in the U.S. They wanted to know about the reformist trade unions and other roadblocks to the workers' movement. And they were eager to discuss the world-wide struggle of the workers and communists, from Western Europe to Nicaragua.

What dominates the discussions in the camps isn't battles and military matters, but workers' strikes, mass protests and the socialist education of the workers and other toilers. The peshmargas are closely linked with the lives and struggles of the working people. Among the new recruits at the training center, 60% had been workers and agricultural wage laborers, with others having been peasants or other toilers or students.

On the military front, one of the most striking things is the conception of military work that shapes Komala's peshmargas. The armed struggle is seen as a lever of the revolutionary

## Report from Kurdistan



Komala peshmargas in the rugged hills of Kurdistan.

movement of the workers and poor.

Komala's peshmargas played a big part in the early days of the resistance to the assault of the Khomeini regime on Kurdistan. Originally the underground organizing among the working masses was geared to a large extent towards gaining recruits and logistical support for the peshmarga forces.

However, this is no longer the case. Now the armed struggle is mainly seen as providing support for the workers' revolutionary underground and the mass movements against the regime.

This change is connected to the ideological clarification that helped pave the way for the founding of the Communist Party of Iran in 1983. In particular it was linked to overcoming populist ideas that denied the pivotal role of organizing the working class itself as the force for change and revolution.

The main bearers of populism in the Iranian and Kurdish left were the Castroist and Maoist-influenced organizations. The Fedayeen, for example, had attempted to create an armed movement with Che Gueverist-type isolated guerrilla foci. Other left groups attempted to create a peasant guerrilla army on the Maoist pattern. Both these attempts have now collapsed.

Meanwhile, the Marxist line of Komala has consolidated a powerful armed movement on the shoulders of the workers and other toilers.

## Linked to the People

One of the first things that the new Islamic regime did upon coming to power was to unleash troops against the revolution in Kurdistan. The workers and peasants put up a ferocious resistance; it took over five years for the Khomeini regime to complete its occupation of the region. Nonetheless, the forces of the Islamic republic remain isolated and hated, and the peshmarga forces operate throughout Kurdistan with the support of the people.

The peshmargas have countless proud stories illustrating their close bonds with the working masses. In many localities, Komala's forces are still the authority recognized by the people. For example, disputes among villagers are not brought to the Islamic authorities; instead, the resolution of such personal disputes is often postponed until they can be brought before the communist peshmargas. It is this type of trust and support among the masses that make the peshmargas' operations possible.

Mass meetings are organized right under the nose of the regime. Often these meetings are held in the village mosque because it is the largest available building. The local mullah may not be happy about his mosque being used to propagate the policy of the communists; but the popularity of Komala is such that there is little the mullah can do without fear of losing all influence.

These groups also intervene in the local conflicts with the regime. They work to isolate spies and agents, when possible holding public trials of those who carry out crimes against the people. The peshmargas also organize resistance to the attempts to set up Islamic Councils, which are tools of control by the regime and are hated by the masses.

There are similar peshmarga groups called city units for work in the large cities. Such units took part in the brickyard workers' strikes in Bookan last year. They also carried out agitation for last year's unprecedented May Day action in Sanadaj. And they widely distribute the party's newspapers and other literature.

One method of their agitational work is to occupy a section of the city in conjunction with the military units. This allows open work among the masses that would be otherwise impossible under the repression of the regime.

This political work of the peshmargas provides an important link between Komala-CPI and the workers and toilers. Part of this work is the recruiting of new forces for both the peshmargas as well for the party's underground organization.

An important distinction has to be made here between the peshmarga units and the underground organization of the party. Peshmarga units stay in a locality for short periods, are armed at least with pistols, and carry out relatively more open political work. The underground party organization, on the other hand, is rooted in the workplaces and neighborhoods and has to use extreme care to avoid arrest and Khomeini's torture chambers. The peshmargas do not make direct contact with the clandestine organization because this would pose the danger of exposing the underground workers to the regime.

Meanwhile, there is also the military side of the work. Komala's peshmargas strike at the troops of the Islamic regime across Kurdistan and this can involve concentrations of several hundred fighters. But here too the targets and the timing is guided by political considerations, often linked to the mass movement.

One important mass movement, for example, is the struggle against the military draft. There are big protests and mass actions against the attempts to drag young men off to the slaughter in the Iran-Iraq war, as well as against

*Continued on page 12  
See KURDISTAN*



Men and women peshmargas celebrate their graduation from basic training.

# KURDISTAN

## Continued from page 10

the attempts to forcibly arm people against the peshmarga forces. The Komala peshmargas will direct their attacks against the regime's special task forces that hunt down suspected draft dodgers; or they will overrun a military garrison that is particularly active in enforcing the draft — all to encourage the mass struggle.

### **Towards a New Insurrection**

The peshmargas we talked to described the troops of the regime in Kurdistan as demoralized. In the early days of the Khomeini regime, the Islamic guards and troops were flush with enthusiasm. If their fort were attacked they would bitterly resist, and if possible they would even attempt to pursue the peshmargas. Now things have changed. The troops give up quickly to save their skins and are reluctant to leave their bunkers. The dirty and dangerous job of holding down a hostile

population is taking its toll on the troops.

Nonetheless, the regime's military occupation is still being beefed up with better weapons and fortifications. It will take more than several thousand lightly armed peshmargas to lift this heavy military jackboot.

The Komala peshmargas are acutely aware of this. There is no militarist play acting about a quick military victory. On the contrary. They proudly understand their place as a lever for building up the revolutionary movement among the workers, peasants and other working people — a force which no military power, no reactionary terror can hold down.

The armed struggle of the Komala peshmargas is tilling the soil for a new insurrection; for the creation of truly mass militias of the workers and toilers; for the overthrow of the Khomeini tyranny; and for bringing to power a revolutionary government of the workers and poor that will open the way to socialism. □