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The Experience of the Presidential Elections and the Progressive Struggle

(From editorial in "Nameh Mardom", Central Organ of the Tudeh Party of Iran No. 716, 5th July 2005)

The elections for the ninth presidential term in Iran ended with the victory of Mahmood Ahmadi-Nejad, the candidate of the ruling reaction. The marred process of these elections, which according to some of the regime's leaders were the most heavily rigged elections throughout the rule of the Islamic Republic – as our Party had warned previously – provided the leaders of the regime with the opportunity to eliminate the reformists from the executive, thus gaining complete control of the legislative, executive and judiciary – for the first time in the 26 year history after the revolution.

Undoubtedly more time is required for a comprehensive analysis of the elections of 2005 and of the facts and events that started at the end of last year with the elections for the seventh parliament, and ended on June 25th 2005 in favour of Reaction. Although heated debate is still raging regarding the electoral tactics and policies of various groups and parties, regrettably rather than engaging in an objective analysis of the events, the debates are mainly aimed at justifying each group's own policies and attacking those of others. The complex problems ahead and the problems that presently face us are not dealt with in the debate. We explained our position regarding the party's policies, in issue 715 of Nameh Mardom, and see it unnecessary to repeat those points here.

the following three key issues, are among those that require attention in the evaluation of the 2005 election.

Firstly, the ruling reaction was able to exploit the differences in the ranks of the reformist movement on the adoption of election tactics. It relied on its vote among the dependent strata and groups loyal to the regime and sections on very low-income – who were not prepared to have Rafsanjani elected thereby repeating the dreadful experience of his earlier government – and also organised widespread electoral fraud, with the direct involvement of the armed Revolutionary Guards (Sepah) and the Mobilisation (Baseej) forces to get the desired results from the ballot box.

Secondly, during the electoral campaign, the reformers were unable to adopt policies - based on an understanding of the needs of the deprived masses of our country and the enormous problems they face – that would appeal to the society, especially to the wide spectrum of tens of millions of the underprivileged and those living under the poverty line. The campaign's focus on freedom and democracy which resonated well within the intelligentsia and parts of the middle class could not have had the required support among those strata in the society – who are unable to even earn a meager living wage.

Thirdly, part of the election strategy of the reformists was to defend the eight year track record of Khatami's (the outgoing president) government, which had in turn continued (in the main) the destructive socio-economic policies of the Rafsanjani government, and had failed to take any effective steps in meeting the demands of those on meager incomes in our country. The poor record of the Khatami government and his increasingly conciliatory position toward the ruling reaction, especially in the months leading to the election, undoubtedly played an effective role

in eroding the trust of large sections of social forces – especially the students – towards the reformists and distanced them from the scene of active campaign during the election.

Considering the foregoing, the main question before the progressive and freedom movement of our country is how to learn from the lessons of the past eight years and by so doing, to pave the way for the struggle ahead.

One of the positive developments arising from the presidential elections was the acknowledgement of the necessity of the formation of a broad front for democracy and human rights. The embracing of this idea by a wide spectrum of political forces as well as certain social forces created the precedence for firm steps to be taken in consolidating and organizing such a front. The work that began in the presidential election campaign must be followed up with principle and determination. With a democratic outlook which encompasses all the progressive and anti-despotism forces, the way must be paved for the formation of a strong and combative political front. Undoubtedly, the ruling reaction does its utmost to prevent the formation of such a front. Having experienced the sense of danger that threatened its existence in the past few months – ruling reaction intends to consolidate its position by calming the political situation and some social measures.

From a class point of view, the ruling reaction, represents mercantile and bureaucratic and parasitic capitalism in Iran; as such it is neither able nor willing to establish social justice and political freedom in our society. In other words, all the issues and problems that have intensified the contradiction and the ensuing crisis in recent years will continue unabated.

As the history of the past two decades has proved, the regime of Velayat-e-Faqih - the rule of the Supreme religious Leader - is itself the cause of the crisis and the main obstacle to the progress of our society. This contradiction will intensify further with the election of Ahmadi-Nejad and the homogeneity of the political establishment. The idea that people like Mesbah-Yazdi, Askar-Owladi, Khamooshi, Rezaei, commanders of

“Sepah” and “Baseej”, and the cronies of the reactionary leaders who amassed legendary wealth under the destructive policies of the regime of Velayat-e-Faqih, and form the backbone of an economic mafia in our country, and control the its main economic arteries, will miraculously select policies that contradict the methods used in the past twenty years and will answers the needs of our society and the tens of millions who have been crushed under the wheels of the country’s sick capitalist economy is only an illusion that the reactionary leaders and their propaganda network are trying to conjure and deceive the people by empty slogans.

The fact is that the immense socio-economic problems of the country cannot be solved with short-term allocation of funds or certain limited facilities. Massive unemployment and millions of people living under the poverty line, while the country’s production infrastructure and the domestic products of the country are in steep decline due to the incorrect and destructive policies of the past few years, may be resolved only through the adoption of popular and long term policies and more importantly the conscious political efforts for a fair distribution of wealth in society, a principle that is in serious conflict with the policies and aspirations of the despotic regime.

The presidential elections of 2005 were a painful and bitter lesson for all progressive and freedom-seeking forces of our country. The election of Ahmadi-Nejad is a blow to the popular movement and the reform process, and urgent efforts must be made to combat and neutralise it. This is not possible without consolidated efforts to build a broad front made up of all freedom-loving and progressive forces of the country. In these sensitive and important times, the Tudeh Party of Iran, once again declares its preparedness for cooperation and joint action with all progressive and freedom-loving forces of Iran in the struggle against the ruling despotic regime and hopes that with the efforts of all of us this important process will reach its desired conclusion.