

Selected Remarks by Mansoor Hekmat at the Meeting of the Political Bureau of the Worker-Communist Party of Iran – 7–8 July 2001

Note on the Transcribed Text

This transcribed text is the proofread and edited version of the first of two audio recordings of Mansoor Hekmat's remarks at the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Worker-Communist Party of Iran, held on 7–8 July 2001. The audio quality of the second recording is very poor. Nevertheless, the main points intended by Mansoor Hekmat are already presented in this first recording. I consider it necessary to explain a few points.

The transcribed text is not a word-for-word typing of Mansoor Hekmat's remarks. In some places, I have changed the order of the subject and verb to make the written text read more smoothly, and I have converted certain expressions from spoken to written style. Repeated phrases have been written only once.

In cases where, in my judgment, Mansoor Hekmat places particular emphasis on certain points, I have underlined the relevant words. All quotation marks and parentheses have been added by me.

These remarks—which are, in fact, Mansoor Hekmat's final remarks at an official meeting of the Worker-Communist Party before his death—contain key observations for understanding and re-examining the fate of the Worker-Communist Party, its splits, separations, disagreements, and the conflicts and disputes over the political legacy of “Worker Communism” and “Hekmatism.”

It is my hope that the basis for the judgment of the outside world will be the words of the person who formulated the foundations of “Worker Communism” and whose professional political name was Mansoor “Hekmat.”

Iraj Farzad
5 February 2014

Mansoor Hekmat:

I am thinking out loud here. In that sense, what I am saying is neither very well organized nor exhaustive, and in fact many issues can be raised in this connection.

Frankly, what has been written in the letters—that if I am no longer here, what will happen to the Party's line?—is not a valid discussion. *Because even while I am here, the Party is not fully on the line.* My entire political life has been devoted to persuading a group that doesn't want to go in this direction; to go in this direction, not to be afraid, and to lay energy on this path. But they have not made that efforts.

It is not the case that the Worker-communist Party, simply because I exist, follows the line of Worker Communism. It does not. As I will explain in the discussion on leadership, this has nothing to do with the “*line of Mansoor Hekmat*” or with “*Hekmatism*.” Within the Worker-communist Party, Mansoor Hekmat's line functions as a pressure group. This line of Worker Communism has constantly tried to move the Party away from a given, existing condition and take it somewhere else.

I raised precisely this issue at the recent Third Congress. I had adopted the same position at the Second Congress as well. I presented these views in my discussion on “the Methods of activities,” and I expressed them in the theoretical debates. I have stated my position.

I do not know what each individual thinks. However, the body of writings I have produced—even though it is still not a complete exposition—or the collection of ideas and views that I have expressed over the past twenty years, constitute a coherent and explainable system.

As I said at the Congress, if you were to go to a university professor specializing in political tendencies and the history of political thought and hand them my books, saying: “These are the books of Mansoor Hekmat. This is the political history of a country, and these writings were produced at specific moments in that country's political history in response to definite political developments. One concerns the Soviet Union and its collapse, and these analyses were written in that context. Another concerns the Gulf War. This is the political history of today's world.”

If you then asked that professor, “What line is this?” they would tell you: “This is a distinct viewpoint. It is a current derived from Leninism. It embraces its humanism and draws its concept of practice from Marx's Theses on Feuerbach. It is highly practical in orientation. At the same time, it believes that society and the world are far more radical than the unreal images commonly presented of them.”

They would say: “This is a coherent intellectual system. It assigns a definite place to the individual and a definite place to ideas. It establishes the relationship between thought and action and asks which precedes the other. It attaches great importance to the subjective factor, while also recognizing the significance of the objective factor. It sees the practical element as a driving force in history.” Regarding socialism, it presents a particular judgment of its historical development. On the question of “socialism in one country,” it advances those discussions. In relation to “revisionism,” it offers those interpretations and analyses. It explains why it characterizes Maoism and Trotskyism in the way that it does. This is a distinct viewpoint—whether one considers it good, bad, or otherwise. If we recognize Gramsci as representing a distinct perspective, then we should recognize this perspective as well. In fact, Gramsci's own views can be expressed in just a

few pages. But if you examine the challenge that this line has posed in the political history of that country, how it transformed that society's political elite and brought many of them along with it, you will realize that this has been one of the relatively successful communist tendencies in the history of the Left. It has significantly altered the existing situation, attracted many people, and succeeded in establishing a body and collections of ideas. This is certainly worthy of discussion and reflection. *Yet no one at the leadership level of this Party* looks at this viewpoint, this policy, and this history in this way. Someone says, "I am a Trotskyist." Likewise, one of our comrades may say, "According to this viewpoint, I am a Worker Communist." Of course he or she is active, stays up late at night, and meets with people—but not in pursuit of advancing this line and this perspective.

If these people themselves represented the this line, I would not have to spend so much energy. Someone else would chair the Congress, someone else the Plenum, and someone else would publish the Party journal, while I would simply contribute my own share of the work.

During the anti-populist struggle, there were fifty or sixty of us working together, and I also took on my share of responsibilities. The *Union of Communist Militants* was led by people such as Hamid Taghvai, Khosrow Davar, Habib Farzad, Mehdi Mirshahzadeh, and others. I was one of the activists of the anti-populist movement and one of the defenders of revolutionary Marxism. I was among its principal figures, but that organization was full of activists committed to its own line. I was active and worked hard, but not everything depended on me as it does now. No one felt alone. Even if you became tired, you could simply sit in your car for a while, and the Union of Communist Militants would continue its work.

The reason for the present situation is that the Worker-communist Party is not actually on the line of Worker Communism. Moreover, the leadership does not attach importance to the fact that a coherent body of political, methodological, economic, philosophical, practical, organizational, and tactical views can be embraced and adopted as a comprehensive system within the Party leadership. The leadership does not regard these ideas as an integrated system that can either be accepted or rejected.

Trotskyism is not like this. Those in our movement who defend this perspective—the "Hekmatists"—*are either at the grassroots level or outside the Party*. They are not represented at the top. Many people whose lives have been transformed by my writings are among the rank and file or *outside the Party*. If that were not the case, there would be no need to call upon me every time an issue arose. They would speak and respond in their own names.

Therefore, I am not worried about the Party's line. In my opinion, the fate of the struggle between these political lines will *resemble what happened in the Bolshevik Party over "Leninism."* Some will simply say, *"We do not accept it," and they will go their separate ways.* In reality, they will be admitting that they were unable to carry their own line forward. The roots of that inability, however, will ultimately be attributed and extended to me too.

It is obvious that the Worker-communist Party advocates a radical, humanist, equality promoter and so on. However, it does not carry within itself the driving force of Worker Communism, *and at the next turn it may well lose control of the road.* Therefore, I have stopped worrying about the question of what will happen to the Worker-communist Party after I am gone.

I think that only *in my absence will some people begin to read my books carefully and pay close attention to their wording and formulations.* In many cases they will not even need to examine the debates in great detail. They will simply listen once again to the Marx Society seminar on the Foundations of Worker Communism. From this point of view, some people's earlier argument—that Worker Communism is an objective reality and that Mansoor Hekmat merely came along to explain it—is groundless nonsense. Worker Communism is a body and collection of theoretical and practical conclusions drawn from Marxism *by a particular individual*; it did not emerge spontaneously from "objective reality."

The same happened in the Komala camps, where people turned to my discussions. I myself proceeded in exactly this way: I read Marx and Lenin in order to understand what Marx was saying and what Lenin was saying.

No one, especially at the top of the Party, has approached the literature and the body of Worker Communist thought in this way. There are people who know whole passages of these debates by heart and know how to apply them, yet they are not even members of the Party. Meanwhile, those at the top see "Nader" (my chosen name in both communist party of Iran and worker communist party of Iran); they do not see Mansoor Hekmat and Worker Communism. *They accept Nader, but they have neither deeply understood nor even thoroughly read Worker Communism.* No one in the Party leadership has seriously engaged with these ideas. This is an intellectual movement whose influence within the Party leadership is unfortunately quite limited.

I said these things at the Congress as well; this is nothing new. In my opinion, the Party leadership is not on the line of Worker Communism or the discussions we have developed. This places enormous pressure and frustration upon me and consumes a great deal of my time. If the Party leadership genuinely defended this school of thought, it

would have dozens of representatives, and if one of them passed away—even if his writings differed somewhat from mine—there would be no problem.

I think something *similar happened to Lenin*. There was Bolshevism, but there was not yet Leninism. Bolshevism was a radical left movement confronting Menshevism and leading the October Revolution, but it was not yet Leninism. *I believe that if I am no longer here, people will begin to study these discussions*. In that sense, *the Party may disappear for a few years only to re-emerge later*. If something happens to me, *these discussions will remain, and others will read them*, just as we ourselves read the writings of people who had died twenty-five years before we were born.

In the same way, people will turn to this perspective. The recordings exist. The books exist. In my opinion, they will judge these discussions to be stronger than Lenin's. I personally have no doubt that the arguments I have put forward are deeper than Lenin's. Lenin developed a series of tactical discussions while confronting opposition. He did not face problems of this degree of complexity, nor was he compelled to adopt this methodology. *He did not confront a defeated communist movement*.

The Party leadership has not adopted this methodology because the foundations of Worker Communism are built upon Marx's Theses on Feuerbach and emphasize the place of practice within this outlook. At the level of principles, we all have much in common: we are all committed to freedom, we all respect the individual, we all oppose human suffering and support complete equality among human beings. These principles are pillars of the Worker Communist system, *but they are not its engine*. At times, you may have to sacrifice one of your principles. If you refuse, you fall into a trap. *There are situations in which the driving force of your movement and outlook requires you to compromise*, yet you refuse to compromise *and instead sacrifice practical action* for the sake of 'pure principles.'

At present, in my opinion, the Worker-communist Party has understood only one thing: radical opposition to the Islamic Republic. I am a member of a Party whose objective is to overthrow the Islamic Republic and replace it with a Socialist Republic. Clearly, this phenomenon is unique in Iran. Only one party can accomplish this; there are not two such parties, and it is precisely this left current that has managed to preserve that perspective.

Will this Party endure? Or, to put it differently, is the Worker-communist Party truly the driving force of this movement? The Party's specialty has become undermining its own movement. When Iraqi communist activists join this movement on the basis of this perspective, without any prior contact, the Party leaves them idle for ten years. It neither assists them in developing their organizational perspective nor stands beside them in their struggles. At this moment, the Party is not even an instrument for disseminating Worker Communism. It is simply a radical communist party that seeks to implement the Worker

Communist program in Iran. That is all. It is not yet an instrument for spreading this movement and this perspective.

The international website of the Worker-communist Party still does not exist. No one insists on telling the outside world what the Party actually thinks. Those who newly join the Party are not introduced to its ideas and are not politically educated through them. *No one insists on explaining to a new member how we think. To me, these are warning signs.* It is not that I, as Nader and Mansoor Hekmat, reject this; I reject it as a member of the Party. You make promises that someone else is expected to fulfill.

Can this Party continue in this form, as the party of such a movement? In my opinion, no. Some time ago, a bridge collapsed. Engineers investigated and discovered that although all of the bridge's pillars remained in place and the highway still passed over it, one lane had been subjected to a load greater than the capacity of its supporting column. One of the cables snapped, transferring the weight to another support that could carry only fifty percent, not seventy percent, of the load. As a result, the bridge twisted and collapsed—not because the bridge itself was weak, but because the balance and unity in the distribution of weight had been disrupted.

The Worker-communist Party has itself damaged the bridge. *I believe you are causing the Party to fall apart.* The rank and file of the Party say, 'We are at your service.' In fact, if I am no longer here, emotional attachment alone may keep some people from leaving the Party, although such a departure would not be unimaginable. *But the Party leadership will not preserve its unity,* because you yourselves do not preserve your unity and *you do not show one another mutual respect.* No one's agenda is to unite others around a common cause. *No one's agenda is to bring everyone together.* As a result, *the divisions at the top of the Party continue to widen.* Everyone thinks that each side of the split has some legitimacy, and each person pulls the blanket toward themselves. If I am no longer here, this is what will happen. *I do not necessarily mean the long-term fate of the movement itself,* which may well develop along a different course.

Let me give an example.

When the issue of the “April 1999 Resignees” arose, *had I not been there, the Party would, in the real sense of the word, have collapsed at that very moment.* Such confusion would have gripped the organization that no one could have brought it under control. *Other than the authority of Mansoor Hekmat,* there was no one who could tell those five people: “You are not Worker Communists.” *Had I not been there, no one could have told them: “You are not Worker Communists; you are Worker Economists!”*

I told them: “Do not tamper with my writings. Do not quote me.” They fell silent. *Otherwise, they would have proceeded in the name of Worker Communism. Had I not*

been there, they would have argued that Economism was itself Worker Communism: “We leave politics to Khatami, and we ourselves are Economists.” That was their definition of Economism, which they initially tried to present under the label of Worker Communism.

In my opinion, there was no one else capable of confronting them. *The Party leadership panicked.* Imagine a stadium with a capacity of 30,000 people. If panic breaks out because of an incident, fifteen thousand people may be trampled to death. No one dies merely because someone coughs or sneezes. But a tightrope walker balancing on a rope may panic at a single sneeze, lose balance, fall, and die.

The Party's situation is like that. It is not simply a matter of losing a capable and experienced manager and then learning the skills he possessed so that everything can continue normally. The Party is leading a struggle that runs against the current. If you so much as sneeze, it can shatter completely—it is not merely a matter of taking a step backward while retaining control. *At that moment, the crucial task was to prevent panic and to hold everything together.*

A second example concerns my own situation.

When I was diagnosed with cancer, the issue was not whether I had a 90 percent chance of recovery or only a 30 percent chance. My position within the Party was well known to everyone. *Yet not a single person expanded the scope of his activity.* No one went to the cadres and explained: “This is the significance of Nader's possible loss; these will be its consequences; we must remain vigilant so that Party members do not become depressed.” Whenever someone undergoes surgery—even for something as minor as a tonsil operation—there is always a possibility of death. I was facing cancer and underwent surgery, yet no one in the Party leadership came forward to ask: “What should we do if Nader does not come safely through the operation?”

Had it been their own father who had fallen ill, they would have thought about informing their brothers and sisters, about how to prepare their mother so that she would not collapse, and so on. *But no one did anything. And yet you expect me to place my trust in this leadership?* Both during the affair of the April resignees and during my illness, I lost confidence that the Party possessed the commitment and foresight required to preserve itself. No one altered their course. No discussions were held with Party members. No speeches were delivered. No one established contact with anyone on this matter.

Emotionally and as members of the movement, everyone was distressed. They cried, they worried, they were concerned about my family. *But the Worker-communist Party and its future were simply left aside.* After the operation I might never have been able to speak again. Even now—what if news of my condition and the possibility of my death were to spread? *It was I myself who even determined how the public should be informed.*

Therefore, in my opinion, this Party will fall apart, and you yourselves will be the ones who cause it to fall apart. I am not optimistic.

It is not simply that the rank and file care deeply about the Party. Whatever strength exists lies within this leadership and within the Political Bureau. If we are to prevent Party members from becoming depressed, or address the lack of political education among members and cadres, it must begin here at the top. The same applies to financial matters: unless someone continually reminds the leadership that money is essential for the Party, unless someone teaches this at the top, nothing happens and people simply continue doing what they have always done. They have not accepted that without money the Party cannot function.

When one of our Party members refers to the Mojahedin as “the Hypocrites” (Monafeqin), people remain silent. Someone should explain the history of our movement, organize lectures, and so forth. A person who never gives lectures has no intention of persuading others to share his views. Anyone who truly respects the opinions of others establishes forums in which to present ideas and involve others in them. *Otherwise, he merely drafts a resolution and has it adopted by some official body.* The proper approach is first to explain, to clarify the methodology, to respond to possible criticisms, and only then to formulate a resolution. *Explaining our ideas to people is important to us, and people should see that our ideas genuinely matter to us. Anyone who does not do these things is simply a bureaucrat who has no real respect for others.*

How can someone be part of a medical team and yet, before entering the operating room with colleagues, offer them no explanation at all? In my opinion, those who never bring their arguments into this collective, who do not try through reasoning to convince their comrades, simply do not respect their comrades' opinions.

One of the principal problems in the Party leadership, in my view, is that we do not take pride in one another. I, for one, have always been proud of every one of you, and I have shared every thought and opinion I have had with you. But that attitude is not mutual. If something happens, you do not even inform one another so that you can understand how each of you thinks, *because everyone assumes that the others are somehow beneath them.*

That is not how I work. Without certain comrades I would never enter this movement. Even in earlier periods nothing could be achieved without others. It was the same with the comrades in Komala. If one of them said, *“This is how I think,”* I would reply, *“Do not think that way, because I cannot succeed without you.”* I have no desire to surround myself with fifteen flatterers merely to publish a journal such as Worker Policy. *If the Party is to survive, these very people must first understand that without one another they are nothing.* Anyone who genuinely seeks to unite others around a common cause must

write, organize seminars and lectures, and should not imagine that criticism is an attack upon his personal dignity or status.

My discussion concerns the situation in which I am no longer here. I have no intention of dying, and my doctor does not believe that is likely either. For me, the Worker-communist Party is important regardless of whether I am present or absent. *If this Party disappears, then the movement itself will effectively have received its death sentence.*

I believe that the Party can come to power even without Mansoor Hekmat. However, I also believe *that Mansoor Hekmat's political line will disappear* if no one carries it forward after Mansoor Hekmat is gone. *I do not expect that people who, during my lifetime and while I am present, have not even taken up parts of these discussions, will suddenly do so after my death.* Rather, you yourselves must make an effort to advance your own political line. It seems to me that those who are unwilling to struggle for the advancement of their own ideas do not really regard those ideas as important.

The question is whether there are people prepared to preserve this very Worker-communist Party as an accessible force for the working class of Iran and to maintain its place on the political stage of Iranian society. For those who truly want to do so, it is possible—even without me. The condition is the existence of people who defend the Party with all their strength and who, in the face of opponents and enemies of communism, respond firmly: 'Enough! Be silent!' A Party is not built upon mutual flattery, nor does it retain those who do not wish to remain in it through appeasement or concessions.

If such unity exists at the top, there will be far less opportunity for scattered individuals to claim, 'I belong to such-and-such faction of the Party.' If the Party leadership has eighty-five percent of the Party with it, the remaining fifteen percent of potential opponents will also restrain themselves. *That is why the leadership ultimately determines whether this Party survives or falls apart.*

In my opinion, if such determination exists at the top, then every disagreement will be resolved with wisdom before it becomes a polarized conflict. There must be established codes for conducting discussions. There must be established codes for resolving disagreements. There must also be established ethical standards defining what is and is not acceptable conduct. For example, it is unacceptable not to answer someone's argument directly while discussing it privately over the telephone with someone else.

In the early days we had these standards and principles. *Our movement advanced on the basis of moral integrity.* Even today we should say that our organization rests upon mutual trust. If you have a criticism, why do you not raise it openly in the meeting? That is important. Equally important is that you do not form informal cliques. These codes must exist. Otherwise, simply because not everyone shares exactly the same political line,

every disagreement can easily turn into personal resentment. As Kourosh Modarresi said, 'Everyone has his own line.'

Worker Communism and Hekmatism are not the dominant line within this body. What governs this collective are broad political and social principles: what kind of labor law they want, what kind of society they wish to live in, and similar issues. These are shared by everyone. But the dynamic character of Worker Communism—how it should be represented under changing circumstances—is neither shared nor uniform. *We do not possess a common outlook or methodology.*

For the moment, the danger of the cancer in my throat progressing does not seem particularly great. The question I ask myself is whether I should spend the rest of my life continuing to push a number of people merely so that they will defend the remaining fifteen percent of my ideas. It is not supposed to be the case that, at the next Party Congress, I once again deliver all six of the Party's principal speeches—assuming I am still alive. I have other plans for the rest of my life. *Continuing in the same way as before no longer interests me.*

Nevertheless, this Party is like my own child. I will not hand it over to just anyone, whatever the cost—not as Mansoor Hekmat, but as a member of the Party. If I know that, without my intervention, the political position I defend will not be carried forward, then I will remain—not out of any “love of power,” but in order to advance the political line in which I believe.

But if I become convinced that doing so is futile, I will let it go and leave the Party to do whatever it wishes. Consequently, I will refuse to accept a responsibility whose implementation I cannot guarantee. Why should I spend my life once again promoting positions that I have already been advancing and defending for many years? Why should I have to compel a member of the Party leadership to listen to the news, encourage another leader to become more active and devote more of his own effort and energy, or ask yet another member of the leadership to extend his political horizon beyond the geographical boundaries of Kurdistan? I did not receive my lifetime for nothing. If someone tells me that something needs to be done, I will go and do it.