

**The Report of the
Politburo Central
Committee of the Tudeh Party of Iran to
Enlarge Plenary Meeting of The Central
Committee
(May 2001)**



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The Report of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Tudeh Party of Iran to the Plenary meeting of the Central Committee (May 2001)

Comrades!

This central committee plenary meeting is taking place at a time when again, our country is going through many important and destiny making events. Analyzing these events, and investigating the roots of the present trends and coming up with an outlook which can guide the freedom and social justice loving forces and the democratic movement, are the principle task that are facing all the democratic organizations and political parties. We hope that this meeting can take an important step in this direction.

The present situation in the country has a strong connection with the events in the last four years. Four years have passed since the historical referendum on 2nd Khordad (22nd May, 1997), where tens of millions of Iranians rejected the “Supreme Religious Leader’s” “best” presidential candidate. Four years ago, despite all the tricks and conspiracies of the reactionary clergy and the “Velayat-e Faghih”, the absolute rule of the religious leader,, millions of Iranians voted for Mohammed Khatami as the candidate who promised “freedom and civil society” as oppose to “more islamization” of the society. From the beginning, the regime’s leaders tried to interpret this historical movement as people’s support for the regime, but what was clear was that the

people had used an opportunity to show their deep hatred for the regime.

The four years of Khatami’s presidential period is close to an end. The analysis of the last four years and an evaluation of the government performance and it’s influence on the events in the country, with the intention of a precise understanding of the present trend of the events and forming a future outlook for the movement is necessary.

Economic Performance of Khatami’s Government

President Khatami, in his first public speech after winning the presidential election, referring to the disastrous situation that the country was in, which was the result of implementing eight years of “economic balancing” policy, said:

“Economic problems are among the first urgent problems the government has to deal with. We have to overcome the economic difficulties but people should not bear the pressure.”

In the last decade, Tudeh Party of Iran has been one of the most ardent opposition forces against the “economic balancing” policy which was the disastrous remedy of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund for the “Third World” countries. Our party, in midst of Rafsanjani’s propaganda for this policy, announced that the experience of implementing these policies in other countries has shown nothing but destruction of the national economy and further dependence to the capitalist monopolies and its overall effect on the country is nothing but disastrous.

Uncontrolled import of the consumer goods, lack of support for domestic production against imported goods, privatization and handing over the control of the manufacturing units to the big capitalists, the single product economy dependent on oil

production, and domination of big trade bourgeoisie and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie nurtured in the Rafsanjani's corrupt government were the effects of the implementation of the "economic balancing" policy in the 90's. Tens of billions of dollars of foreign debt, dramatic reduction of the workers real income, reduction in the portion of manufacturing in the Gross National Product, and high inflation and unemployment rates are the other effects of implementing these policies in the eight years of Rafsanjani's government.

With the new government, people were hopeful that a new trend would be started in the economic policies of the country. With the announcement of the combination of the new cabinet and leaving the critical positions in the government to the same elements in Rafsanjani's cabinet, it became clear that there will not be much place for hope for this government to deal with the disastrous economic situation in the country.

Continuation of Rafsanjani's policies by Khatami's cabinet left destructive effects in our society. In addition to the increase in financial pressure on the millions of workers families, implementation of these policies has caused many social illnesses with unprecedented dimensions. There are more than two million addicts in Iran of which more than two hundred thousand are women. Only in Tehran, there are more than thirty thousand homeless children. According to the officials, from every four unemployed, three of them are the youth. The rate of unemployment in the present year will reach 22.6 per cent.

The effects of the anti-democratic and anti-national policies is observable in all aspects. The terrible situation of health care, lack of medical specialists, shortage of hospitals and drugs, shortage of housing and homelessness of hundreds of thousands of Iranian youth, and the destruction of the education system in the country overall shows the depth of the social and economic crisis in the country.

The propaganda of the regime's leaders about the social and economic crisis and the shortages and their claim that the "reforms", more than anything else should address these economic illnesses, more than being an indication of their care for the people, is the hypocrisy of those who are in the leadership of the country, led the country to the present disastrous situation. If anybody is to answer for this situation, they are the leadership of the country in the last ten years, like Khamenei and Rafsanjani and others.

Khatami's cabinet, despite its promises, under the pressure to protect the regime and in accordance with its class base, which is to protect the interest of different strata of bourgeoisie, continued the old policies and did not take any significant step in direction of people's demands and social justice. Some people close to Mr. Khatami believe that the conspiracies of the reactionaries did not allow Mr. Khatami to implement his program. Without any doubt, the conspiracies of the reactionaries continued all along, but nevertheless, Mr. Khatami never presented an acceptable program to protect the interest of the working class and the people.

Opening the economy to the trans-national corporations and giving out contracts which are against our national interest is another negative aspect of Khatami's government performance. For example, the biggest oil and gas contract after the 1979 revolution, worth four billion dollars, was signed with an Italian company in July 2000. This contract dominates the Italian company over the "South Pars" oil field with the 40% Iranian share and 60% percent Italian. It is necessary to mention here that due to the implementation of these policies in the oil industry and the danger of contracting out the excavation of oil to the foreign companies that thousands of the workers of the "National Excavation Company" went on strike and forced the government to retreat.

One of the most significant aspects of the governments program in the last four years has been the plan of "economic settlement".

The main aspects of this plan are continuation of the privatization, giving special privileges to the foreign investment and removing regulations hinder foreign investments. In general, the aim of this plan is to continue the domination of the capital, gradual removal of all the government companies, step by step removal of all the subsidies which help the workers and people and finally creating an favourable conditions for foreign investment. There is no difference in this program and the program which Rafsanjani government followed eight years ago and it is not by accident that the ruling regime of reactionaries, in the economic policies, not only did not hinder these policies but have always supported them.

Khatami's Cabinet and "Political Expansion"

Khatami announced that the implementation of the "political expansion" is one of the most important tasks of his government. Obviously, for a country which after the monarchist dictatorship has fallen into the trap of the medieval dictatorship, nobody except the ruling regime of reactionaries and the right wing and anti-democratic forces in the opposition, would oppose the political expansion. In the last four years the debate has not been over the necessity of the "political expansion" but it has been over the way of its implementation.

On this issue, three prominent ideas exist. First, is the idea of the ruling regime of reactionaries and the supporters of the "Absolute Power of the Religious Leader", who are against any political change in the country and believe that any opening can threaten the existence of the regime. According to this idea, the way to end the deepening crisis of the regime is to suppress the freedom and democratic rights of the people and to arrest and imprison the religious and secular thinkers. And so they believe that by creating a "central and strong" government under the direct control of the "Supreme Religious Leader" and the dominant

clergy, and with minimal changes, and reducing the economic pressure, the regime can move toward stability.

However they believe that the experience of the last four years and qualitative and quantitative expansion of the democratic movement is a serious and immediate threat. This threat has to be dealt with by any means including bloody suppression. In the recent months, this group, by intensifying the pressure on Khatami, have tried to force him to comply with their plans, including the bloody suppression of the movement, or resignation from the political scene. Closing some of the publications, declaring the "national-religious groups" illegal and the arrest of student activists and reformists are the conspiracies of the ruling regime of reactionaries for suppression of the movement.

The second idea, belongs to Khatami and his supporters in the 2nd Khordad (22nd May) movement. According to this idea, the continuation of the Islamic Republic, with the growing contradictions in our society, is difficult. By accepting some reforms, adjustment of the policies based on pluralism and move towards the participation of people in some parts of political decision making, in the framework of Islamic Republic, it is necessary to rebuild the popular base of the regime, which will result in the political stability.

According to this idea, the way to implement these reforms is by conducting negotiation at the top and trying to convince the leaders of the regime that if the reforms are not implemented, the society will be on the verge of a explosion the first victims of which will be the "regime" and the dominant clergy. By understanding the deep hatred of the people against the regime they are aware of the fact that if a solution is not found for the present crisis, the danger will surpass the existence of the Islamic regime and this possibility exists that the peoples faith and their belief in the clergy will be damaged for ever.

Vis-à-vis the above two ideas, in the last ten years, Tudeh Party of Iran has propounded the idea that the basis of the present social and economic crisis in our country is caused by the domination of the “Velayat-e Faghih” regime. The dominant regime in Iran, is a regime based on reactionary and medieval ideas which has no value for peoples’ rights. According to the system of thinking of the leaders of this regime, people can play no role but to be the “slaves” and to follow the “Absolute Religious Leader” as the “representative of God on the earth”. Following the “Leader’s orders” without any questions is the limit which set the framework of the peoples rights. The leaders of the regime don’t hide the idea that in their frame of reference, the Islamic Republic of Iran can not be dismantled by peoples vote since its eligibility is a “God given eligibility”.

All these characteristics, are the characteristics of a medieval religious dictatorship and the Inquisition period. If this understanding of the regime is correct, which we believe that the experience of the last twenty years beyond any doubt to have proved its correctness, then the idea that such a regime on its own and without the smashing force from below can reform itself, is unrealistic and incorrect. The experience of the last four years have also proven that the Islamic regime has an irreconcilable contradiction with the reformist trend and will use all means in its disposal to damage this trend.

Khatami’s government tried to enforce the limited participation of the people in the political affairs by allowing the publication of many publications and also a limited freedom for the alternative thinkers close to the regime. Publication of tens of newspapers and journals which played an effective role in the disclosure of the reactionary and anti-democratic character of the regime, beside the growth and blossom of the social, political and trade movements, deeply changed the dictatorial mood dominant in the country.

The leaders of the regime, realizing the danger of the democratic movement, organized their first assault against the movement few months after take over of the government by Khatami. Conspiracies for stopping the reformist trend to the point of overthrowing the Khatami’s government if necessary, by organizing the “chain murders” of secular thinkers, were put into action. Today, three years after this horrible crime, with the disclosure of many documents and facts, people know that this crime was committed with the direct request of Khamenei and the planning took place at the highest levels of command hierarchy of the regime.

The “chain murders” of the writers and political activists, Foruhars, Mokhtari, Pooyandeh and Sharif created deep hatred in the society. In Tehran, tens of thousands, by organising a rally, demanded the arrest and punishment of the criminals.

The “chain murders” came to a halt as a result of wide-scale protests by the people, the nationalist and religious forces and freedom seeking and progressive forces and international solidarity, indicated that the mass movement and its allies, if informed and organized are able to put a stop to the reactionaries conspiracies.

Khatami’s government found it possible to implement the “political expansion” project through promotion of respect for “law” and “doing everything according to the law”. Our party from the beginning warned that the law under the “Velayat-e Faghih” regime in which the “Supreme Religious Leader” has the control of all the legislative and judiciary levers, is nothing but a suppressive weapon under the reactionaries control and it is not possible to carry the reformist trend forward using this weapon.

This position of our party was criticised by both the reformist and some of the opposition forces. These forces accused our party of tendency toward violence and lack of consideration for peaceful means of struggle. They believed that extra legal activities and

struggle outside the framework of “law” is an attempt to mechanically forcing the movement forward and can give pretext to reactionaries for the bloody suppression of the reformist movement. Obviously, by propounding this position, our party did not intend to move the society towards violence but warning about the difficulties that this position can create for the movement.

The historical experience in different countries around the world and in Iran have shown that the violence and the bloodshed have always been forced upon the people by the reactionary and anti-democratic forces. Accusing the progressive and democratic forces of promoting violence, not only is illogical and wrong but is to fan for these reactionary forces.

Soon the trend of events proved the correctness of our party’s position. The regime, using its majority in the fifth parliament, passed the publications bill to shut up the opposing publications. And later by passing the Islamic punishment bill and also the deployment of “student militia” bill practically left the movement in a defensive position. Under these circumstances and by lack of action and some incorrect and reconciliatory moves by the Khatami’s government, the reaction started its organized attack against the publications and the student movement. The banning of “Salaam” newspaper and the attack by the “Religious Leader’s” goons to the students dormitory and the catastrophe that came about by killing and injuring tens of students, signaled the beginning of the “legal” attack by the reaction against the movement. These events proved that despite the heroic struggle of thousands of students, the movement is still lacking a strong organization to defend itself.

The attack by the armed goons of the regime with direct order from Khamenei and after Khatami’s surrender to the “regime’s expedience”, had a high cost for the reform and student movement. Arrest and imprisonment of more than fourteen hundred student activists and a vast propaganda attack with the

purpose of creating an atmosphere of terror and self-censorship and accusing the reformists of co-operation with the United States and “the line of overthrowing” the regime, put the reformist movement in a serious defensive position.

The hazards of the unconditional attitude to the “Do according to the law” slogan, when the “law” and its implementation instruments are under the control of the ruling regime of reactionaries, were augmented in the recent months by the intervention of the “Supreme Religious Leader” in the decision making of the legislative assembly. Khamenei’s order to prevent the member of parliament from debating and changing the publication law and the insistence of the reactionary publications on the “Absolute Power of the Religious Leader” shows that the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in its present form, is only an instrument at the disposal of the reactionaries, and is a block in the way of the reform movement.

There are other important points in the evaluation of the performance of the Khatami’s government regarding the “political expansion”. One of Khatami’s government project to institutionalize the freedom and move towards “civil society” was to hold the election for the “town and city councils”, twenty years after the victory of the revolution. The “councils” article in the constitution was left to oblivion after the take over of the power by the reactionaries. The Tudeh Party of Iran was among the first political parties in Iran, who beside welcoming the elections for the councils, warned that the important point is not to hold the elections but the role and the effect of the councils in the political life and decision making of the country.

The regime’s leaders and specially the defendants of the “Absolute Power of the Religious Leader” did not hide that in their point of view, the councils should only be an instrument in the hands of the regime’s leaders and ready to implement their orders. The experience of the last two years have indicated that the councils, due to the enforcement of the ruling regime of

reactionaries, have not been able to play an effective role in the political life of the country. The election of the council and participation of two hundred thousand candidates and millions of Iranians, was an interesting and important experience the progressive social and political views among the people.

The councils election, due to the fact that some of the independent candidates were able to pass the supervisory committee, set up by the fifth parliament, gave people the opportunity to elect their independent candidates. Election of many women in different cities also indicated that despite twenty years of suppression, the heroic women of our country are ready to struggle in the political arena, if any opportunity arises. The effect of councils election was shocking for the regime. This election showed again that if the will and tendency of the people finds an opportunity, the life of the regime will be short.

Another point which worth mentioning in the framework of Khatami's "political expansion" project, is the attempt to create new political parties to direct people's movement through the "friendly" parties. In the last four year, many groups and political parties have been registered. The majority of these groups and parties have no popular support and their basis of existence is the "name" of some political "characters".

The argument of parties and the institutionalisation of the political activities through the "legal parties" is not a new argument. During the last eighty years of Iranian contemporary history, there has been only limited periods where the political forces and parties have had legal and open existence.

After the 1953 coup d'etat, the monarchist regime banned all the political forces and parties which where against monarchy and the prisons were filled by the members of our party and the nationalist and religious forces, which were against dictatorship. After a short period of free activity of political parties after the 1979 revolution, the "Velayat-e-Faghih" regime suppressed the opposition by

accusing them of "overthrowing" the regime, and executed many secular thinkers and freedom seeking people.

In conclusion, what exists as the "political parties law", can not create real and independent political parties and only supports the parties which believe in the "Absolute Power of the Religious Leader". And it is not for no reason that even the nationalist-religious forces such as "freedom movement" despite all the promises by the Khatami's government, have not been able to have legal activity. The recent attack by the judiciary system against the nationalist-religious groups shows the framework of "partisan" activity in Iran.

Comrades!

What was stated above as the Khatami's government "political expansion" project and its effect on the political events in the country was only an augmentation of the most important issues and not a complete report of the political events in the last four years in our country. Our party can not and should not deny that with respect to "political expansion", very positive and important changes have taken place in our country. The breakdown of the graveyard silence of the oppressive years and the mass executions and the murder of alternative thinkers, and a new atmosphere of limited political, cultural and trade activities and the possibility of disclosing activities of the nationalist, progressive and freedom seeking forces, is an important and effective change in the direction of the interests of the democratic movement.

The events of the last four years removed the mask of the reactionary leaders of the regime and nullified the effect of their propaganda based on "holiness" of the dominant clergy for ever, and showed the real face of the regime's leaders whose only aim is to hold on to the political power over the people. The most important example of this was the disclosure of Rafsanjani's hidden face during the parliamentary election. The fall of Rafsanjani to the thirtieth position in the Tehran parliamentary election, after all the vote manipulations and nullification of

hundreds of thousands of votes, is a strong example in proof of what came above.

The sixth parliamentary election and the election of the “villages and cities” councils along with the 2nd Khordad elections indicated that the court of public opinion have already strongly condemned the leaders of the regime. The regime’s leaders fear is that this trend is not reversible. Even if today, the regime can temporarily suppress the reformist movement, the historical place of the dominant clergy is a place similar to the monarchist regime.

The Process Of Reform Faced With Conspiracies From The Reaction And The Problems In The Path Of The People's Movement

The Plenary Meeting of the CC of our party held last May, referring the vast attack of the reactionary forces against the process of reform, appropriately noted: "the regime, under increasing pressure of the mounting popular movement, and its radicalization, feels so threatened that it believes that it can hinder the growth of the popular movement for freedom and for eliminating "valayete faghih" regime, planning attempts at coup d'état, e.g. toppling Khatami's government, and if necessary, closing the sixth parliament and suppressing the reformists completely. the main issue that the CC of our party has to address at this critical juncture, knowing all the problems, difficulties and complications, is the type of tactics should the popular movement use to confront these conspiracies....

Millions of people through their complex and onerous struggle in recent years, have gained invaluable experience and have shown that, with admirable vigilance, they are able to confront the conspiracies of the ruling reactionary regime. Knowing that the ruling reactionary regime attempts to drive the society towards violence and shedding blood through the creation of turmoil and

intrigue, our party believes that the popular movement should resist the conspiracies of the regime with full force and without resorting to any unplanned and nervous moves and with further organizing its fronts. Obviously, knowing the trend of developments, all possible shapes of struggle, such as taking sanctuary, objections, strike and demonstrations can be and must be used to confront the scheming of the reactionaries.

In order to get organized and overcome its superficial weaknesses (as in a feeble and inconsistent leadership), the popular movement needs time and hence, it has to maximize its attempts to maintain the gradual trend of reform (from Nameh Mardom, No. 583, May 2000)

The Plenary Meeting of the CC, in its assessment of the current situation in Iran, concluded that the popular movement with its present weaknesses, is not ready for a direct confrontation with the ruling regime of reactionaries and therefore needs time to overcome its organizational weakness, improve qualitatively, and to attain a level of readiness for struggle required to defeat the scheming of the reactionaries.

The CC of the Tudeh Party of Iran, in the past years has emphasized another important principle: the significance of the role and impact of the vital struggle of the pro-reform social forces: workers, youth, students and the women within the today’s events of Iran. Pondering upon this issue to analyze class developments during the last four years, and the position of various social forces in the popular struggle against reactionary forces, deserves special attention.

Working Class And Its Position In The Struggle For Reform

the Tudeh Party of Iran, in its 60-year history, has always seen the working class and its allies (the rural and urban workers), as the most important and persistent social forces defending fundamental, stable and democratic reforms. The social and political struggle currently going on in Iran will have a definite impact on various social forces with different class interests. It will expose the unreal boundaries between “us” and “them” as opposed to the real boundaries between the people and the anti-people forces.

The program of the Tudeh Party of Iran, approved in the 4th Congress of the party, presents a comprehensive analysis of class developments in Iran after the revolution in 1979. According to this analysis, fundamental changes have shaped the working class in Iran after the revolution, the most important of which is the decline in the production in the heavy industrial sector and hence a decrease in the number of workers in the industrial sector.

According to the Yearly Report from the Statistic Center of winter of 1999, the share of the three major parts of economic activities in the last census of 1996: services, 44.5%; agriculture, 23.4%; and industry 30.7% (p. 106). An interesting development is the rise in a new spectrum of workers who work in agriculture, husbandry, fisheries and forestry. Economic depression implementing “economic balancing” and the vanishing of a large number of industrial units or the turning over of these industrial centres to the private sector has had a tremendous adverse impact on the working class and its struggle.

In the past four years, similar to what happened in the era of Rafsanjani’s presidency, the working class of Iran has been involved in a hard battle with the regime for its economic rights. Thousands of protests, small and large, all around the nation are a clear indication of the struggle and resistance of the working class against the destructive policies of the regime. These conflicts have been at such a level that the Hamshahri daily of May, 2000, wrote: “the

number of arrests, charges, and interrogation of the members of the labour organizations only the past one year rose to 10,000 cases.”

A thorough study of the struggle of the working class of Iran in the past four years points to specific problems and issues that require addressing: to understand the role and impact of the working class on the process of reforms. First of all there is the indication that the working class of Iran suffers from a lack of trade organizations, the lack of a single and independent labour centre, like the “Workers United Council” organized by the Tudeh workers in the 20’s. This prevents them from promoting its trade struggles in a coordinated and organized manner.

The existence of regime-created, yellow organization such as the “House of the Worker” only serve to control the working class and contain their struggles. They not only can play any role in organizing the labour, but also in most cases, their effort has been to deter the labour movement from growing. It is because of this very situation of disorganization and void of organized structure in the labour movement, that the regime, in most cases, has been able to abort the labour movement through media manipulation and brutal raids.

Successful examples of labour movement activities are the ones in which workers from various sectors participated jointly in their struggle and in an organized manner. The bright example is the protest of Kashan workers against the transfer of social and medical care hospital (built and supported by their own money) to the private sector. A very large number of people participated in this protest.

The movement of oil workers in the recent years has gained success whenever it was organized. Recently, the Oil Minister in Khatami’s cabinet, Bizhan Namdar Zanganeh had to back off after an organized protest by the workers in the drilling section of the oil industry.

In the past two years, we also witnessed some, limited, but united and organized, movement of workers in various manufacturing units against the passing of the bill that “excluded small shops of less than 5 employees from being by the labour law”. Here, specific political slogans were promoted. It shows that a scattered and unorganized struggle of the working class, mainly for labour rights, has limited the working class and its natural allies (the urban and rural workers) from achieving any gainsay, as they deserve, in the political events in Iran.

It is based on this fact that the working class has had a limited presence, compared to the youth, students and women in the daily political arena, as seen in the participation in the elections. This calls for a remedy. Creating independent trade structures and labour unions and centres for their coordination, must be a priority. Also, studying the possibility of creating of information channels such as independent labour papers should also be looked into, considering the available resources.

As the February 1979 revolution showed, a united and organized working class and its allies are capable of taking such steps as a general strike or breaking the resistance of the ruling regime of reactionaries. But this power and capability must be first organized and prepared. Thinking that the working class can be drawn into an organized struggle wishfully and with orders from the top is naïve, considering the objective developments in Iran.

This awareness must be promoted among the working people that the root cause of poverty, depression, a lack of job security that millions of Iranian workers and their families suffer from, all stems from the rule of "the absolute rule of the religious leader" regime and hence, the struggle for promoting reforms is in direct and inseparable connection with the interests of the working class in Iran.

The Youth And Students, And Their Position In The Struggle For Reforms

The youth and students constitute one of the most prominent pro-reform social forces in recent years. Obviously the movement of the youth and students has a broad and un-uniform class base, which inevitably impacts the struggle of students. A large portion of the class base of the students and youth is linked to the oppressed working people and the small bourgeoisie. The fundamental changes in the past years, has been in increase in the number of students and dispersing them all over the country.

According to the latest official figures (1998-99). The number of students enrolled in the universities and other higher education institutions in the country (except in the Islamic Free University) is more than 638,000; 371,000 of which are male and 267,000 female. Figures of winter 1999, also indicate another 668,000 (368,000 male and 300,000 female) enrolled in the Islamic Free University. This puts the entire student population in Iran at 1.3 million, who, in most cases, hold anti-reactionary tendencies and therefore, pro-freedom and pro-democracy.

A study in the specifics of the student movement in the past four years reveals its deeply political, progressive and democratic nature. The student population was the only social force that has a completely political character and stood firmly against the closing of non-mainstream newspaper. And so, it was the target of wide-ranging and violent attacks at the hands of the suppressing forces.

The outstanding and active role of the students in the political arena can be seen in their participation in presidential elections of June 1997, involvement in the city council elections and then their active presence and determining role in the sixth parliamentary elections February 1998.

The student upheaval of July 1998 following the savage raid by "the absolute rule of the religious leader" goons on the university dorms, and the participation of tens of thousands of fighting students in direct confrontations with the regime-backed thugs in several cities, is an indication of revolutionary radicalism of the student movement and its high level of organization as a social force. That is why after the events of July 1998, the student movement has always incurred the wrath of the ruling reactionary regime.

Radicalism has grown to such an extent in the student movement that DV, the office of fostering unity, which was given birth by the regime for the aim of "joining the clerical schools and the university", is today being accused by the same leaders as being "conspiracy centre against the regime": hundreds of progressive and freedom-seeking students and office-bearers of this office are being tortured to repent and to confess to pre-arranged scenarios by the regime's unjust bureaus of law-enforcement.

Events of July 1998 also showed that lack of unity and coordination between various social battalions defending reforms is one of the most serious problems of the movement in current critical conditions. While all the universities around the country were involved in a heroic struggle against the reactionary forces, no other social force came forward in support of the students in their struggle. The defeatist and subservient policies of the 2nd of Khordad had an effective impact in the defeat of student protests of July 1998.

Women's Movement And Its Place In The Struggle For Reform

Women's struggle against the "the absolute rule of the religious leader" regime and its anti-women policies in the last few years has risen to new heights. The brutal suppression of women's basic rights came in form of "legal" and inhumane policies, like the law of "ghesas" (religious retribution or punishment), the

regime's humiliating view of women. The fate of women in the society including millions of women from the oppressed strata of the society consists of enduring not only the burden of class oppression but also bear the brunt of gender oppression. This immense social force, the women, has emerged to be one of the most powerful allies in the struggle against the dictatorial regime.

Iran in the last several years has evidenced women coming to the forefront of political arena. Significant increase in women's action came especially amongst the students and the youth during the presidential elections on June 1997, during the city council elections later (which brought forth an increased number of women contesting the elections), and during the parliamentary elections a couple of years ago.

Women have increased their activities in the area of women's issues. The growth in different organizations around the country under various banners have served the purpose of educating and organizing. Many publications devoted to women's issues have surfaced and are increasing. They focus on issues concerning their lives and expose the anti-women's policies of the reactionary regime against the womenfolk. This has had a very high impact on the younger generation of women.

freedom-seeking and progressive women, and women in leading roles have come to the forefront in organizing. They will undoubtedly influence the coming events in the country. Support and active assistance for these activities and organizations should be put on the highest priorities by all progressive, freedom-seeking and democratic forces.

An important point to consider regarding the women's movement is that the forces of 2nd Khordad Front have not paid sufficient attention to the issues concerning women. It is hard to find anyone in its core group or its near associates that has advanced any idea or action regarding the advancement of women's status in the society or alleviating their sufferings. This weakness is

highly manifest in the dismal showing of the number of women candidates in the 2nd Khordad Front. The Tudeh Party of Iran uses all its strength in the advancement of women's status in the economic, political, and the social areas of the society.

Like the other disasters affecting the Iranian society, absence of rights of women is directly connected to and originates from the medieval and barbaric policies of the "the absolute rule of the religious leader" regime. For this reason, women in their struggle to improve their status in the society, should be and are a very vital force in the struggle with the ability to impact strongly on the struggle itself.

Moreover, it is crucial to point out here that the Tudeh Party of Iran, has never considered women's struggle as apart from the struggle of men, nor will it do so in the future. In the battle against despotism and reaction, both men and women are part of the larger social and political struggle of the people.

The Future Of The Reform Process, And The 2001 Presidential Elections

Dear Comrades!

The new year began with soaring tension and crisis in the country. At the onset of March 2001, the Tehran Revolutionary Prosecutor released a statement in which it declared "national religious groups" illegal, accusing them of attempting "to topple the regime". They arrested tens of national religious figures and closed four more newspapers and magazines. And they announced that the justice system would deal with the opponents of the "regime" with its full power.

In order to better understand the developments during the recent days, we need to look further back. In September 2000, the regime's Khobregan Majlis (the assembly of experts), ordered by

Khamenei, an extraordinary session. During a lengthy discussion about the political crisis in the country and the future process of developments, they drew up very important conclusions.

Rafsanjani, the main architect for the reactionary forces, mentioned the discussions in that meeting during his address at the Friday prayers in Tehran. He said: "unlike the ordinary conditions and previous meetings, members of the Leader's Khobregan Majlis, stepped forward to get more involved. In their meeting, they all felt that the enemies have entered the battlefield with many tricks and have targeted the Islamic character of the regime... The most important objective of the enemy in Iran is remove Islamic rule and there be no "the absolute rule of the religious leader" and the Khobregan Majlis. They focused mainly on this issue and were concerned..." And the core of his speech was that: "we are under such circumstances that we can not allow the nation's concern exist like this..." (IRNA, September 2000)

Our party at that time warned the popular movement of this and emphasized that such a statement by Rafsanjani is because "in his mind and in the minds of other leaders of the regime, this threat against "the absolute rule of the religious leader" is very real". As such, important decisions have been made at the highest level in the "the absolute rule of the religious leader" hierarchy about how to deal with the popular movement and the ways to stop and crush it..." (Nameh Mardom, No. 591, September 2000).

Since then, the process of reform and the popular movement have been facing continuous attacks from the reactionary forces in various areas. Superficial attempts at ordering the trial for secular thinkers, closing of critical newspapers, dismissal of Mohajerani from the Ministry of Ershad (Guidance), increasing the judicial muscle power against secular thinkers, arresting tens of writers, journalists and reporters, barraging a broad propaganda campaign and making false cases against the reformists, and finally increasing the violent and bloody activity of the regime-sponsored goons (a well-known case is the savage attack of "Ansar "the

absolute rule of the religious leader"” against DF, “Office of Fostering Unity” camp in KhorramAbad, and the stabbing of hundreds of students). These all fit in the large picture of a single conspiracy: a complete blockage of the reform process.

In addition to these attacks and following threats from the "the absolute rule of the religious leader" a similar campaign started against the Islamic parliament and the members of the 2nd Khordad Front.

In recent days, we witnessed that first Mohammad Yazdi, former head of justice department, and one of the most well-known leaders of reaction, stated in his Friday prayers in Tehran that members of the parliament do not carry the power of attorney and the term attorney in that sense does not apply to them. And then, as ordered by Judge Mortazavi, the notorious torturer, Ms. Fatemeh Haghighat, MP from Tehran, was summoned to court and accused of a critical speech and for “confusing public minds”.

The basic question is that the reactionary forces will use whatever tactics and tools to reach their goals. One can conclude from the news and reports that the ruling regime of reactionaries in no way want the event of 2nd Khordad (four years ago) to repeat on 18th of Khordad, i.e., on June 8, 2001. Before Khatami announced his candidacy, the reactionaries attempted to exclude him from the election scene and to hold a complete superficial set of elections, the type of elections in the ruling period of “constructiveness leadership” and put an end to the issue of reform, even in its current framework.

Statements made by Mohsen Rezai, secretary of “Tashkis-e Maslehat Assembly” and a close friend of Khamenei said that if Khatami intends to repeat the same old words, he better not take part in the elections. Otherwise, he will face the people’s (meaning, ruling regime of reactionaries) will and the “people” (armed and non-armed goons of the regime) will oust him. The barrage of propaganda by newspapers such as Kayhan and

Jomhuri Islami, clearly explained the wishes of the ruling regime of reactionaries: to have Khatami leave the 2001 elections peacefully.

Discussions about the perspective of developments in Iran, and the duties in front of the progressive and freedom fighter forces, have been viewed from various angles. Some ask this question that, isn’t it that “Khatami wants to reform the regime to safeguard it?” So how can one defend him and the reformists whose principal goal is some shallow reforms in order to protect the regime?

Of course this is not a new point of discussion. For many years, our party has dealt with the roots of such theories among leftists and will continue doing so in the future. The basis of such a thesis, i.e., “allow the society go towards explosion”, has its roots in “the worse, the better”, and there were times that our party was accused of being “reformist” and “revisionist” because of its support for popular struggles, and efforts to materialize national and democratic revolution without promoting the slogan of a socialist revolution. Our party, based on its scientific ideology, did not, and will not believe that popular and revolutionary movement is one that can be created from the top and with intention.

Social processes are very complicated and full of various influencing factors. If they are not paid due consideration, it will lead to either ultra-left or ultra-right results. In 1990, when our party declared its slogan, its line of action: “Discard "the absolute rule of the religious leader"”, it invoked a similar accusations. In response to these accusations, our party correctly pointed out that in order to achieve freedom and democracy, and to make fundamental and democratic changes, our society must pass transitional periods, and therefore it is necessary that the slogans and program for struggle of the progressive forces and parties to be developed and prepared consistent and in conformation to this principle.

The slogan: “Anti-dictatorship United Front”, which was calling upon all anti-monopoly and anti-despotism forces for cooperation and a united movement for discarding despotism from the country, also originated from such a viewpoint. The Tudeh Party of Iran has always believed, and believes, in this important principal that in the struggle against despotism, attracting allies or eliminating allies to achieve a specific goal, is not one’s wish. In each specific historic moment, and to reach a certain target, there are potentially united forces; and our, and other progressive forces’ duty is to covert these potential allies to actual allies.

The Plenum of the CC in May 2000, in its assessment of allies within the movement and about the nature of 2nd Khordad Front in Iran, emphasized that: “Coalition front of 2nd Khordad, is a front that has formed gradually in the past three years in the shape of an organized structure, made up of more than 18 socio-political organizations, acting around supporting Khatami’s government and confronting the monopoly forces defending violence and despotism; and in the events of Iran plays its own role.

The major weaknesses of this coalition is their notion of a boundary between “one of us” and “one of them” (separating between Islamic reformists and the secular forces) , the instability and non-persistence (not forceful enough) in evolving the method of government in Iran, and moving from dictatorship towards a people’s government.

As seen, such a front, although possessing of some common ground with our party’s proposed anti-dictatorial united front, it falls far from the real aspirations of the movement and those of the working people.

In summary, while the conditions of absence of democratic and political freedoms and the inability to have progressive and freedom-seeking parties and organizations legally, and while this front formed in Iran has some serious and sometimes disabling

weaknesses in dealing with daily events happening in the country, the very existence of such a wide spectrum of independent social forces has created the possibility that with proper slogans and with systematic work and informative communication, the goals of this front can be promoted thus creating venues for creating a united front against despotism, violence, monopoly and for the establishment of freedom and social justice.

Demeaning this wide popular front, because of its weaknesses and its non-persistence, unstable (and even in often protecting the “regime”) spectrum of political forces in it, will only harm the movement, weaken the position of the radical forces and eventually play into the hands of those forces “defending the regime”. (Nameh Mardom, No. 583, May 2000)

Besides the danger of “leftism”, and the danger of “rightism”, there is the danger of sliding to a position of supporting the government that has plagued the people’s movement. There were not a few people who considered the slogans: "Eliminate Velayat-e Faghih" and “ United anti-dictator front” as far to the left and believed that at this time, one must support Khatami and 2nd Khordad leadership unconditionally.

Of course these forces, in the past, had similar views in defending Rafsanjani as a “pragmatic man” of the regime, and even considering the selection of Hashemi Shahroodi as head of judicial authority, a step toward the reform. Supporter of these views practically were asking the movement to follow the uncertain and conciliatory forces, and considering any confrontation with reactionary forces as extremist and hasty.

This frame of mind does not give much credence to the mass movement of social forces as the principal defender and motivator of reform. This is true with Khatami and his supporters who think the continuation of the reform process could only be achieved by negotiating with the top.

According to this view class struggle, revolution and masses social movement has come to an end and any effort to organize peoples struggle is considered pushing the society toward violence. Even in the past few months, it has been said that “our society has not been ready for all these changes”, and maybe it is necessary to “compromise our wishes”.

The “right-wing” view wants to reconcile the Velayat-e Faghih regime with the people. This position is seen prevalent among some of Khatami’s supporter, the 2nd Khordad Front leadership and some of the opposition forces. The opinion of moving within “constitutional” framework with the excuse that there are progressive elements in it, is trying to cover the fact that with Velayat-e Faghih regime, the constitution is nothing but an instrument used by reactionary forces to preserve the dictatorship regime.

The “right-wing” view declare our party’s slogan of “Eliminate Velayat-e Faghih as pushing the movement to confront with religion. They oppose it because they see Velayat-e Faghih as a religious principle and not as a political governing institution in our society that is an obstacle to any movement toward establishing freedom and social justice.

In summary, the “right-wing” are vehemently opposed to the main position of the Tudeh party of Iran which says that fundamental, democratic and stable changes are not possible within Velayat-e Faghih regime and only by discarding it will make it possible.

Comrades!

During the elections 2nd Khordad, our party, on one hand witnessed huge masses of people got drawn into the struggle and, on the other hand, we also observed weakness in the struggle, especially in the leadership of the movement. Through past experience, we could not hide our concerns in this regard.

It is obvious that the conditions set for the elections were hardly conducive: undemocratic and the disqualification of 334 out of 338 registered candidates. Not only was a protest registered by the Tudeh Party of Iran but also by the wide spectrum of the national and religious forces. In the June 1997 elections, our party while clearly and vigorously exposed the true reactionary and backward-minded nature of the Nateq Nouri, it could not accept the Mr. Khatami’s views (and the focal point of his campaign) regarding freedom and civic society being possible within the context of “Velayat Faghih”. Our party’s policies during the June 1997 elections can be viewed in the context of the people’s choice of a candidate of their liking and the outright rejection of the candidate of reaction.

Four years after June 1997 elections, people in our society still live in an atmosphere where reactionary rulers deny free and open elections. They even attempted to have Sayed Mohammad Khatami disqualified on grounds of religious and legal issues. For this despotic regime, even a unenergetic, incapable and half-hearted government of Khatami poses a threat and should be removed.

So, in context of this assessment, the question that arises is which choices do the people have in front of them. We still believe that the people’s movement should decide the tactics and strategies with the prime goal in mind, and that is: maintaining the trend for reforms and advancing them. The people’s movement still needs time for organizing and consolidating its ranks and avoid at all costs direct confrontation with the reactionary forces.

With the above in mind, it is clear that like the June 1997 elections, there is only one real choice facing the people. And that is to defeat the candidate of the ruling reactionary regime.

Fellow Compatriots!

For the past four years, many times, you have used opportunities arising from cracks within the armour of the regime and with the growth of social forces, pro-reform and those advocating social change, you have wisely crossed many hurdles along the way. And you have thus delivered a crushing blow to the ruling regime of reactionaries.

During the elections of the town and city councils, you voted for those candidates who had been disqualified by the regime's "Heyat-e Nezarat Bar Entekhabat" (credentials committee supervising the elections), accused of being anti-"Velayat-e Faghih".

Later you implemented an effective and massive boycott of the elections for the regime's Majlis-e Khobregan, the council that works to solidify the reaction's foundations. After that you went enmasse to heavily defeat the regime's candidates in the parliamentary elections. All this shows the level of elevated understanding and remarkable flexibility in choosing appropriate tactics of struggle to rub the reactionary noses in mud.

Today also, all the progressive and freedom-seeking forces alongside you, free-spirit and dignified people, once again face the arduous task. Millions of Iranian workers, toilers, youth, students, and women who had participated with great hopes in the heroic event of June 1997, rightly feel disappointed that the promises made by Mr. Khatami were not fulfilled and not honoured. They ask the forces composing of the 2nd Khordad Front and their leaders, in case they get selected, to announce clear plans for fulfilling those promises, to remove the society from the dead-end situation it currently is in.

Today, the reaction knows the crushing defeat they would be facing in the June 2001 elections. But they will resort to all kinds of devious tricks to counter the massive presence of the people at the scene. And the people and the progressive and freedom-seeking forces are aware that this election is not for the election of

one person but a vote for a plan for fundamental changes. It is also a vote against a despotic regime, against what the 2nd Khordad front calls the oppressive rule.

The Tudeh Party of Iran, as in 1997, does not agree with Mr. Khatami's vision which claims the possibility of freedom and civil society within the context of "Velayat-e Faghih". However, in reality, considering the existing, imposed circumstances and the necessity of an active presence in every aspect of the people's struggle against "Velayat-e Faghih", active participation in the June 2001 elections is a must.

In this elections, on the one hand, we have candidates of the ruling regime of reactionaries: hidden, ashamed, half-ashamed and light-weight. And on the other hand, we have Mr. Khatami, the candidate of the 2nd Khordad Front.

Most people know, and so do most progressive and freedom-seeking forces, as do most forces of the 2nd Khordad Front that the June 2001 elections is a vote for continuation of the reform process and a vote against the demands and vicious tricks of the reactionary forces.

The Tudeh Party of Iran, while fully endorsing an active participation in the June 2001 elections and voting for the candidate of 2nd Khordad Front, it views the vote as a step in the direction effective to creating conditions for profound changes and the total elimination of "Velayat-e Faghih".

Organizing an anti-dictatorial front comprising of all forces defending freedom requires options for the movement to establish a popular government.

Comrades!

The last four years experience has clearly shown that the present reform process , the 2nd Khordad Front and other forces that believe in the “system” face grave danger of being blocked and or suppressed by the current regime.

By drawing a line between “one of us” and “one of them” as envisioned by some members of 2nd Khordad Front clearly shows that at any turning point these forces would hold on to their own group interests and preserving the “system” over national and people’s interests, they are liable to sacrifice the later over former.

Today most social and political forces who defend reform and democracy know that without organization, without promoting the quality of the movement and creating a real alternative for the present dictatorship regime there would be no hope to advance the reform process and bringing to reality the aspirations of the people’s movement.

Today people’s movement needs a radical and strong leader who believes in freedom and social justice. Such change is only possible by forming a united front of all forces defending freedom and opposing dictatorship. Today more than any other time, the need for a formation, of such front is felt deeply , and this is the duty of all progressive, national and religious forces.

Today our society is going through a transition, a transition from a medieval dictatorship government to a condition set for forming a national coalition government, and for preparing the foundation for fundamental and democratic changes in our society.

Today the despotic sword is not only hanging over the secular opposition but also is aimed at a broad spectrum of national-religious forces who were allied with regimes’ leaders, which clearly shows class struggle in our homeland. A class struggle whereby, on one side, is a dictator governing and representing

small group of commercial capital and bureaucratic bourgeoisie and, on the other side, a vast social group of workers, labourers, the middle class and national capital.

This is the nature of the current critical class struggle in our society and therefore the formation of a united anti-dictatorship front of the classes and groups mentioned above is the only certain option to advance the reforms ahead and opening a way to create a possibility of fundamental, permanent and democratic changes in our homeland.