

# Celebrating the Centenary of the Communist Party of Iran

Document of the Enlarged Plenary Meeting of Central Committee (Feb. 2020)

Dear Comrades,

June 2020 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Iran. Although the seeds of the labour and social democracy movement in our homeland were planted and grown during the Constitutional Revolution (1906) - and had a decisive impact on its development and victory - the Iranian labour and communist movement in the form of an organised and cohesive party formally began in June 1920 with the founding of the Communist Party of Iran led by the prominent figure of the Constitutional Revolution, Haydar Amo-Oghli (also known as Haydar Khan).

The history of the left and Marxist ideas in Iran dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. With the rapid growth of industry and the development of the capitalist mode of production, Marx's teachings found their way to Iran. The social and political arena of that period could be summarised, within the historic development of Iranian society, as the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The nascent capitalism of that time was growing, albeit sluggishly, while in parallel the birth and formation of the working class was taking shape. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, under the influence and impact of progressive left-wing views, the anti-dictatorship struggle grew significantly, and a growing number of people began to join the revolutionary struggle. Abdolhossein Agāhi, our martyred comrade and a prominent historian, wrote in his book, "The History of [political] Parties in Iran", about the growth of socialism in Iran: "For the first time in Iran, in [an edition of] the newspaper "Iran" (March 1917) an article from "Akhtar" newspaper (printed in Istanbul) - [originally published] on the occasion of the 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Paris Commune (March 18, 1871) - [was reprinted] in which socialist ideas were introduced [to Iran]. The paper ("Iran") explained the reason for publishing that article and wrote: "The socialists are growing daily in promoting their objectives... It is now almost 20



*Figure 1: Haydar Amo-Oghli, Leader of the Communist Party of Iran, 1920*

years since these [ideas] have been introduced in Europe.” The author explained “the main objective of this group” by writing, “[They] want the wealth of the nation to be shared by the poor and working people, so the poor and working people have prosperity... Many have written extensively about this.”

Although the historians do not agree on the precise date of the beginning of the social democratic movement in Iran, they all share in the same notion that the Social Democratic Party was the first organised party, by relative standards, in Iran and one that had an active role in the initiation and development of the Constitutional Revolution. The revolutionary activists of the social democratic movement, such as Asadollah Ghaffar-Zādeh, worked hard for the victory of the Constitutional Revolution.

It was during this time that underground political organisations influenced by Marxist views and ideas were formed in large cities of Iran like Tabriz, Tehran and Esfahan, to mobilise the people on the revolutionary road. The social democratic movement in Iran continued its activity, amidst the setback faced by the Constitutional Revolution and then during WWI, both inside Iran and in exile (in Western Europe and, particularly, in Russia). At the outset of WWI, a group of social democratic activists (“Mujahedin”) and Baku oil workers - led by Asadollah Ghaffar-Zādeh Kāteb, Bahram Aghayev, Baba Hashem-Zādeh, Rostam Karim-Zādeh, Seyfollah Ebrahim-Zādeh, and others who were organising workers’ protest demonstrations - [banded together to form]the “Edālat” (Justice) Party.

Amongst them was a political group that Ali Müsyo, one of the prominent intellectuals in Tabriz, formed in 1898. This organisation [“Edālat”] later became one of the most powerful centres of the anti-dictatorship struggle. Social democratic ideas were first introduced to Iran by those Iranians undertaking seasonal work in the Caucasus and Asian regions of Russia, and particularly to work in the Baku oil industry - where more than half of the oil field workers were Iranian. Outstanding Iranian revolutionaries like Haydar Amo-Oghli (one of the prominent leaders of the Constitutional Revolution and later to become the general secretary of the Communist Party of Iran) rose from amongst those workers. In 1904, a political party called “Hemmat” (Endeavour) was founded in Baku to organise the revolutionary activities of social democrats among the working people of Azerbaijan and the Iranian migrant workers. That same year, Ali Müsyo began to circulate flyers and pamphlets published by the Baku, Tbilisi and Tabriz branches of the Russian Social Democratic Labour (Bolshevik) Party, in Tabriz and other Iranian cities. As well as this, Müsyo translated the material into Arabic and had it circulated in Iraq, in Baghdad and Kāzimayn. Copies of “Iskra” (Spark), the central publication of the



*Figure 2: Ali Müsyo, a leader of the revolutionary social democratic current in Iran, 1898*

Bolsheviks, were also sent to Tabriz via Baku in 1901 and 1902. The dispatch of "Iskra" to various destinations was organised by Lenin himself and his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya. When Haydar Amo-Oghli returned to Iran from Russia in 1904, he formed the first cells of the revolutionary social democrats with a few of his comrades in the city of Mashhad. One year later, on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution, the first formal document of the social democratic movement of Iran was ratified in a meeting in Mashhad. After the setback of the Constitutional Revolution (the 1908 bombardment of the parliament by Mohammad Ali Shah, known as the "Minor Tyranny") and later on during WWI, the Iranian social democrats continued their revolutionary activities both in Iran and in exile. After the victory of the February 1917 Revolution in Russia and the overthrow of the Tsarist regime, the Iranian revolutionaries that had migrated to Russia took the chance to make their organisations public and overt, build up their activities, and open the party offices and labour centres. The Social Democratic Party of Iran, "Edālat", was founded in May 1917 in Baku and published its program in two languages: Farsi and Turkish. On page 12 of the Farsi text of the program of "Edālat" Party, it reads: "One of the demands of the Party is transformation of the life and the social relations based on socialism in order to end the exploitation of the working people by those who rule the society."

The first convention of the Social Democratic Party of Iran, "Edālat", which was held in June 1920 in the Northern city of Anzali, saw the foundation of the Communist Party of Iran (CPI). In general, the course of the political [currents] [in Iranian] society at the time of the foundation of CPI was the continuing dominance of anti-colonial sentiment, after the failure of uprisings in the north of Iran, and the influence this in turn was having on the restricted interests of various classes and layers within the society. Therefore, there existed many large organisations of anti-colonial forces in numerous parts of the country - particularly in Qazvin, Hamedan, Kermanshah, etc. These organisations were the remnants of various political parties - such as the Democrats, Social Democrats and others - which took a specific form and name depending on the areas and backgrounds of the personalities involved in their development. The Communist Party of Iran aimed to work among these scattered organisations after moving its headquarters to Tehran. However, due to a lack of experienced cadres, the CPI was not yet able to lead these scattered movements, and therefore aimed to upgrade the level of organisation in those formations. To this end, and to improve the competence of these organizations in theoretical studies, it first published the paper named "Haghighat" (Truth), then "Kār" (Labour) and, later on, regional papers such as "Nasihāt" (Advice) in Qazvin, "Peyk-e Rasht" (Messenger of Rasht), and other similar publications. In this period, another progressive and militant party strongly under the influence of the October Revolution was the Socialist Party, which leant towards the interests of the middle layers of the society, under the leadership of Soleymān Mirzā Eskandari, a renowned figure of the Constitutional Revolution. A close cooperation was formed between the CPI and the Socialist Party (SP). Indeed, such was the close relationship and unified activities of the two parties that the British consulate mixed them up in its reports back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At that time, the intellectual

youth of our country showed the interest and initiative to form cultural, literary and theatrical groups and centres. In some cities, these associations were formed alongside the political organisations. Among the most significant centres were the Cultural Association in the northern city of Rasht, the Culture Association in Qazvin, the Educated Association in Anzali, and the Prosperity Messenger of Women and the Patriotic Women in Tehran. The CPI and SP had a significant role in the activities of all of these associations.

The years prior to the founding of CPI, i.e. the 1910s, had also witnessed a growth of the labour movement and development of labour strikes. In these movements and actions, the workers demanded their rights - such as 8-hr workdays. Comrade Agāhi writes in his well-researched book that in 1920 the Central Council of the Labour Unions of Tehran was formed, which had a significant importance in the history of the union and labour movement in Iran. This Council expanded later on and was joined by labour unions from other cities. According to various statistical reports, in early 1922 there were ten labour unions with about 10,000 members active in Tehran - a city with a population of more than 200,000 at the time. In Tabriz, with a population of 200,000, the labour and trade unions had about 3,000 members. In Rasht, with a population of about 40,000, the labour unions had 3,000 members. The membership of the fishermen's union in Anzali and its suburbs was 3,000, 30% of whom were Russian. In that same city's port, the dock workers had their own union with 200 members. Trade and labour unions gradually took shape in other cities of the country too. In this period, as a result of the organising and leadership activities of the unions, the strike movement grew and the labour unions successfully organised numerous actions in early 1922, a few of which included the strikes of print-shop workers, bakers and textile workers - all in Tehran - as well as strikes by workers in Anzali, and so on. Most of these strikes had economic demands.

Once the dictatorship of Reza Shah took power in 1925, the assault of reactionary forces on the union and labour movement expanded and escalated. In the same year, and on the eve of the elections for the Majlis (legislature/parliament), Reza Shah issued an executive order to dissolve the Central Council of the Labour Unions of Tehran. A broad campaign against the communist and left forces began. Ultimately, in 1931, Reza Shah had a notorious bill passed by the puppet Majlis - later to become known as the Black Law. Based on this law, all communist activities were banned in Iran. It was in this same year that Taghi Arāni joined the leadership of the CPI. The new leadership of the CPI, whose main goal was to unite the ranks of the organisation, started publishing "Donya" (Universe) magazine in early 1932 which was basically a political-theoretical communist publication. For



*Figure 3: Dr Taghi Arani, Leader of the CP Iran, 1930s,. Murdered in prison*

the first time in Iran, this magazine introduced a materialistic worldview to what was an immensely religious and old-fashioned society. Reza Shah's police force arrested Arāni and a number of the leaders and cadres of the CPI in 1937 - these detainees were later nicknamed as "The 53". The detention of "The 53" effectively meant the end for the CPI. A few years later, Taghi Arāni, the driving engine of this party, was murdered in Reza Shah's jail after having been subjected to continued torture.

After the Allied Forces (WWII) removed Reza Shah from power and "The 53" and other political prisoners were released amidst the loosening of the grips of dictatorship, the Tudeh Party of Iran - as the party of the working class of Iran and the true follower of the CPI and great revolutionaries like Haydar Amo-Oghli and Taghi Arāni - was founded in October 1941 and began its activities, and once again raised and waved the victorious banner of the struggle of the working people of Iran.

Dear Comrades,

As evidenced by the history of the last century, the communists and the Tudeh Party of Iran have an historic and unique role in the political, cultural, and social development of Iran. No propaganda, neither by reactionaries nor the mouthpieces of the imperialist media, can deny that - it would be a futile effort. As a result of the activities of the communists - and particularly the Tudeh militant activists - the teachings of Marx, Lenin and other works of the international revolutionary movement, were translated into Farsi and widely published and distributed throughout Iran. The theoretical and social wealth of our Party - and its extensive grassroots base in the 1940s and 50s and later on during the victorious revolution of 1979 - has been such that even the opponents of the Party have also testified to it. The influence and weight of Party ideas amongst the intellectuals and the impact of its popular base in promoting and strengthening the demands of the working-class movement and other working people of Iran is attested to by numerous impartial observers of Iranian history and society. Some of the most well-known Marxist works that have been published by the Tudeh Party of Iran in Farsi are: the core works of Marx and Engels, including "The Capital" translated by comrade Iraj Eskandari; a large portion of Lenin's works translated by our comrade martyr, Mohammad Pourhormozān; two reference books on Dialectic Materialism and Historic Materialism authored by our comrade martyr, Hooshang Nāzemi (Amir Nik-Aeen); a number of important works on political economy and imperialism by our comrades Farajollah Mizāni (Javānshir) and Ra'at Mohammad-Zādeh (Akhgar), both members of the political bureau of the Party's Central Committee, who were executed by the Islamic Republic regime; "The History of Political Parties in Iran" and numerous other works by our comrade martyr, Abdolhossein Agāhi; publications on the history of the Kurdish people by comrades Rahim Nāmvar and Hassan Ghezeli; key works on the movement for the emancipation of women from gender discrimination by the late comrades Malekeh Mohammadi and Maryam Firooz; extensive brilliant literature on Marxist ideology and theory, linguistics and history by comrade Ehsān Tabari; as well as valuable works by comrade Rahmān Hātefi (Mehrgān) who lost his life under the barbaric tortures inflicted by

the theocratic regime ruling Iran. In addition, prominent figures like Ali Omid, Shenāsāei, Mo'alem, Hosseinpoor Tabrizi and others had a superb role in the labour movement in Iran and in the history of the contemporary struggles of the labour and communists of our nation.

In short, the publication of hundreds of books and pamphlets as well as high-quality political, social and cultural journals and magazines - all publicising the ideas and teachings of Marxism-Leninism in the Iranian society; organising peasant and labour unions; organising student activities; forming progressive organisations for emancipation of the Iranian women from the claws of reaction and gender and class discrimination; introduction of revolutionary programs and fighting for the rights of the workers and to enact the Labour Law; fighting for agrarian reform in the interests of peasants; fighting for rights of women to vote and to get elected; striving to implement public and free healthcare for all; for fair distribution of nation's wealth and for social justice; struggle for the self determination of all the ethnic peoples in Iran within the borders of a free and united Iran; struggle for freedom of political parties and trade associations; are amongst other ideas and campaigns that for the time were introduced by communists and particularly our party in our country with a creative form and content - were keenly and broadly received by the Iranian society. Thousands of Tudeh activists and other progressive forces mobilised and organised in the struggle to realise these ideas and fruitfully implement the campaigns entailed.

The broad meeting of the central committee of the Tudeh Party of Iran tasks the leadership of the party to organise a series of promotional and publicising programs over the next year, including the publishing of a book on this occasion, to mark the centenary of the foundation of the Communist Party of Iran.

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