

A short history of the Organization of Communist Unity (OCU)

“The Star Group” (SG) was one of several small Marxist groupings that was formed in the late 1960s by anti-imperialist activists within the Confederation of Iranian Students (National Union) who had political leanings toward the National Front of Iran (INF). In 1970, hoping to relocate and expand their activities into Iran, they created the Iranian National Front Organizations Abroad (Middle East Branch) (INF-ME) and launched a new volume of its newspaper, *Bakhtar Emrooz*. As the official publication of the INF-ME, *Bakhtar Emrooz* (volume 4) primarily advocated for the necessity of armed struggle as the road to Iran’s liberation. Meanwhile, at this time, the Star Group was trying to directly communicate with and contact revolutionaries within Iran and initially succeeded by establishing contact with what was later referred to as the “Pouyan-Ahmadzadeh” group. After a few months, however, following an armed battle in Siahkal in northern Iran that marked the beginning of armed struggle in Iran, contact with the group was lost. It was not until the fall of 1973 that relations were then established with the People’s Fedaii Guerrillas Organization.

At the beginning, the Star Group and the Fedaii agreed on joint activities in Iran and in the region in the framework of a “unification process”. Accordingly, the SG sent their comrade, Manouchehr Hamedi, as their representative to Iran to join the organizational life of the Fedaii and help move the unification process and discussions forward. While in Iran, Hamedi lived in Fedaii team houses but was reported to have been killed in an armed conflict in the city of Rasht in May 1976.

Even before establishing a relationship with the Fedaii, the Star Group was already active in the Middle East and was in touch with militant Palestinian organizations. It ran several radio stations, including *Radio Mihanparastan* (Patriots’ Radio Station), and took part in the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war within the ranks of Palestinian organizations. Its activities continued during the process of unification with the Fedaii and after its termination. The main activities were: solidarity actions and close political and military cooperation with revolutionary organizations in the region, especially in the Palestinian movement and the struggles in Turkey; work with militants fighting in the Gulf countries and participation in the Dhofar armed liberation struggle; participation in the Lebanese civil war and the war against Israel in South Lebanon in May 1977; organizing military training for Iranian revolutionaries and procuring military and technical equipment for them; publishing and publicizing activities under the auspices of the INF-ME including continuing *Radio Mihanparastan* broadcasts and the launching of *Radio Suroosh* (Radio Messenger) for cultural broadcasts; the continuation of *Bakhtar Emrooz* and creation of *Iran Thawra* (Iran Revolution) in Arabic; and taking part in the

publication of seven issues of the journal, *Asr-e Amal* (Age of Action) which advocated armed struggle in Iran. During this period, the SG also published works from numerous militant organizations in Iran and from the INF-ME in Persian and Arabic.

A working relationship between activists from the Star Group and the Mujahedin-e Khalq aka People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI) began in 1970, before the official announcement of the formation of the PMOI and continued until the Mujahedin Khalq's "change in ideology".¹ The SG was sharply critical of the "change" process and explained their opposition to the views and actions of the propagators in three volumes.

During the period of joint activity between the Star Group and the Fedaii, there were many oral and written discussions regarding revolutionary issues and the different understandings and approaches to Marxism, including Stalinism and Maoism. Upon discovering the prevalence of a Maoist tendency in the Fedaii that supported the teachings and actions of Stalin, the Star Group engaged in a critical discussion of this tendency and took a stand against it. Finally, when the impacts of Stalinism became evident in the methods and practice of the Fedaii, in anti-democratic and unacceptable relations within the organization as well as in the inappropriate policies of the Fedaii representatives outside of Iran, the process of unification was ended. After this, the Star Group inaugurated its activities in spring 1977 as the Communist Alliance Group (CAG).

Throughout this time, the Star Group and subsequently the Communist Alliance Group were one of very few tendencies in and outside Iran that separated itself from any "camp" (as for example, the parties which were subordinate to and dependent on the "Socialist" camp.) Believing that the Soviet Union and the countries tied to it, China, Albania, and others were not socialist, they acted independently from these or any other international tendency.

The Star Group, the CAG, and the OCU published many books and periodicals.

Bakhtar Emrooz (volume 4) was published by the Star Group from within the INF-ME from August/September 1970 through January 1977 and was distributed in the Middle East, mainly in Iraq and Lebanon.

Seven editions of the periodical *Asr-e Amal* were published beginning in 1973. Late Comrade Fereydoun Ilbeigi Asli (nom de guerre Bahram) carried the major responsibility for coordinating its production. *Asr-e Amal* supported "the people's revolutionary movement" and included articles by Comrade Fereydoun, the Star Group members as well as Fedaii comrades. While *Asr-e Amal* was distributed by INF-ME, it was not affiliated to a particular group.

¹ This is a reference to the takeover of the then Islamic organization by a number of self-proclaimed 'Marxists' during which they admitted to the "purge of more than 50 per cent of members" by expelling and even killing some members.

In the years 1977 and 1978, the CAG published many documents exchanged between the Star Group and the Fedaii during the unification process as well as other works related to relevant theoretical issues and analyses. Throughout this period, as in other times, it published several translations of classic Marxist texts. Among them were three translations in the “Liberation of Labor” series.

The first volume of *Raha’i* (“the political publication” of the CAG) was published during the same period (1977-1978). The introduction to the first issue explained that, “This publication is not the official organ of the CAG and thus only the unsigned articles reflect the general view of its members.” *Raha’i* included specific analyses and views about the political and social conditions in Iran and the make-up of the opposition forces, positions concerning the clergy and their role in the Constitutional Revolution, the 1977-1978 events, and other important issues. After three issues, with issue number 4 published in April 1979, *Raha’i* became the journal of the OCU. OCU was formed in Iran with the help of its members in Iran in early 1979, amidst the people’s growing movement against the monarchical regime which ultimately led to the February 1979 uprising and revolution. The “Basic Principles” of the OCU were then published. (See below).

The second volume of *Raha’i* (July 1979 – February 1982), as the journal of the OCU, presented the organization’s analyses of the political news of the day, discussions of theoretical views, promotion of its world view as well as critical analyses of the views and practices of other organizations. The second volume included 111 issues with the first 80 issues appearing weekly; issues 81 to 104 came out three times a week and then twice a week, and finally issues 105-111 appeared occasionally.

The third volume of *Raha’i*, from January 1983-November 1989 (18 issues) was published under very difficult circumstances due to the heavy suppression of political activity at the time. *Raha’i* was the last journal published by any leftist organization in Iran.

Raha’i Zan was one of the first woman’s magazines to be published after the 1979 Revolution. It was published by *Anjoman-e Raha’i Zan* (Women’s Liberation Society), a group formed by members and supporters of the OCU, from 1979 to 1981.

The OCU’s supporters and members also included workers and students who were active in their respective movements and who occasionally published periodicals. *11 Ordibehesht* was a workers’ periodical that came out from January 1980 to July 1981. The OCU was active in different provincial towns and despite its small presence, it played an important role in the armed struggle in Kurdistan. One of OCU’s most skilled military cadres, Comrade Morteza Seyyed Esmail (Abu Shaheen), also known in Kurdistan as Kaak Fouad (*the Arab*), was lost in a face-to-face battle with the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps.

OCU publications emphasized the necessity of democracy, freedom, and the struggle against the death penalty. OCU also supported the struggles of the people of Palestine, the liberation movements in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

The OCU stood against authoritarian leadership and organization and defined its view on organization as “centralized democracy” (as opposed to the “democratic centralism” of other organizations). And it practiced it: unlike other organizations, it did not have a central committee. Rather it worked with a coordinating committee, which did not have the power of political decision-making; instead, it made decisions along with the Organization’s committees and the membership and coordinated the different activities. The members of the coordinating committee were elected yearly from among the entire membership. Publication in *Raha’i* of opposing views, for and against, whether to participate in the first parliamentary elections in 1980, was an unprecedented action and a strong evidence of the organization’s commitment to internal democracy.

Another example of this principle was its acceptance of the legitimacy of forming factions within an organization, which occurred once in the OCU in 1980.

The difference between the views of the OCU and other left organizations is most clearly seen in the following comparisons: a fundamental and uncompromising criticism of Stalinism, Maoism, and Trotskyism as digressions from Marxism; a belief that the Soviet Union and other so-called socialist countries were not socialist; independence from and non-reliance on these countries and other international forces; belief in democracy and continual struggle for its attainment; belief in socialist revolution as *the* social revolution for Iran; opposition to authoritarian organization and belief in a democratic organization.

The “Committee Abroad” of OCU was formed in 1983 with the purpose of continuing activities outside Iran. Until 1990, when there was a severe blow to the OCU in Iran, this committee was able to achieve the following: reprinting and distributing *Raha’i* abroad, publishing nine issues of its own periodical *Andishe Raha’i*, as well as a number of translations and research works. This was all accomplished with the generous help and efforts of many OCU supporters abroad.

Supporters of the OCU also published a number of different publications. Including after the 1979 Revolution: *Rah-e Raha’i* in Isfahan, *Navid Raha’i* in Tehran, *Nashriyeh Kargari* (*Workers’* publication) in Tehran, *Gahnameh* in Europe; and before the 1979 Revolution: *Jaras* in India, and *Left Platform* in the U.S.

Following widespread arrests of its members and supporters in June 1990 and their imprisonment, OCU activities in Iran and abroad were discontinued.

Principles of the Organization of Communist Unity (OCU)

- Scientific communism is the fundamental principle of the organization.
- As long as class society exists, true freedom is not possible. It is only in a classless society that people can be truly free and realize their full humanity.
- Capitalism is a world system. In its imperialist monopoly stage, capitalism is oppressive and imposes its economic, political, and social exploitation on all the workers and peoples of the world. A world socialist revolution provides the only way to eliminate capitalist exploitation and oppression. Whereas workers are the only class with a future mission, it is only through their direct rule that true freedom of human society can be attained.
- The dictatorship (democracy) of the proletariat is the form of government for building socialism and transitioning to communism after a socialist revolution. The dictatorship (democracy) of the proletariat is the only possible path to majority rule and the direct engagement of the people in self-determination.
- The inherent common destiny of workers around the world is based on the fact that they all live under the oppressive rule of capital — world capitalism— despite differences in race, nationality, language, culture and religion. Proletarian internationalism is one of our principles and of any communist organization.
- Iran is a capitalist society. The basic contradiction in our society is between labor and capital, the specific class war in our society is that between the working class and other working peoples against the bourgeoisie and world imperialism. The only social revolution that can bring about fundamental change and the end of exploitation, in the interest of the working class and all the people, is a socialist revolution.
- World history from the beginning of communal life until now has shown that no ruling class is willing to peacefully relinquish its interests and privileged position to another class. The use of class force is the only way for the oppressed of Iran and the world to gain power; it is the only way to attain liberation from oppression and exploitation.
- Under conditions where world imperialism relies on military might and the ruling class rules by force, the exercise of revolutionary class power manifests itself in the form of armed struggle and the use of armed force. Therefore, a political-military struggle for preparing and carrying out socialist revolution is the only way to liberation for the working people of Iran.
- Revisionism in different forms, relying on reformism, parliamentarianism, by infiltrating workers movements around the world, has driven movements off course and led to their defeat. Communists have a responsibility to fight against the platforms, parties, countries, and groups

that advocate and try to implement such anti-worker views and actions designed to promote class reconciliation.

- Maoism, Trotskyism, and Stalinism are other deviations in the communist movement. The Organization of Communist Unity continues a specific and comprehensive struggle against these aberrations.
- Our belief in proletarian internationalism is based on solidarity with workers around the world and their complete independence from all powers, specifically governments that profess to represent workers. We stand for a policy of total independence from all governments and view their policies critically. We consider an integral part of our proletarian internationalism to be the condemnation of the anti-revolutionary nature and policies of all governments that, in the name of socialism, take positions against the peoples of Iran and the world and who deal with and appease puppet regimes and imperialism. We do not recognize any center or motherland for socialism and will struggle against any advocacy of supremacy and nationalism in the guise of socialism.

Goals

- A) Ultimate goal: The ultimate goal of the Organization of Communist Unity is to take part in building a communist party for socialist revolution and to assist in bringing about a society free from class oppression and its various manifestations.
- B) Interim goal: Participation in the class struggle of workers against capitalism, sharpening the weapon of theory, and working towards establishing and expanding a revolutionary political-military organization in Iran, dedicated to the world view of communism.