

Tudeh News



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Economic Bankruptcy, and Escalating Poverty: The “Economic Miracle” of the Reactionary Regime

(Abridged from “Nameh Mardom”, Central Organ of the Tudeh Party of Iran No. 765, 26th May 2007)

In the process of the presidential elections of 2005, Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad referring to the increasing privation and poverty, promised to lead the society to social justice and reduce the poverty and privation by putting the “oil money on people’s table”. Close to two years after these promises, a look at the critical economic situation of the country only shows that the “oil money” and the national wealth has been put on the tables of the big merchant-capitalism and their dependants and also the high ranking officials in the anti-popular institutes and forces such as the Revolutionary Guard (Sepaah), etc.

Ahmadi-Nejad, amongst all the tensions and squabbles that is happening in full force in and around the ruling authority, claimed that his government has performed “a miracle in the economy”! In a recent speech ... after giving some statistics about the economic issues, he said: “The economists know that

this is a miracle. These numbers ... are our honor.”

To clarify the dimensions of the economic miracle of the reactionary government and the fact that the outcome of this “miracle” has filled up whose pockets, it is enough to look at the statistics given in the parliament about the performance of the government. “The volume of imports in the last year of the reform government (Khatami’s government – ending 2005) was \$28 billion, %75 of which was investment and intermediate commodities. In the last year, the country had \$50 billion worth of imports. The bulk of this amount is consumer goods ...The volume of cash flow in February of last year reached twice the similar value in the last year of the reform government...”

Ahmadi-Nejad’s “economic miracle” propaganda was propounded after the very important visit to Iran by a “World Bank” official...In his meetings the “World Bank” official gave strict recommendations to the economic policy makers of the government. Naturally, part of Ahmadi-Nejad’s “economic miracle” should be coming from these recommendations!

One of the most fundamental parts or sections of this so called “miracle” is the order related to [and deviating] Article 44 of the Constitution (which deals with nationalization) and its consequences which Ahmadi-Nejad has referred to as the big developments in the life of Islamic Republic. According to the government spokesman, the executive bill for implementation of the policies related to Article 44, and privatization of state institutes and activities, has been ratified by the cabinet. He added: “the executive bill of policies related to the Article 44 is one of the fundamental and important laws of the land which not only

deals with the privatization of the government companies but also addresses the economic monopolies and facilitation of competition.”

Also...the Council of Currency and Credit of the Islamic Republic issued an important regulation. According to this regulation, the establishment of the banks with joint Iranian and foreign capital, possession of stocks of the Iranian banks by the foreign investors, rapid privatization of the banks and establishment of the branches of foreign banks in Iran are permitted and legal...

The deputy chair of the Privatization Organization said: “this year the stocks of 240 public companies will be sold.... Their [investor’s] presence will be supported by the law...We go towards full privatization with strong steps.”

Another important facet of the “economic miracle” is the emphasis on the privatization of the oil and petrochemical industry, and also the sale of the refineries to the private sector, and giving low interest or interest-free loans to the private sector for buying the power generation plants.

In this regard, the 2007 budget bill that has been passed by the parliament allocates low-interest or interest-free loans to the private sector from the Currency Reserve Funds.

As reported by papers, “...Overall, 80% of the power generation plants will be privatized and the government will only keep 20% of the ownership of these plants...”

No doubt that the privatization of the power generation plants is to the detriment of the consumers who will be forced to pay a higher price for power consumption. This experience has been common in most of the countries which have implemented privatization according to the instructions of the IMF.

But, the most interesting part of these miracles is the type or the nature of the private sector that under the support of the Ahmadi-Nejad government is taking over the national wealth...

One of the privatized power plants is in the West Azerbaijan province. Who is the purchaser? Of course the Mostaz`afaan (Deprived) Foundation!...his same foundation contracted out the plant projects

to some of the companies associated with the Revolutionary Guard. These parasitic Foundations and the companies associated with the Revolutionary Guard are those “private sectors” that Ahmadi-Nejad government ... has focused its energy to serve.

The basis of the dispute between various sections of the ruling authorities in the political-economic arena ... are related to these types of issues and the takeover of the huge national wealth.

The deposing of Iran Insurance official..., etc. by the reactionary government and the positive and negative reactions from the different sections inside and outside the ruling circle, and especially presently the struggles inside the spectrum of forces inside the dominant reaction, are all over nothing but the possession of the national wealth... We shouldn’t be deceived by the superficial slogans of Ahmadi-Nejad and the gangs around him. These gangs are related to various layers of the big trade capitalists; their actions are based on their class interests and don’t stem from any national or democratic motivations. The struggle of Ahmadi-Nejad government in essence is the struggle of particular layers of big trade capitalists who try to get the upper hand. And this is why they hide their real goals and purposes under the populist slogans.

The big trade bourgeoisie didn’t lose any grounds after the revolution and their huge commodity and financial resources was untouched. This section of Iranian bourgeoisie has been active in foreign as well as domestic trade in the last three decades, and due to this, it has achieved a greater financial, investment and political position. This is the reason why the big trade bourgeoisie and its allies, and also the military, security and middleman gang that Ahmadi-Nejad represents ... are after strengthening their position in the ruling circle...

With the deepening of the economic crisis and increased pressure on the people, there is no doubt that we will witness increased social tensions and rising of people’s protest movement. That is why in the recent months, the leaders of the regime have prepared and performed a vast range of suppressive measures from attacking the

workers movement to threatening and escalating the pressure over the student and women movements.

Struggle against the destructive economic policies of the regime is an inseparable part of the struggle against the dominant dictatorial regime and the struggle to bring about freedom and social justice to the country. Countering these destructive policies is only possible by the common effort of all the freedom-loving forces and the active support of the social forces of the country. These forces should enter the arena of struggle against the dominant reaction with a political and struggle plan.

Contract Workers, Job Security and Labour Rights in the Supreme Religious Leader (Velayat-e Faqih) Regime

(Abridged from "Nameh Mardom", Central Organ of the Tudeh Party of Iran No. 765, 26th May 2007)

- *Member of the parliamentary judicial commission: over 90% of the country's factories are in trouble!*
- *General Secretary of the Workers' House: In 2006, over 200,000 workers in 500 production units are owed unpaid salaries (3 to 50 months backlog)!*
- *Fars News Agency: Currently more than 75% of employed workers are on temporary contracts!*

Since Ahmadi-Nejad has been brought to power, we have been witnessing an incredible growth and expansion of unproductive and middle-man economy based on devastating flood of imports – the first sign of which is stagnation and crisis in the manufacturing units and demise of domestic products. The labour in our country as a whole, and especially the working class, are the first victims of these policies. A while ago, ILNA news agency quoted the president of the “nation-wide contract workers union” that at least 30% of contract workers across the country are not paid their legitimate wages and benefits and it appears that the government has forgotten all about contract workers...

In a report on the conditions of contract workers, ILNA news agency clearly indicated that: “over 50% of the country's

contract workers are not receiving their rightful wages and benefits, and nothing is done by the Ministry of Labour to alleviate this condition ... and the inspectors of the Ministry of Labour are turning a blind eye to this issue.”

The lack of job security for workers and the prevalence of temporary contracts have direct connection with the policies of the regime ... in increasing privatization and reforming the economic structure. ...According to the president of Saveh Mining and Industry Association ...: “the biggest problem in industry today is a drop in production and thus a reduction of workforce in these units. Uncontrolled imports, cash flow problems, and aging of equipment are other problems of industry... Governments brag about facilitations for producers, but a producer must jump through several hoops before receiving any assistance...”

Destruction of production and erosion of job security of workers as a result of the policies of Ahmadi-Nejad's government have resulted in widespread use of a new method dubbed as “firing and re-hiring”... “Currently, workers with 12 to 15 years of experience without a single day of interruption are forced by employers to leave their jobs and then sign a new contract for less pay”, said one of the representatives of the Workers' House.

The Ministry of Labour ... has recently planned a new plot to weaken the workers protest movement and to confront the independent workers unions... Minister of Labour announced an interest-free loan to workers so they could purchase Iranian-made goods...He ... mentioned its aim as “fluidizing relations (meaning: providing security for capital and modifying the labour law) and creating a peaceful atmosphere to invest as an important step in reducing the problems of workers”!

The truth is that the anti-worker government of Ahmadi-Nejad and its Ministry of Labour are completely ignoring the rights of workers; an act that ... is in complete contradiction with recognized international standards including the international charter of union rights and the protocols of International Labour Organization (ILO), and is therefore ... taking away the rights of our

nation's workers. One of the most important issues in this regard is the right to organize and operate independent trade unions. In the regime of Velayat-e Faqih and especially in the current government, the working class and other toilers of our nation are denied this indisputable, obvious and legitimate right, and union freedoms and rights – like the other social and individual democratic rights – are not recognized...In their fight to gain job security which includes the demand for an immediate ending of temporary contracts, the workers and toilers of Iran need the organizations of their trade unions. The fight for union rights is a fight to achieve trade rights and benefits for all workers. Also, it is only with the existence of independent unions that steps could be taken to establish union rights based on the international charter of union rights... which is of utmost importance to workers in current situation. The working class and other toiling masses in our country are engaged in a harsh and critical struggle to regain their union rights. Unity, solidarity, awareness and detailed attention to the political developments in the country account as the essential conditions for succeeding in this decisive struggle!

Unity and solidarity of social forces and the urgent need to confront the plots of the reactionary regime

(Abridged from "Nameh Mardom", Central Organ of the Tudeh Party of Iran No. 766, 9th June 2007)

Constant aggression of the reaction against the higher education institutes and the student movement of the country is gaining broad dimensions and becoming more concerning than ever. The wave of arrests of the student activists at various universities, escalation of the activities of formal and informal thugs in the regime and the security forces disguised under "student mobilization", and the wave of open or hidden "cleansing" of educational institutes from the dissent forces, is a very concerning

trend that must be resisted with full power. The much hated and anti-popular regime of Velayat-e faqih (The Supreme Leader) and its bankrupt government started a planned campaign in the past two years to take revenge of, and eventually suppress and destroy the organized movement of students in the country's universities. This campaign is still being pursued. The main reason for the animosity of the ruling reaction against the educational institutes is the significant role of the student struggles in advancing the reform process in the recent decade, and the fact that the universities became the radical stronghold for union, social and political struggles.

The heavy defeat of the reactionaries and the leaders of regime in their attempts to take over the universities and turn them into "Islamic Seminaries", including numerous "cleansings" among dissent educational staff and detaining hundreds of freedom-loving students in the past 28 years, indicates this fact that despite all the repressions and pressures, the student movement, bearing its glorious traditions and history of struggle, has been able to continue its struggle and maintain its autonomy.... As one of the student leaders put it: "this time around, pressures are not limited only to eliminate contrasting views and opposing ideas, but also intend to physically eliminate the student movement through suppressing actions, arresting and detaining the students."

Raiding the student movement in the recent weeks started by dealing with Student Association of Amir Kabir University and arresting a number of its activists... Intensifying the efforts for solidarity with these jailed militants and with the student movement is inseparably and indispensably tied to integration of the struggles of social forces of our nation. Close ties between student struggles and the struggle of the women of the country (e.g. the active participation of the student movement in June 12, the solidarity day with the women of Iran), and also solidarity with workers struggles, will undoubtedly have a significant impact.

Student support for workers struggles, a valuable and instrumental step!

Following the escalation of terror and fear atmosphere by the ruling reaction, the labour and trade union movement has been faced with a new wave of pressure and suppression. Keeping the Sanandaj (in Kurdistan province) workers in detention on the May Day, and threatening and intimidating the union activists of "Vahed Tehran & District Public Transit Company" ... are a few to name... In connection with the same matter ... Mansour Ossanlou, the Chair of Board of Directors of "Vahed ... Union", was sentenced to 4 years in jail for the alleged and manufactured charge of acting against the "national security", and to one year in jail for the so-called charge of "propaganda against the regime"... Conviction of the Chair of the Board of Directors of "Vahed" union is not legitimate and is only a calculated action to put pressure on the union movement of working people in order to make it surrender. Meanwhile, and to support the struggle of workers, a group of university students in Tehran, with an admirable plan, rushed to help out the families of detained workers... While collecting donations to aid the families of workers, students state that: "the student movement that in the recent years has entered the battlefield with the slogan of 'Unity between Student Movement and Labour Movement' must take serious steps to help a powerful presence of labour movement in the social and political struggles and to express its solidarity with workers. Helping to form the strike fund and collecting donations for detained and fired workers is one of these steps."

In the current critical situation, this action of the student movement, which is an instrumental and helpful step, has a vital and fundamental significance. Any effort and attempt to strengthen the trade union movement is extremely vital and decisive. Hence, the support of student movement not only strengthens the labour union movement but also effectively helps the general struggle of people for freedom and social justice. On the other hand, defending the student movement and supporting it, which is under broad attack of reaction, is an urgent necessity. In such a critical situation, the student movement must not be left alone in this precarious battle. United

and broad effort of all the freedom-loving and democratic forces of the nation, and mobilizing an international, broad campaign in defense of university academics and students of the country are of utmost importance and all the possible power and potential must be utilized in achieving this.

June 12th, Iranian women's Solidarity day

(Abridged from "Nameh Mardom", Central Organ of the Tudeh Party of Iran No. 766, 9th June 2007)

It was two years ago on June 12th that after prolonged and passionate discussions, Iranian women decided to organize a peaceful demonstration protesting the misogynistic articles in the Constitution and the civic law.

In their statement ... they state that "in current situation, there are many hurdles on women's way to achieve their rights. In order to pursue our rights, we women have no other means but to raise our voices. In order to be able to have our voices heard better by other social groups, we need to support each other and be united."

Their "support and unity" objective was fruitful and thousands gathered in front of Tehran University on June 12th with slogans such as "we are women, we are humans, citizens of this land, but have no rights", and "freedom, equality are our basic rights", and once again showed their determination to pursue a persistent and tireless struggle for their human rights...

The reactionary regime could not tolerate this and tried to scatter them ... But the voice of independent movement of women had long passed over the tall walls of Velayat-e Faqih (Supreme Leader) despotism and had disturbed their dreams. Soon after, the press reported the demonstrations. Their final resolution stating their demand for changes in the misogynistic laws of the Constitution and their determination not to stop until achieving their goals was reported by many media. And to this day, they have kept their promise.

Furthermore, the women's movement could gather different groups of women with different tendencies (more than 50 trade

and non-governmental women organizations participated) around the cause of "equal rights", and spread women's demands openly and publically, and not in small circles... Women had previously proved, through their articles, papers and speeches, that their struggle for equal and human rights is part of the people's struggle for freedom and social justice, and not separate from it. Even the anti-women reaction has realized this and is trying to send women back to their homes, press down their demands for equality as "western" and "non-Islamic" ideas, and attempting to push forward their misogynistic and medieval thinking in a country that 65% of its university students are female.

Since the establishment of the government of Ahmadi-Nejad the repression of women in Iran has soared. In last year's June 12th demonstrations alone, 70 people were arrested and detained; this year 33 were arrested on the eve of International Woman's Day, March 8th, during protests, which shows how much the regime is scared of the increasing power of women...

Putting more pressure upon workers, students and toilers, meant that the women's movement was under greater strain as well; pressure was increased in many areas such as the media, films, books, etc. The word "woman" has been eliminated from Internet search engines and many e-publications are filtered frequently. Holding women's events is not permitted in public buildings and halls. Women activists are threatened to jail and torture if they dare to have meetings in their homes. Women's big "sin" is promoting gender awareness and for this, they are called "Soft Contra".

Women know that without organizing and promoting awareness among the masses, no change could be expected in women's situation, and women's issues cannot be solved from above and behind the closed doors... Establishing different independent and trade organizations for women, and working with them, is the most important weapon in the struggle against the anti-woman reaction, and can immensely strengthen women's movement. Participating in various campaigns that target revealing the inequalities, helps this process. For example, the "campaign of one million signatures" to abolish the anti-woman laws ... has had an effective role in

revealing those anti-human laws, and more importantly has targeted activity among the masses and organizing them.

By divulging the medieval law of stoning, "the campaign against stoning and capital punishment" has been able to mobilize the support of progressive minds against stoning, to a point that the Iranian regime was forced to announce that "there is no stoning in Iran". But women will continue their struggle until this law is legally abolished...

There is no doubt that despite the regime's oppressions and threats towards independent women's movement, today this movement has a tremendous active role in our country's popular movement. Women's struggles in various areas such as elimination of poverty, violence and gender discrimination in universities and stadiums, against restricting the access of women and girls to universities (gender quota), and for peace continues despite all the difficulties... The result of this struggle is, on one side, the presence of a new generation of women activists who participate in the struggle against reaction, and on the other side, divulging the misogynistic laws has made some elements of the regime to retreat – even if it is for their internal competition – and forced some of the religious leaders to take a position as to the necessity of making changes and revising some of the anti-women laws...

However, in this battle, the dark-minded reaction is not sitting idle...The recent assault on women for "unsuitable covering" (Bad Hijab) ... and the position of the State Minister with regards to "temporary marriage" as a means of resolving the economic problems of the country (!) and the escalating issues of drug addiction, prostitution, poverty, unemployment, and other social abnormalities, which in turn are the result of the anti-popular economic policies of the regime, are a few examples. Despite the fruitless efforts of the regime to suppress the progressive forces, including women, the popular movement of our nation will open its way. The independent movement of women is an indispensable and inseparable element of the popular and democratic movement of our country.
