



“Nameh Mardom”

(“People’s Letter”)

Interview with

Comrade Ali Khavari

on the occasion of the

Tudeh Party of Iran’s 56th
anniversary

Q: Thank you for the long-awaited opportunity to talk with you on the occasion of the Party's 56th anniversary. Our first question also relates to this occasion. How do you evaluate the Party's current status in light of the recent political developments in Iran and around the world?

A: I also thank you for the opportunity to talk directly to the readers of Nameh Mardom. Please allow me first to address the issue of the "long-awaited" opportunity to which you, as well as some other comrades, have referred. Our Party has been a defendant of the principle of group leadership and opposes elevating the importance of individuals in relation to the Party's elected bodies. When party organs exist and determine the most important political guidelines, then reliance on one person for analysis and instructions is irrelevant and unnecessary. In the recent years, despite tremendous logistical problems, the Party's Central Committee has had its annual meetings. It has adopted clear and precise viewpoints towards the most important domestic and international political developments. Nameh Mardom has printed the political documents of these meetings. This group decision making process has enabled our Party to present a coherent policy in the midst of political upheavals in Iran and around the world. Today's interview is a responsibility that the Executive Committee has bestowed upon me, as one of the few remaining original members proud to have been with the Party for 56 years, to communicate with the Party's youth that has taken the banner of struggle in one of the Party's most difficult periods.

Now, let's return to your question about the Tudeh Party of Iran's 56-year history of struggle. In my opinion, from whichever angle you look at it, the history of the Tudeh Party of Iran is unique in our country. Political prisoners and progressive elements supporting the goals of the working class in our country founded our Party. Because of its long history of struggle and the extent of its political and cultural influence in our society, our Party is not comparable to any other political force in Iran. This statement is not political grandiosity. Anyone with a little conscience and fairness can trace this through the contemporary historical documents, as well as numerous pieces written to slander and defame the Tudeh Party of Iran. When our Party entered the struggle, the prevailing culture was an extremely backward feudal one. The Tudeh Party of Iran, during a short period when open political actions were allowed, transformed the political and cultural scene to such an extent that its effects can still be felt not only in Iran but also throughout the Middle East. In Iran of that period, the word worker was a strange concept. Women did not have the right to vote. Servitude to the colonialists formed the culture of a large sector of the country's politicians. Peasants were being bought and sold with the land. Political and cultural backwardness intertwined with superstition. Underdeveloped capitalism along with feudalism formed the major infrastructural characteristic of the country. Few political parties and organizations existed. There were only a few scientific, political and cultural publications. The Tudeh Party of Iran was born in these circumstances and it managed to transform the country's political and

cultural scene in a very short time thereafter. Our Party's first party policy document, adopted at the Party's first Congress in 1944, was a most progressive, revolutionary and clear minded policy for its times. In Iran's 60-year contemporary history, this was a political party's first plan document that recognized workers rights and called for: an eight-hour work day, a social security system, land reform for peasants, equality between men and women and the latter's right to vote and be elected. Above all, it organized a focused political movement in order to reach all these ideals.

Another notable aspect is that over the last five decades, the Tudeh Party of Iran has done the most to familiarize Iranians with Marxism-Leninism. It was our Party that continued the unfinished tasks of the Iranian Communist Party and others, such as Arani, Heydar Amoo-Oghli and Soltanzadeh in widely disseminating these thoughts throughout Iran. Our Party has published hundreds of books, magazines and articles to familiarize the progressive and freedom-loving forces with this ideology. Even now, if someone wants to study the classic works of Marxism in Farsi, the most important source would be the Tudeh Party of Iran's publications.

It should be noted that even someone like Mr. Bazargan (the first prime minister after the revolution), in talking about the Iranian contemporary history, admits that it was the Tudeh Party of Iran that introduced political parties and political activity in its current and prevailing form. All the political forces have been actually "tutored" in this regard by the Tudeh Party of Iran.

The significance of the Party's achievements comes to light only when considering that our Party was outlawed for more than 40 out of these 56 years. The ruling reactionary and repressive forces have constantly and viciously persecuted our Party. I have always believed that (in relation to Iran) the reactionary and imperialist forces have been mostly scared of our Party's tremendous influence in shaping the developments in Iran. I remember that in the first formal attack against our Party in January-February 1948, Dr. Eghbal, the then government spokesperson, announced that our Party's most important crime was "promoting communal ideas", "being subservient to foreigners" and "deceiving the simple people" to agitate and disrupt the domestic situation - more accurately, another words, mobilizing and organizing the masses of workers and peasants against the oppressive monarchy. The British and American government documents, that have been released, clearly show that one of the main reasons for their secret services organizing the 1953 coup was their fear of our Party's rising and significant influence in Iran. This situation has not changed in the last 56 years. Thirty four years after Dr. Eghbal, Reyshahri, head of the (Islamic Republic's) revolutionary courts lists the same crimes for the Tudeh Party of Iran members. Reagan repeats the same concerns as Roosevelt had about our Party's regional influence. Khamenei (Khomeini's successor as the "Vali-e Faghih" - religious leader) has had to admit that in the early periods after the revolution, our Party's tremendous influence had caused anxiety for the regime's rulers. Our Party's history is that of an active and fighting party, which in my opinion belongs to the Iranian labor and communist movement and all the forces that struggle for the ideals of the working class. The incomparable sacrifices of (our comrades) over the last 56

years have made a proud chapter in our country's history. Nearly six decades have passed. Our Party's members and supporters have endured tens of thousands of years in prisons and thousands of martyrs, and still hold the banner of struggle for workers' rights high with enthusiasm and selflessness.

Of course, along with victories and achievements, our Party has had defeats and mistakes which we do not deny. However, if you compare the victories against the defeats and judge them fairly, you will see that the latter form a very small part in relation to all the contributions that the Party has made in the last 56 years. We must safeguard this history and especially its major achievements. Attacking and degrading this history is one of the major goals that the class enemies of the Iranian labor and communist movement has always followed. Today, you can observe that in this period of heavy censorship ruling the country, how the regime is allowing the publication of "memoirs" and "historical books" in order to disgrace the labor and communist movement.

Q: Comrade Khavari, you referred to the Islamic Republic regime's initial attack against the Party. What is your opinion of the Party's current status, 15 years since that event, especially in light of the myriad of problems raised around the world concerning Marxism-Leninism's legitimacy?

A: The Islamic Republic regime's attack against the Party, formally initiated in January-February 1982, was one of the most vicious and heaviest onslaughts that our Party has endured in its 56-year history. Almost 10,000 of our members, supporters, cadres and leaders were arrested and sent to torture chambers in a well-orchestrated and planned series of raids. As I mentioned earlier, the regime mainly intended to paralyze our Party completely, as well as to discredit and destroy our influence among the working and deprived masses. With torture and deception, the regime forced a group of the Party's leadership from that period to appear on television with their broken faces, as well as spirit, to question the Party's historical legitimacy. These actions had a tremendously negative effect on the Party's organization and structure. The arrest of the majority of the Party's leadership and experienced cadres destroyed the communication among the Party organs. In the aftermath, rebuilding the Party and adopting clear policies faced serious obstacles. Disillusionments and differences of opinions, along with the presence of opportunists who wanted to take advantage of the situation to take over the Party leadership, complicated the situation. Despite all of these problems, the Party managed to rebuild gradually its organizational, political, promotional and international organs with the help of its members and determined cadres. By analyzing past policies, the Party has come to adopt new policies in different areas.

Q: Comrade Khavari, how did the developments in the socialist countries and the downfall of the Soviet Union affect the Party?

A: Another problem that our Party confronted during the last 15 years was the developments in the former socialist countries, the downfall of the Soviet Union and its aftermath. The extent and importance of these events may be analyzed and clarified only across the whole world. Another words, the world labor and communist movement, of which the Tudeh Party of Iran was a member, was suddenly faced a most serious ideological crisis which was undermining its whole history and existence. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which had a special place in this world movement, had fallen into the hands of opportunists and anti-Marxists who were following no other goal but to destroy socialism and all of its achievements. Imperialism took advantage by orchestrating a massive propaganda campaign against the labor movement throughout the world. The truth is that few worker and communist parties have stayed immune from these problems. In our Party, also, there were those who believed that the Party must follow Gorbachev's path, carry out "Prestroika", and liberate itself from "dogmas" and "ideology". It was natural that a majority of our comrades were not ready to accept these suggestions. On the contrary, they chose to analyze carefully and scientifically, away from all the commotion, the events that had had and would have a significant effect on the fate of humanity. Not only in our Party but also in other Iranian leftist organizations, the earlier mentioned tendencies went so far as to take control of the political and ideological direction of some of these groups, and on the whole had a disruptive effect. In recent years, plenty of individuals and organizations have buried Marxism-Leninism, along with concepts such as imperialism, class struggle and dialectic and historical materialism. They have branded Marx as idealist and utopian and Lenin as dictator. In the end, disguised under modernism and new thinking, they have come to approve capitalism, a backward structure in a new made-up mode, as the solution. Such assertions of knowledge, rather than reflecting a serious analysis of complex, delicate social and economic issues, more so represent the superficial approach of their proponents. It does not appear that these "experts" have even the understanding that Marxism-Leninism is part of the social sciences, and social scientists, whether in agreement or not, have written thousands of books about it. Discussing this topic requires work at a scientific and expert level, and one may not judge it by just reading a few pamphlets and then writing a few meaningless articles.

We believe that answering these issues is a historical and important responsibility which must be taken seriously and shared by all in the world labor and communist movement. We have communicated and exchanged views with several other parties, especially those in the former socialist countries, in the recent years. We participated in two important world conferences: one on Marxism and our period, which took place in India and the other, a consultative conference in Greece over the causes for socialism's downfall. In the latter, in a session separate from the conference, we had a chance to exchange views with comrades in the Russian Communist Party and other worker and communist parties. One must note that a party, such as the Russian Communist Party, with all its capabilities and first hand information, is still researching the matter and has not issued a final opinion. The common view among a majority of the world worker and communist parties is that much more research needs to be conducted before a responsible judgment is issued. Our Party, in preparation for its Fourth Congress, asked a group of the Central

Committee members to come up with a draft document on this issue. After nearly a year, the result of their efforts was published in “Nameh Mardom” for feedback from the members and supporters and also for judgment by the general public. Of course, this is only a small step towards clarifying the matters and more needs to be done.

Q: How do you see the status of the left in the world and Iran today?

A: I believe that after a short period of disillusionment during which the world labor and communist movement had taken a defensive position, we are now witnessing its rise again. In Italy, Portugal and France that have powerful communist parties, after a tough period that saw the dissolution of for instance the Italian Communist Party, they have been reinvigorated much to the surprise of capitalist political pundits. Today, the leftist and communist thoughts form the banner of not only the Communists but also a vast array of the working masses. It is enough to look at the actions by the European workers over the last two years from Germany to France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium Such an extent of the struggle has been unprecedented. In the United States, after decades of declining labor organizations, suddenly hundreds of thousands are finding (the unions) again, and the struggle at the heart of imperialism is riding high. Most importantly, look at the former socialist countries, where the communist parties had suffered a tremendous defeat and had taken the brunt of an unrelenting propaganda campaign over the last eight years. One of the most interesting examples was the presidential election in Russia. The Communist Party, which Yeltsin had earlier banned, was being heavily and constantly attacked by the monopoly-controlled media. Yet its representative received more than 30 million votes. Even the imperialist media confessed that the result might have been different had it not been for the media attacks and the hundreds of millions of dollars of contribution spent in this regard.

In my opinion, this reception of the worker and communist movement is clear. Imperialism’s declaration of the “new world order” means nothing but a few developed capitalist countries openly and limitlessly pillaging the whole world. In the absence of the socialist camp and the Soviet Union, the people have realized what a valuable and reliable ally they have missed in the defense of their rights. The citizens of the former socialist countries, having experienced both systems with full of problems, have realized that the old system was superior in terms of humane-social achievements setting the human kind and not capital as the center of its economic progress. Today the dominance of capitalism in their countries is such a terrible disaster that for a way out they have to traverse the same road as before again.

Regarding the left in Iran, in my opinion, if we can overcome the fractious differences, the objective factors for which have dissipated, it will have a bright future with a determining role in the country’s developments. The urban and rural working masses naturally gravitate to the left. If the Iranian left can organize a unified working class, it will be the strongest political force in Iran.

Q: Comrade Khavari, one of the most important events recently has been the (Iranian) presidential election. Political parties and organizations adopted different policies towards the election. Please explain the Tudeh Party of Iran's position in this regard. Some people described the policy of not boycotting nor supporting a specific candidate as one of neutrality or abstention.

A: When discussing the issue of election under the regime of "Velayat-e Faghih" ("Supreme Religious Leader"), it must be said that our Party never did nor does it consider the (regime's current) electoral process democratic or free in any of its aspects: right of participation for the electorate; right of the citizens for candidacy; respect for the necessary rights of individuals and political and social organizations. What was different in the recent campaign was the strong mass movement which transformed a superficial and confused process orchestrated from the top into a thunderous protest with serious consequences.

I must also add that the Tudeh Party of Iran's policy is based on firmly supporting the rights and freedoms of our country's working masses and the general well being of its citizens. In that respect, it can never be neutral. Long before the election for the seventh term of presidency, our Party had been steadfastly carrying out its strategy of doing away with the regime of "Velayat-e Faghih" through the tactics of exposing the deeply parasitic nature of (middleman or dependent) bourgeoisie and its reactionary, political-religious leadership, known in the governing circles as the "traditionalist right". This has been the backbone of the Party's social and political struggle.

Emphasizing this reality, meaning completely opposing one of the two main presidential contending factions, cannot be interpreted as having been neutral. With a clear understanding of the gravity of the situation and realizing the delicacy of our responsibility, we made a decision. However, there was not nor is there now any definite evidence supporting the public's hope for fundamental changes in the regime of "Velayat-e Faghih" to allow us to have bet on a specific candidate.

For our country's deprived masses living under the most difficult conditions, we sincerely hope for an opening even if it is relatively small. However, we believed and we still believe that in the framework of "Velayat-e Faghih" and the relationships of parasitic capitalism dominating the fundamentalist religious ideology, relief from the heavy burden of political, social, economic and cultural problems would not be forthcoming. In our analysis for the election, we could not ignore the reality that those running the affairs of the religion and the government and the "Vali-e Faghih" (Supreme Religious Leader), above them all, care for the people, their vote and participation in the political arena only to the point that it serves to reaffirm and strengthen the regime of "Velayat-e Faghih" and its beneficiaries. The ruling circles have enough "legal" means to control the direction of the political and social movements. One witnesses these days that even the supporters of Mr. Khatami (the new President), such as in Mr. Behzad Nabavi's interview with "Salaam" newspaper, are obliged to admit the reality, and by the way confirm our Party's

analysis, that with the “Vali-e Faghih” controlling all the levers of power, expecting serious changes is unrealistic.

Q: Nevertheless, how do you evaluate the swift and unexpected turn of events in the wake of the presidential election?

A: Passing over the interjections and the idiotic publicity campaign that the “traditionalist right” wing of the regime orchestrated in favor of its candidate, which by the way had no small a role in heating up the electoral process, one must admit that the root cause of this development dates back to the years of repression. The first sighting of this trend, which happened to be a boisterous one, came about during the period between the fifth term election for the (Islamic) Assembly and the seventh term presidential election.

During the fifth term election for the Islamic Assembly, the Resalat (“traditionalist right”) wing was feverishly taking steps to consolidate its power: in addition to having complete control of the winning card of “Vali-e Faghih”, it even turned its back on its most influential ally, the help of whom was decisive in removing the representatives of the “Society of Fighting Clergy” from their seats of power in the government and the Assembly. (The influential ally was Rafsanjani, the former President). After the end of Rafsanjani’s second presidential term and his failure to win the support of other circles of power in the regime to change the law and “legally” allow him to run for another term, the Resalat wing saw Rafsanjani’s star waning. It even refused to include few candidates on behalf of him. Rafsanjani then decided to enter a new political fight. This development, at that time, could only have a bearing on the fifth term Assembly election and not on any future event, especially the presidential election.

The occurrence of this schism between the two main ruling factions eased the burden slightly on the masses who until then, under the rule of a tremendously repressive machine, could not have played an effective role in the country’s political events. The possibility of a repeat of Rafsanjani’s maneuver during the third term Assembly election in breaking his alliance with the “radical” faction had looked remote but it actually happened. Rafsanjani was then forced to reestablish his ties with the “radical” sector, driven out of political influence earlier due to Rafsanjani’s coalition with the Resalat wing, and formed a new political block.

The shifts in alliances and the schisms at the top not only disrupted the plans of players in and around the regime but also provided a legal medium for the people to voice their discontent strongly and without fear of persecution from the regime. During the fifth term Assembly election, if those who received top popular votes were jointly listed along with other candidates of the Resalat wing, they would have had the same fate as candidates of the “Islamic Coalition”. Ms. Faezeh Hashemi (Rafsanjani’s daughter) received the largest votes in Tehran. This reflected the repressed mass protest against the regime’s anti-woman policies. It was this same repressed mass protest that manifested itself in the

presidential election by voting against the regime and its candidate and electing Mohammad Khatami instead.

In any case, the presidential election acknowledged the immense power of the masses, whom the rulers of the “Velayat-e Faghih” regime had ignored in their calculations, as an independent force not supporting but rather rejecting the regime. Now, the rulers of the Islamic Republic, aware of this fact, feel themselves atop a temporarily quiet volcano. At the same time, the people no longer see themselves as mere individuals against an oppressive regime. This realization by the masses of the importance of solidarity and protest against an oppressive regime will have unprecedented ramifications.

Against this massive earthquake, the regime has outwardly reacted with indifference claiming that the people’s votes in fact reaffirmed the regime of “Velayat-e Faghih”! The actions of the defeated faction, who by the way still rule over the main levers of the economy and the government, reflect a different situation and mind frame: one of anxiety, fear and revenge.

The regime has set up the “Expediency Council” in order to demote the government and the presidency to merely executive roles serving the wishes of this Council. Rafsanjani heads the Council and along with the (Supreme Religious) Leader (Khamenei) they represent the ruling clergy, commercial and increasingly influential bureaucratic bourgeoisie setting and guiding the country’s policies.

Until the day that the masses, in a determined and effective majority, realize that in the framework of the “Velayat-e Faghih” regime, changes and reforms only culminate in a superficial make-over or a slight easing of their pains and deprivations, things will go around the same circle. The people must organize a unified political movement against the regime’s repression in order to achieve their rights and freedoms.

Q: Comrade Khavari, the Party has recently published articles in “Nameh Mardom” warning about the conspiracies of the regime’s security forces in and out of Iran. Would you please elaborate?

A: The conspiracies of the regime’s security forces actually started from the first day that the regime set up these forces and will continue as long as the regime is in power. The forms and methods are the only things that change with the time and the situation. Once, the regime’s security forces were gathering information on the Party through surveillance, telephone tapping and infiltrating agents. Then these conspiracies entered a new era when actual attacks against the Party started. The Party was faced with television shows and numerous documents publicizing “confessions” that had been dragged out (of our imprisoned comrades) by force. It also faced many attempts at destroying the Party from within. With these plots having been defeated and with the execution of many of our imprisoned comrades, the regime thought of new ideas. It published several “memoirs” and similar writings in the name of those arrested and even martyred under

torture and tried to pass them as “views of the Tudeh Party of Iran” only to fail dismally due to the alertness and warnings of our Party leadership. In the last two years, we have had to deal with another ploy , which has been the formation of “leftist” parties in Iran. In a country, where the Party’s supporters are tortured and executed for reading the Party’s books and continuing the struggle for the Party’s ideals, suddenly “leftist” organizations get the permission not only to publish but also to take out one-page advertisements in the country’s daily newspapers and magazines for the sale of books by our comrades Javanshir, Behzadi, Neek-Ayeen and others who the regime has executed under savage torture.

All these new forces are in open contact with groups outside of the country. They are conducting an active campaign to bring under question the Party and its legal organs, as well as to whip up differences (within the Party). These people are free to give interviews and publish inside Iran views of the “well-known” figures of the Party in the name of “enlightened Tudeh Party of Iran” guidelines and views. They have taken the deception so far as to proclaim that with so much freedom, there will soon be (political) parties forming in Iran and no doubt by the same “well-known” figures. The other delicate point is that such a party would be operating legally within the framework of the “Velayat-e Faghih” regime’s constitution, defending the regime against any “foreign” threat and possibly more importantly opposing the “misguided and destructive line of the Party leadership outside of Iran” who are calling on the people to fight for the removal of the “Velayat-e Faghih” regime.

As far as I know, most of our comrades have separated themselves from these activities and are alert not to be deceived by such maneuvers. In the aftermath of the Party’s warnings, we must anticipate the emergence of new elements. We do not consider these conspiracies to have ended and we believe that our comrades, wherever they may be, would be fighting them off with carefulness and vigilance. We must not allow the enemy to take advantage of our innocent emotions to find a way inside to deliver another blow against the Party.

“Nameh Mardom”: Thank you. Do you have any message for the comrades?

A: Please allow me to take this opportunity and congratulate all of our comrades and Party supporters, wherever they may be, for our Party’s 56th anniversary. I wish victory and success for all of our country’s working masses and all those fighting for freedom, independence and social justice.