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Privatization and Workers' Job Security

(From the supplement of "Nameh Mardom", Central Organ of the Tudeh Party of Iran No. 621, 22nd Nov 2001)

Recently, the media has carried several reports on the economic policies of the Velayate Faghih. Some of the policies have ratified as legislation in the Islamic parliament and the government. These laws that have been cleared by the Council of Guardians, too, directly affect the lives and the interests of the workers and other proletariat in Iran.

All these bills fall within the framework of the Islamic Republic government's third development plan comprising various components of the socio-economic direction of the Velayate Faghih Regime. Fully backed by the Islamic Republic leaders, this development plan reflects the foundation and basis of all previous 5-year development plans and should be implemented in its entirety. In this regard, when President Mohammad Khatami introduced his cabinet members to the parliament, Ali Hashemi, the head of the "Kargozaran" faction in the parliament stressed that no changes to the general direction of the economic policy of the new government would be possible, because the third development plan had already undergone the process of ratification and therefore, they should proceed on basis of this plan.

When this development plan was ratified by the earlier parliament, in our analysis, our party indicated that "this development plan is the worse than the previous ones as far as the protection of the rights and interests of the working class. For the regime's leaders, the working class, indeed the creators of material and spiritual wealth of the country, are not of the slightest importance. We see that in the name of job creation and improving production, very

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generous allowances have been made for the employers and the bourgeoisie, but no mention is made of job security for the workers or even a shade on their rights. The third development plan is against the interests of the nation. The anti-worker laws are actually the initial phase to an assault on the working class, to organized labour movement and its historical gains." Nameh Mardom, No. 580.

One of these bills that calls for support for restructuring of the weaving industry, was ratified by the parliament. It is a prime example of a chain of actions by the government threatening job security of millions of workers. And it will lead to a loss of almost 100,000 workers. The Islamic republic wants to attract foreign capital while being secure within the framework of the third development plan that would allow it to make any changes to the employment law.

The last report of the Directorate of IMF invites the leaders of Iran to accelerate privatization and restructuring of the public sector so as to facilitate foreign capital to implement the legislation and the employment law. Privatization of some of the oldest production units will lead to massive unemployment. Thousands of workers will lose their jobs. According to expert sources, the first phase of privatization of 5 public corporations will bring about the laying off of 10,000 workers. Neither the government, nor the corporations are willing to accept any responsibility for the consequence of such a massive unemployment in a very short time on the workers' lives.

The other aspect of this privatization bill is handing over the Iranian National Petroleum Corporation to the local and foreign capitalists. According to reports in the media, during a short and quick period all refineries and distribution units will be transferred to the private sector. Scattered protests against this plan in the gas and petroleum industry are growing. The oil industry workers are gearing up in their fight for their jobs. This resistance should be organized. Other the oil industry, the tobacco company of Iran will also suffer from the same fate in several steps soon. Currently, 12,000 workers are employed in this corporation. Out of these, 80% of them will lose their jobs as a result of privatization.

Based upon a report, the unemployment rate will exceed the 16.2% during 2001-2002 but specialists predict a fall out of more than 18% in the next few years. The depth of unemployment crisis is the direct result of the economic policies implemented by the regime through the development plan. Unfortunately, despite of the stark reality in front of him, President Khatami, actually believes that this development plan is the only way out of the crisis. He told the press no miracle is possible except through the injection of capital in Iran. He added that the country should provide a safe environment for foreign capital. Providing a safe environment for foreign capital is nothing but suppressing job security of the workers. The militant working class in Iran has resisted these plans. Extensive strikes in different parts of the county and in industrial areas have been very effective.

Well-organized demonstrations recently of more than 10,000 workers of the weaving industry in Isphahan shows the level of resistance of workers in combating against anti-worker policies of the government. Organized labour movement along with other groups of people will help improve the campaign against all these workers policies.

The fall of anti-popular regime of Taliban in Afghanistan

(From the supplement of "Nameh Mardom", Central Organ of the Tudeh Party of Iran No. 621, 22nd Nov 2001)

After more than four weeks heavy air attacks by the US on Taliban positions in Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Kandahar and Kabul, and following the invasion of Northern Alliance troops, Taliban regime collapsed and lost control over major parts of Afghanistan. The fall of anti-popular Taliban regime, which was dictated to Afghan people with the help of intelligence service of Pakistan reaction regime

and approval of the US administration, undoubtedly is a prosperous and fortunate event for the people of Afghanistan who were captives and under the yoke of bondage of a bunch of criminal reactionary forces for years. The black record of Taliban regime and its leaders, and especially the crimes that these dark-minded anti-humans organized and committed against Afghan women, is one of a kind in the contemporary history of human society.

Foundation of Taliban group goes back to mid 90's. In September 1994, Pakistan regime created an armed group of two thousands of Pakistan-resident Afghan scholars to guard the security of a business delegation that was passing from Karachi to central Asian countries. Following the success of this group, Nassrollah Baaber, State Minister at the time, who is known as the principal organizer of Taliban group, made a trip to Kandahar and Herat, and contacting several Afghan groups, urged them to support Taliban group. At the same time, Saudi Arabia government provided a great sum of money to Pakistani agents and Taliban, to supply Taliban with human resources and vast military supplies. All of these were organized and implemented with the direct endorsement of CIA agents and the US government in the region. This way, with the support from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the US government, a gang of mercenaries invaded Afghanistan; first created a blood shed in Kandahar, and eventually with the direct intervene of Pakistani military officers and other mercenary groups, captured Kabul and took over almost all of Afghanistan. In addition to the "Afghani scholars" residing in Pakistan, who were studying in 1383 religious schools in the North-Western provinces of Pakistan, close to 15,000 armed hired soldiers from various Arabic countries, whose main organizer was Osama Bin Laden, were among Taliban and committed dreadful crimes in Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif. It is estimated that close to 14,000 Afghani scholars are studying in these schools, particularly in "Jame-atol-eslamiah" and "Darol-Olum" which are located in Peshawar. These schools have traditionally enjoyed financial support of Britain government.

Taliban leadership is not very much unidentified either. Mullah Mohammed Omar, Taliban chief, was one of the commanders of Yuness Khaless group that hand in hand with the well-known criminal Hekmatyar, who was hired by CIA and Saudi Arabia, had committed many crimes in Afghanistan. One of the goals of Pakistan and Imperialism in imposing

Taliban group on Afghanistan was “establishing security” to secure the interests of trans-national monopolies, and oil companies in particular, and to build a main oil transport line from Central Asia, through Afghanistan and Pakistan. This was why right after the occupation and take-over of Mazar-e-Sharif by Taliban, American corporation Unichal talked about implementing the project of building main lines to transport oil and gas from Central Asia to Pakistan and through Afghanistan, and evaluated “establishing security” by Taliban as a positive step toward materializing of these projects. Besides this gas line project, tens of other important economic projects, such as building a railroad to connect Pakistan to Central Asia, Russia and China were on the table; in all of these projects, in addition to American companies, Japanese and European companies were also involved. During these years, a consortium consisting of American company Unichal, British Petroleum from Britain, Sayco Van Pex from Japan, Delta from Saudi Arabia, Hyundai from South Korea and Gary Saint from Pakistan, and also Pakistan’s Oil Ministry, finished preliminary feasibility study of building oil and gas transport main lines, and in the first place oil and gas from Turkmenistan. Ironically, with the mediation of Pakistan, a delegation of Taliban traveled to Washington in 1998 and negotiated with the White House and Department of Foreign Affairs of the US.

In addition to Taliban crimes in Afghanistan, the forces under the control of this group, and also “Osama Bin Laden”, have played a key role in originating civil war in Chechen and Kashmir, and in general disturbing the security in the region. These activities, in their general lines, have been in the framework of strategic targets of imperialism to reinforce its political, economic and military positions in the region.

As such, the fall of the anti-popular, criminal regime of Taliban in Afghanistan, is an event that any progressive and human-loving force in the region will welcome it. The fundamental issue in the current conditions is that what will happen to Afghanistan. According to the latest reports, following the fall of Kabul and other cities of this country, American and British special armed forces have entered into this country and have occupied parts of it under the pretext of “establishing security”. Imperialism and the Bush and Blair administrations in particular, would like to impose a dependent and “safe” regime on Afghans, which will ensure interests of these countries. Interventions of imperialism, equipping and arming “Afghan Mujahedeen” and creation of Taliban, all are proven historical signs that leave no optimism about the plans of goals of imperialism in Afghanistan. Of course,

all these interventions happen under the flag of “fight against terrorism”. And this is while various reports are indicative of return of Taliban to Pakistan and their former bases in this country, waiting for the right moment to go back to Afghanistan once again.

Progressive forces of the region, including Afghan forces, strictly oppose the increasing interference of American and British administrations with the internal affairs of this country. Progressive forces believe that United Nations has to play an active role in preparing the grounds for normalizing the conditions in Afghanistan and ruling of the wishes of the people of this country. Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic country in which any attempt to impose structures pre-fabricated in Washington and London, will undoubtedly result in further instability, and in the long run, more internal clashes and bloody fights. Establishing a temporary coalition government consisting of all political forces of Afghanistan, including progressive forces that have been one of main victims of the felony of “Afghan Mujahedeen”, attempting to create civic structures, disarmament of various armed groups under the supervision of the UN, creating national army of Afghanistan, and preparing conditions for democratic and free elections in this country, are among the steps that if taken under the supervision of the UN and without foreign intervention, can lay grounds for restructuring of Afghanistan, which has been destroyed under the batter of foreign interferences. What is happening in Afghanistan with no doubt will have its impact on our nation. Scenes of people cheer and joy after fleeing of Taliban and relative freedom of women, will not be impartial in our nation’s mind; a nation who is captive of a gang of dark-minded rulers that wish to establish a regime much like Taliban in Iran. The destiny of Taliban and its leaders is, with no doubt, a destiny that sooner or later will happen to the current reaction rulers in our country. This, however, can materialize only with the will of our nation, not with foreign intervention. Cheering of aristocrats for air bombing of Afghanistan and mass murder of its innocent people, and persuading Bush administration to replicate this scenario in Iran indicates rootless nature of these forces. The destiny of our nation and banishing of “Velayate- Faghih” can only transpire by the powerful hands of our nation; valiant workers, toilers, students and women of Iran, and in doing this, neither the people of Iran nor freedom-loving and progressive forces will allow intervention in internal affairs of Iran by any foreign forces and their agents.