

## THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TUDEH PARTY (MASS PARTY) OF IRAN 1941-47

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### ABSTRACT

This Article examines the Tudeh Party, which was the most important at this time. The Tudeh Party of Iran is an Iranian communist party. Formed in 1941, which supported by Soviet Union . Russia's extensive geographical border with Iran and the influence of Russian communism on Iranian migrant workers gave a special significance to Soviet policy towards Iran. Soleiman Mohsen Iskandari was as the head of Tudeh Party. Tudeh Party had considerable influence in its early years and played an important role during Mohammad Mosaddeq's campaign to nationalize the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and his term as prime minister. The crackdown that followed the 1953 coup against Mosaddeq is said to have "destroyed" the party, although it continued. In this article, I have tried to discuss and analyse the origins, platform, Organization , Influence and its Ultimate failure.

**Keywords:** Tudeh Party – Origan – Platform – Organization – Influence – Soviet Union – Mrxism-Leninism.

### INTRODUCTION

Within the Iranian political system during the period 1941-46 there existed a number of left-wing parties which exhibited the a varied range of Socialist leanings. The Tudeh Party ,as the largest, most influential and long-lived indeed of all the political parties ,was the sole true and full-fledged Communist grouping. Its proclaimed ideology was Marxist-Leninist ,not Socialist, and statements of this fact by the hostile central government were not refuted by the Tudeh Party. This situation has led the majority of observers of this period of Iranian history, both ignorant and informed, to assume the total dependence of the Tudeh Party upon the Soviet Union. The organization of the USSR on Marxist-Leninist lines and its proximity to and interest in, Iran prompted the natural but mistaken, idea that the Tudeh Party was nothing but a Soviet creation or a Soviet puppet. (Communist garlic,1959)"1".

This presupposition can clearly be refuted with the recognition that Communism was not simply an ideology wholly imported from the Soviet Union but had long-standing precedents

in Iran going back as far as the political aspects of the teachings of Mani (Kishavarz, K, 1975) "2" from 242-273 (Iranian ancient prophet) onwards and the ideology of Mazdak ( A Commonism Philosopher) "3" a century later .

### **(1) THE ORIGIN OF THE TUDEH PARTY**

The history of Iran has been punctuated by egalitarian peasant uprisings, and while difficult to show that the Tudeh Party was a natural outgrowth of such movements, it is clear that it would have made no progress in Iran if it had not found many who were predisposed to give a favorable reception to its ideas. Its beginnings can perhaps be traced to 1880. When an article on scientific socialism reprinted on from a Turkish paper was published in Iran. "4" together with an editorial comment while a year later Farhang in Isfahan published a series of articles by the Iranian political philosopher Jamal al-Din Asada badi (Afghani) considered the pioneer in the spreading of reforming ideas in Iran."5"

At the beginning of the twentieth century however much socialist influence was being gained from the Russian based social Democratic movement throughout Iranian socialist circles. The Tudeh was at its inception party to this reception, not as commonly assumed as a dependent grouping, but rather as an independent localized Communist party within Iran. The more secure footing of the Social Democratic movement in Russia made it the natural mutual ally or the tentative Iranian parties. Thus we shall begin our discussion of the origin of the Tudeh Party with an analysis of its initial connection with the Social Democratic party, and follow it afterwards with that of the Hizb-i- Adalat and the Persian Communist Party (PCP).

#### **Social Democratic Party (Ijtima iyyun-i Ammiyun)**

The most important character concerned with the SDP was Haydar Khan."6" He was born of a radical family and was influenced early on by Narimanov founder of the social Democrats in Baku. Haydar Khan was given the task of setting up an electrical plant in Mashhad. While in Mashhad, he was advised by Russian social democrats to establish a political grouping. However "7" he failed to achieve this because of the ignorance of socialist ideas amongst the population. As the factory venture proved unsuccessful he moved to Tehran, where his ideas did attract certain a certain following, even amongst the clergy.

At this time, the Social Democratic party in Baku "8" spread its influence throughout the Caucasus; after the Persian Revolution, it also seized the opportunity to spread into Iran initially through the exchange of ideas with Persian revolutionaries. The ultimate transfer of the party into Iran was the task entrusted to Haydar Khan.

Advice was given by the Baku organization to the Markaz-i Ghaybi (Secret Centre) a 12 man group of middle-class radicals in Tabriz who knew the Caucasus and assistance was also given to the Kunita-yi Sitara (Star Committee) of three Armenians and four other constitutionalists in Rasht and to Bahar and his intellectual group in Mashhad. The leader of the Kumita-yi Barq (Committee of Light) was Yefrem Khan, of the Armenian Dashnak party. By the end of the Constitutional revolution in 1909, out of the secular parties, the Social Democrats were second in strength only to the Constitutionalists. According to Tarbiyat "... during the first period of the Constitution, the only organized party was that of the Social Democrats".<sup>9</sup>

The Social Democratic Party had branches in the four Northern cities and several 'front' organizations, including in Anjuman-i-Azerbaijan in Tehran; the Mujahid (Fighter) in Tabriz, and the Mujahid (Fighters) in Mashhad. With a strong party newspaper in Tabriz, the party gained a major success in persuading 300 Armenian, Georgian and Russian volunteers to guard Tabriz and collected a force of Caucasian revolutionaries. Yefrem Khan, with the combined force of social democrats and Dashnaks, liberated Rasht and with help from the Bakhtiyar tribes captured Tehran. The membership, however, was rather illusory since the party was small. Weak constitutionalism, secularism and parliamentary reform.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the program of the Baku Social Democratic Party, which was translated into Persian by Tabrizi radicals, was more socialist—calling for land-ownership by farm-workers and universal religious freedom.<sup>11</sup> The Mujahidin merely stated that their program was in accordance with the principles of Islam, and in 1907 the program of the Mashhad group focused upon centralization, rather like that of the Bolshevik Party in Russia.

The radical element sought not a Marxist ideology: instead they looked for Caucasian support for the constitution. Haydar Khan rescued the party, when its *raison d'être* seemed lost with the defeat of the Royalists in 1909. He was supported by the radical Prince Iskandari, an ex-constitutionalist, and Taqzada from Tabriz, both of whom were wary of the label 'socialist' because of popular misconceptions of the term.<sup>12</sup>

Within parliament the party had 27 deputies.<sup>13</sup> Outside parliament Haydar Khan was the organization's leader. Haydar Khan probably avoided the Majlis because of his ignorance of Persian and therefore the non-parliamentary group was more daring in outlook.<sup>14</sup> They attracted the opposition of the ulama by their radical newspaper *Iran-i Naw* (New Iran) and by their violent tactics (for instance, the murder of Ayat Auih Bihbahani in 1910, which sparked off a spate of assassinations).

After the Anglo-Russian invasion of 1911 the party was weakened and its newspaper banned. Several socialists were executed and many more fled. The Iranian movement split into two streams following upon the Russian Revolution: Parliamentary Reform and International Radicalism. The Reformists were strongest in Parliament, the Radicals the Caucasian oil-fields. Haydar Khan meanwhile was killed in the struggle the Gilan movement which was partly communist. After the first Russian Revolution, Iranian radicals in Baku formed the separate Adalat (Justice) Party, which ultimately became the Persian Communist Party.

### **Justice Party (Hizb-i- Adalat)**

The origins of the early Adalat Party "15" are to be found in the social conditions obtaining in Iran in this period. The peasants of the countryside were oppressed by tyrannical landowners and lived abject hunger and poverty. In reaction against the harsh measures employed by the landowners together with the chance of employment. These peasants migrated across the near-by border into Russia, a large number being attracted to Baku where the oil refinery offered job opportunities. They were willing to stay, despite Iranian consular pressure and the cold reception they found, accepting low wages and poor conditions, because these were however unsatisfactory still more promising than the situation that faced them in Iran."16"

Several factors were responsible for the pull towards communism which attracted the Iranian workers Baku. Their strong sense of exploitation by the local landowners contrasted sharply with the principle of equality operating within the socialist party. The socialist party in Baku exerted large amount of influence itself -under the leadership of Narimanov and the sentiments expressed by the Russian Revolution. which favored the workers' cause "17" also attracted them.

The Baku party encouraged such feelings including the revolutionary flames aroused in the workers by the 1905 Constitutional Revolution in Iran. Such patriotic and revolutionary ideals compensated for the lack of education among the Iranian workers and thus inspired- as well as armed with weapons supplied in Russia- they returned to Iran to join the already existing anti-government constitutional groups. They were unable however to unite with the Mujahidin for the latter were supported by the landowners a compromise which was unacceptable to the workers, fighting as they were, on class lines. As a result of this internal conflict, the zeal of the returning workers was dissipated some were killed, others abandoned their revolutionary ideals. The later Adalat Party's membership formed around the dedicated core who retained their fervor and enthusiasm for the revolutionary cause. It should be noted that Iran was not ready at this point to accept or adopt communist principles and the party and blossomed when this receptivity had increased and strengthened within Iranian society."18"

The first official meetings of the Adalat Party were held in the Baku oil refinery following the collapse of the Tzarist regime. During these meetings the president A. Ghaffarzada- was elected and the constituent committees were formed. In this initial period, the Iranian workers were the most active members; they were anxious to prepare the ground for an industrially efficient Iran with strong worker element, but even more were eager to grasp those principles of communism with which to return to Iran and create within the country a democratic form of government. "19" This movement was due to unfavorable social and political condition within Iran.

The Adalat was a true workers party: its program and manifesto were adopted from the Social Democratic Party of the Soviet Union as were the methods employed by the latter party. A Council of Iranian workers was soon formed within the Social Democratic Party, its members numbering 50.000 by 1917."20" It established contacts with sympathetic groups Within It Iran itself, spreading propaganda throughout the country. so that within a short period secret branches of the party had sprung up, extending the party's influence from the Soviet Union, over Iran, and linking up with groups such as the Social Democratic party. Union between these two parties however. was not achieved, due to the divergent aims and ideas of both groups: Adalat accused the Social Democrats of furthering the interests the bourgeoisie to which many of them belonged and the Social Democrats responded by charging the workers interfering in the internal affairs of Russia in supporting the Bolshevik Revolution. "21"

The leading figure and most prominent member of Adalat was Ghaffar zada, elected as president Ghaffar zada was asked in 1920 by the Soviet authorities "22" to return to Iran to coordinate the work of the Gilan movement. His death at the hands of opponents of the Adalat Party before he was able to begin his activity had a dramatic effect on both the Gilan movement and the Adalat Party itself. It was responsible together with the formation of the Musavat Party in Baku, under the leadership of Rasolzada, for the weakening of the Adalat party Ghaffar zada was replaced by Pishavari

The establishment of the Adalat Party in Gilan, which was supported the Communist movement was part of the way communism was introduced into Iran. Its presence exhibited however, both positive and negative features. Although it emphasized class equality and land redistribution its actual grasp of communist ideology was weak, it opposed other was ideologies "23" and the party was fragmented into communist and non-communist elements who quarrelled between themselves "24" During this period, the party changed its name to the Persian Communist Party (PCP) and pledged support to the Soviet Union. "25"

After the collapse or uneasy alliance between communists and non-communists in the Gilan movement in July 1920 a National Committee for the liberation of Persia was set up, but its policies were deemed too radical for the present for state of the Iranian peasantry, and it was also seen at the 1920 Congress in Baku , organized by the Comintern."26" that the Iranian delegates were primarily anti-British nationalists rather than committed communists This led to a new thesis in October 1920 at the election of a new Central Committee (of the PCP), modifying the earlier anti-religious stance and the call for action for immediate land confiscation. However, a united front against Britain and the Central Government was effected by May 1921 and a first attempt was made to extend the party's influence beyond Gilan. On August 4, 1921, Gilan was once again proclaimed a Soviet Republic but the unity was fragile and the entire movement soon collapsed.

The methods of the PCP now shifted towards the creation of trade unions and peasant organizations and gradual infiltration through education and propaganda. The most fertile groups for the latter activity was found to be among Iranian upper and middle class students studying in Germany who were exposed to European democracy. These students became the core of anti Reza Shah sentiments and formed the backbone of the communist opposition "27" Germany became the centre of these activities since the PCP's movements were restricted in Iran by the policies and legislation of Reza Shah's government In early 1929, the students started publication of their monthly journal *Sitara-yi Surkh*(Red Star)."28" Later in 1931 another newspaper *Paykar*(Battle) "29" was issued fortnightly, edited by M.Alavi. The Iranian students, with the support of local German Communist Party. spread these publications throughout Europe even managing to smuggle copies into Iran. This fast growing student movement was felt a dangerous threat by Reza Shah. He therefore requested the German government to ban all such publications and prohibit further propaganda. At the same time he introduced a law forbidding similar propagandizing activity within Iran."30" The Germans acquiesced to this somewhat reluctantly, wanting to maintain their economic ties and good relations with Iran. *Paykar* was banned, and its editor Alavi, expelled. Despite this a new publication was started under the name *Nahzat*(Movement), which shared the same fate as *Paykar*. "31" In 1931. these students having attracted mass support among fellow Iranians studying in Germany decided upon return to Iran encouraged and led by Arani. "32" There as a consequence the propaganda law was passed by the Majlis in the same year and they were forced to work underground Secret discussion groups organized by Arani were formed from lower middle class elements, such as students, teachers, lawyers, judges and trade union leaders attracted through the communist publication *Dunya*, which was strongly anti-fascist, "33" and sports and cultural clubs were used as covers for these meetings. They were uncovered, however, in 1937. apparently through widespread infiltration by the Iranian secret police and 53 of the most prominent members were arrested under the 1931 law. Put

on trial in 1938, all denied being communists but 45 were convicted and given prison sentences. Arani received 10 years, but in his defence he vigorously upheld his dialectical materialism and attacked the 1931 law as unconstitutional and a He also violation of justice. He also claimed that both socialism and communism as intrinsic elements of western civilisation, could not be barred by Iran which was attempting to westernize itself. "34"

Arani died in prison 16 months later. His colleagues claimed that he had deliberately been refused medical treatment. while the authorities insisted that he had died from incurable typhus. However in 1943 Azhir stated that, although Arani had died from typhus, the authorities had purposely placed him in the cell of a former typhoid prisoner. The other 53 members convicted made contacts among other political prisoners within the prison and were definitely hardened by their prison experience. Upon their release in 1941, they then formed the nucleus of the new Tudeh(Masses) Party, whose leaders were Aran's colleagues from Europe.

## **(2) THE TUDEH PARTY (HIZB-I-TUDA)**

The release of the communists was part of the general amnesty brought about by the invasion of Iran by the Allied powers in 1941 when Reza Shah also abdicated. At this time all political restrictions were lifted and publications were allowed to circulate There was general upsurge of interest and participation in political affairs amongst the population, with a predominant desire to avert the possibility of another dictatorial role similar to Reza Shah's although there was no strong central authority to replace his former government. This might have presented the Tudeh party with the opportunity to establish itself in power. but several factors in fact prevented this from happening. Despite its organized structure, it was. still a young party and lacked the experienced leaders needed for the co-ordination of such program. On top of this, Iranian society was not really ready for proletarian role, which would have required a much greater political awareness than existed amongst Iranians at the time, and its leftist policies constituted a considerable threat both to the Iranian conservative elite i.e. landowners and capitalists and to the Western powers."35" The party organization closely resembled that or Western political parties and therefore created a left-wing challenge "36" to Iranian ruling class interests, which were right- wing, and to its foreign policy. The ruling class had traditionally supported imperialist countries such as Britain. If the Tudeh power it likely that a shift towards Communist governments would take place with the Soviet Union playing a major role . International and national pressure thus weighed heavily against its taking power although it was supported morally and ideologically by the USSR.

The Tudeh were however the only progressive party within Iran, and they defended the 1905 Constitutional law, together with the ideals of democracy. Although basing their principles on Marxism-Leninism, they were wise enough to endeavor to adapt communist goals to the particular conditions and format of Iranian society."<sup>37</sup> This accounts in part for their strong constitutional and nationalist emphases as well as for their argument in favor of the restoration to all those living in Iran of the rights promised them by the Constitutional Law. Such ideas and policies were revolutionary in Iran. In that they were extremely progressive and quite unknown in Iranian history, but the Tudeh cannot be said to be revolutionaries in a military sense, for they did not call for force and violence in order to obtain power, but advocated the parliamentary electoral system as the best way instead. This in fact seems one of their weaknesses, since they had no alternative options in the face of electoral fraud, which would leave dictatorship still in control. However they recognized that military methods would be unsuitable in the present climate and the likely reaction of the Allies to any threat to the status quo in Iran given the threat that fascism was posing internationally and the lack of mass organizations to influence and use within Iran itself.

Due to its belief that social conditions in Iran were not right for communism the Tudeh modified its approach by seeking to support the constitution. However, certain Tudeh enemies, such as sayyid Zia attempted to frighten traders and capitalists in Iran with the name of communism. Their policy was also influenced by the religious character of Iranian society. The vast majority of Iranians were devout Muslims -as indeed were many of the members of the Tudeh- and the party was anxious not to lay itself open to attack on the charge of being communists which they feared the Ulama (religious leaders) might bring against them. As a visible sign of respect, they thus held religious ceremony in commemoration of the death of Arani and also that of Mudarris, who had been the leading religious opponent of Reza Shah. "<sup>37</sup> The desire to avoid creating tension with the ulama, by adopting broad program, was one of the immediate aim which the party established for itself. The others included of release of the remaining '53' still imprisoned, recognition of the Tudeh as a legitimate organization, and the printing their own newspaper, to come out daily. These were mostly achieved quite early on, and by 1941, the party was declaring 'democratic centralization' to be its objective. The leadership had grown strong enough to impose its decisions on the organization, and as a result it divided into sub-committees around the cell structure the rural leaders were unaware of all the gains they might have reaped if they had emphasized the differences between the provinces and Tehran. "<sup>38</sup>

At the conference which was held in June 1942, the 120 delegates from all the Tudeh's sources of support who attended -and whom the Party hoped would create a nationwide basis- made a number of demands: they requested from the government allowance for greater class

representation in politics, the safeguarding of human rights- under which repeal of the 1931 propaganda law "39"(which had outlawed communism )was included. They called also for land distribution improved conditions for the peasant class and for legalized trade union activities particularly free collective bargaining and lastly they wanted to spread communist education throughout the country.

The party had reached national scale by the time of the Majlis elections in 1943-44. Its leaders came primarily from the professions – intellectuals, lawyers, etc., and the ranks were filled with various labor groupings. The party also organized a freedom front which ran 30 different newspapers"40"

In the elections eight of the Tudeh's 15 candidates were returned from the Northern industrial areas of Isfahan despite strong opposition from the British as well as from the Conservative elements within Iran "41" This meant that the Party now gained influence in Parliament and by having members elected, it thus legitimated its appeal, although it chose to emphasize not its communist nature but rather individual rights and general reform. Part of its strength also derived from the fact that the Tudeh deputies voted within the Majlis as a party unit."42"

Sayyid Zia Tabataba'i attempted to counter this widespread influence and support of the Tudeh by creating the rival National will Party."43" which according to Binder was backed by the British and closely connected to the court.

As a result of the effort to tar the Tudeh's image by accusing it of being an instrument of the Soviet Union Sayyid Zia himself came under suspicion from the Party, as well as from other progressive parties and the people themselves, who feared a dictatorship similar to that which they had experienced in 1921 which led to Reza Shah's dictatorship. Pravda's claim that Sayyid Zia was recruited by the British"44" to destroy the Tudeh and other democratic parties was indeed given credibility by his subsequent actions. "45"

The Party also faced opposition from reactionary Muslim tribal chiefs in the south. Qashqai and Bakhtiyari leaders were ready by 1945"46" to help Americans in Iran fight the communist infiltration which threatened their property. "47"

The Tudeh published its program (a remarkable act in itself) at the Congress held in early August 1944,"48" to which 168 delegates came. The points which were adopted covered a wide range and drew much support for the party. They included strong nationalist emphasis firm opposition to foreign intervention especially British"49" and affirmation of Iranian national independence- which to some extent rivalled the Nationalist movement the as well as a call for world peace. Internally, the Congress pledged support for the oppressed and

stressed the need for equality constitutional rights and liberties such as freedom of modernized religion, ideas and a modernized economic order.

The Communist nature of the Tudeh was purposely played down by the Party in comparison with its nationalist and patriotic character."50" The Tudeh believed that Iranian society was not ready to accept Communism. If it was offered to the people they would resist forcefully simply because it came too early and was not understood by them "51" This was a fact also recognized by the reactionary elements within the central government who realized its propaganda potential .They encouraged the populace to distrust Communists as tools of the Soviet Union: when the Soviet Union in 1944 asked for an oil concession in the North the Tudeh was associated with this Communist regime whose aim was the infiltration of Iran. "52" The Party did indeed support the request, but the background to the oil concession issue shows how its name was smeared by the government, which was clearly pro-West and anti-Soviet in government its attitude and policies. "53 "

The original oil concession granted by Iran in 1901 established the pattern of imperialist exploitation of Iranian oil. It was given quit rashly for the immediate payment of £400,000 a financial."54" boost to the sorely impoverished Iranian economy .D' Arcy was granted the right to work oil over an area that covered four-fifths of Iranian territory excluding the North."55" The concession was sold in 1909 to the newly formed Anglo-Iranian oil Company (AIOC), which itself was backed by the British government after 1914.

There was thus never a question of the AIOC's integration and sponsorship by local Iranian industry. It was foreign company, extracting oil purely for British use no subsidiary industries were established to help build up Iranian industry as a whole, or the national economy."56". Despite constant conflicts between Britain and Reza Shah over the concession in the South, the central government made repeated overtures to Western companies(Dutch and American)"57" in regard to oil concessions in the North. This is striking evidence of the pro-Western attitude of the government for such concessions were in violation of the Soviet-Iranian Treaty of 1921. In very generous terms, the Soviet Union there released Iran from considerable debts in return she requested the condition that country or foreign company should be no granted oil concessions in the area which formed her Southern border (Northern Iran) "58" The British oil concessions had from the beginning been restricted to the South, but the Soviet Union feared that a Western power might turn oil concessions in the North into an anti-Soviet base.

This was an accusation that was taken up, in a slightly different form, by the West and others when the Soviet Union approached Iran in 1944 with a request for an oil concession in

Northern Iran: allegations were raised that the Soviets intended to annex Iranian territory under the guise of oil concessions. In fact, a comparison of the economic position of the Soviet Union in 1921 and 1944, and of the terms of the British and proposed Soviet oil concessions, cautions against a too easy acceptance of this view.

In 1921, the economic situation of the Soviet Union barred it from extending any sort of help to Iran: in 1944 however despite the war she was one of the most industrially developed powers in the world. She was therefore then able to offer aid to Iran in building up the Iranian oil industry she also badly needed to replete her dangerously low oil stocks which she had drawn heavily during the war. The integrity of her wish for friendly relations with Iran and the support for an independently strong Iranian nation is shown at least on paper, by the terms of the concessions which she proposed. The Iranian government was to be given the entire right to control all the economical and technical operations of the company ;Iran would keep 50% of the oil produced; Iranians would fill two-thirds of the executive posts including the highest jobs Iranian technicians would be trained and at the end of the concession, all production, equipment, machinery, buildings etc. would pass into the hands of the Iranian government without any compensation whatsoever."59"

The Tudeh Party's backing of the Soviet request should be examined in the light of this background. The support which it gave to the granting of the Soviet oil concession was based the reasonableness of its terms and the benefit it upon would bring to Iran- not as an automatic response in favor towards the Soviet Union. The central government on the other hand, took this opportunity provided by the Party to smear the Tudeh's reputation by associating it with the popular concepts of Communism. Thus the Party's confirmation of the Soviet claim that an oil concession would safeguard the security of the that Soviet Southern border "60"was distorted by the central government which insinuated that the Tudeh's aim was actually the Soviet penetration of Iran :did not the Tudeh's own platform state that an economic presence was inevitably followed by political intervention, and did this not constitute a threat to Iran's independence?

The campaign initiated by the central government against e Tudeh's Party's backing the Soviet request was therefore an anti-Communist one Further evidence this inherent anti-Soviet tendency within the central government is found in the manner in which it rejected the Soviet oil concession after it had initially looked upon it with favor. The Iranian parliament passed bill introduced by the moderate nationalist Dr. Musaddiq which called for moratorium on all concessions to foreign companies until after the end of the war."61" Musaddiq's stand was an independent one: he genuinely disapproved of oil concessions to both the West and the Soviet Union. This bill formed however a very convenient foil for the central government

since it enabled them to refuse the Soviet request without making their pro-Western and anti-Soviet bias explicit. The disguise is shown up very clearly by the clause contained in the anti-foreign intrigues bill that protected already existing concessions i.e. the operations the Anglo-Iranian oil Company Furthermore the AIOC concession was even extended by 9 years in April 1944, and additional negotiations with foreign companies were continued and were expected to go through successfully. "62"

There is thus a clear correlation between the central government's pro-Western policy and its anti-Soviet and anti-Tudeh attitude. The former can be explained in terms of the traditional British (and Western) preservation of the status quo of the Iranian ruling class whereby their oil concessions in the South could be kept secure. Support for the West meant the maintenance therefore, of the government. "63"

Although the Tudeh Party's role in the issue of the oil concession to the Soviet Union must be viewed without the prejudicial government propaganda smears and therefore judged on less secure grounds than those normally applied, it nevertheless could have adapted more efficient measures and taken better precautionary action. The presence of a Soviet military contingent for example, during the demonstrations organized by the Party gave substance to the allegations that the Tudeh were preparing for, or at least favored Soviet intervention in Iranian affairs. "64"

The Tudeh Party might also have benefitted more from a policy which was directed towards the abolition of British oil rights in the South, instead of expending much energy in support of the Soviet Union from which they gained little result "65" Another pattern might have emerged if they had pursued a non-dynamic balance "66" The Party claimed that it did not possess the power to fight the British and would thus have had little chance of realizing that goal. This was not true, however for during the war the authority of the central government was weakened, and the Tudeh had widespread influence within it. Anti-British popular sentiment running high at the time the hatred felt against the British for their role in bringing Reza Shah to power was fuelled by their occupation of Iran "65". The claim that an oil concession would safeguard the Soviet-Iranian border was perhaps over-statement Iran being so weak could scarcely constitute threat, and the Soviet army was then considerably more powerful than the British forces if they were afraid of an attack by the British.

It might be said that in contradistinction to Dr. Musaddiq's negative equilibrium policy the Tudeh Party followed that of positive equilibrium. This laid them open to mounting propaganda that the Party was front for Soviet interests and activities, especially in view of their support for the Soviet oil concession. It was indeed one of the weaknesses of the Tudeh

Party, which a later reactionary government used to bring about the collapse of the Party. The political turmoil and the internal conflicts within parliament caused by the question of concessions sponsored by combined Soviet and Tudeh pressure, led to the fall of Said's government in November 1944. In letter Muhammad Reza Shah "66" Said declared that although he enjoyed the support of many of the members of parliament, he resigning both as result of Tudeh(plus soviet) propoganda, especially protests from Rasht and Tabriz against him and in the hope that by his resignation the conflicts would resolved, and the friction and differences be ironed out. He was succeeded by Murtaza Bayat, a popular choice, but it took 11 days before his appointment was confirmed due to the general confusion and argument. "67"

The Tudeh supported Bayat and his administration its initial days "68" but the new government swung to the right early in 1945. The new premier did not grant favors, as most previous governments had done and many of which had fallen because of lack of support from the conservative deputies. Bayat, too, was too weak to withstand the opposition much of which arose from British suspicion of the government's Soviet leanings (Sayyid Zia opposed for the same reason), and his government was dissolved. The next administration formed in Spring 1945 by Muhsin Sadr also moved the right arousing fears that the Soviet Union might not respect the withdrawal deadline of March 2, 1946. Sadr reacted to the militant stance of the Tudeh over the question of the oil concessions in the Spring of 1945 by closing the communist headquarters and suspending all newspapers. This formed the backdrop to the ensuing struggle in Azerbaijan"69" and Kurdistan, between the Tudeh, the Soviet Union, and the Iranian government.

### **(3)THE PLATFORM OF THE TUDEH PARTY**

The elements of the Tudeh's party platform can be outlined as follows:

#### **1- Man's right to internal freedom and independence:**

This was seen as the right to struggle against foreign imperialism and colonization which threatened Iran's integrity and her right to choose her own destiny. Economic as well as political independence was called for: economic dependence upon another power, the Tudeh believed necessarily entailed political domination by that power so that control within Iran should be solely in the hands of Iranian nationals.

Despite this clear indication of strong nationalist feeling the party's opponents "70" claimed that the Tudeh was pressing for the subsuming of Iran into the Soviet Union, in an effort to discredit the party. That the Tudeh did share Marxist-Leninist doctrines with the Soviet

government did not mean, however, that they wanted either political intervention or domination by the Soviet Union in Iran's internal affairs."71"

**2- The establishment of democratic role and the protection of the rights of the individual:**

True democracy would balance the economic status of all Iranians, as well as improving Iran's political system. Democracy did not exist at the present time contrary to claims made to that effect, because the landowners found it easy to pressure the poverty-stricken peasants to vote for candidates of their choice and those living in towns accepted bribes in order to supplement their very meagre incomes.

The Tudeh also urged the recognition of basic rights such as freedom of speech press, movement etc. within society as the necessary foundation for political system. The use of such rights must however, be regulated by and conform to the Constitutional Law: Law 13 with respect to the press, and 21 related to the freedom of movement. This emphasis upon the importance and centrality of observance of the Constitutional Law is a major feature in the Tudeh's platform"72"

**3- Dedication to the struggle against dictatorship:**

The Tudeh included in this the fight against the opportunist élite whose support was responsible for the maintenance of a dictator's rule. The 15 year dictatorial rule of Reza Shah, for example was made possible only through the co-operation and aid of a corrupt army and body of landowners so the Tudeh believed. "73"

**4- Cleansing and purification of the police system and civilian corruption:**

Corruption amongst both police and civilian elements was regarded by the Tudeh as a result of Reza Shah's dictatorship. A supreme court should be set up to deal with such offenders, with power to return property and money gained by this extortion. "74"

**5- Separation of civil and criminal law administration, and the abolition of all legislation passed by Reza Shah:**

This inclusion was designed to limit the power of Reza Shah and his police. The Tudeh referred to article 27 and 28 of the Constitution Low which stated that all legislation inimical to the interests of the people was forbidden: they saw in the Constitution Low a higher legislative authority than that invested in or held by the Shah. "75" Although comprehensive abolition was called for, the Tudeh's primary concern was for a repeal of the 1931 propaganda law, a repeal which would accord them a legal existence and the right to stand for election. " 76"

**6- Abolition of conscription abuses:**

The ending of improper exploitation of soldiers as house servants and manual workers for the officers, and the extension of their legal rights to include military training and maintenance grants during the period of their service . “ 77 “

**7- Improved use of land, and better conditions for the peasantry:**

The Tudeh believed that a lack of incentive, due to the fact that the peasants possessed no share in the land which they worked, combined with primitive tools and methods, were responsible for the unproductive state of agriculture in Iran. The party offered two solutions:

- (a) Government redistribution among the peasants of the large estates of wealthy landowners and those owned by Reza Shah;
- (b) The foundation of a bank to extend loans for mortgages, and the purchase of more sophisticated equipment.

The government should also fund and install an irrigation system to forestall the frequent threats posed by droughts; and set up health and education facilities to enable the peasants to increase their work hours and efficiency, and benefit from technological advance made in other countries. If all this was carried through, agricultural output would jump, aiding the economy by reducing imports and supplying goods for export. This was, in fact, a very progressive, humanitarian and nationalist policy. “78”

**8- The welfare of the workers:**

In 1943, no law existed which protected workers ‘ rights ‘ and the Tudeh thus set out an eight – point bill which they urged should be passed:

- (a) a maximum working day of 8 hours
- (b) overtime wages to be paid for time over and above that limit
- (c) responsibility of the employer for any medical cost incurred as a result of an injury sustained by an employee at work.
- (d) entitlement of workers to a specified number of paid weeks ‘ holiday per year
- (e) entitlement of each worker to a pension upon retirement
- (f) no child under 14 to be legally permitted to work
- (g) equal pay for male and female employees
- (h) 2 months paid post-natal absence for all female workers. “79”

The Tudeh worked widely amongst the working classes to awaken their class consciousness, encouraging them to fight for their rights by establishing a trade union movement, and urging them to support the Tudeh as the only party concerned for their welfare. Their party platform indeed makes clear how deeply committed to the workers ‘ cause the Tudeh party actually

was, a point illustrated particularly by their concern for female workers, an especially vulnerable group.

**9- Organization of the labor force:**

The fragmentary nature of cottage industry in Iran was harmful to the workers ' conditions ', so the Tudeh believed, and they accordingly encouraged the formation of unions, to remove the need for exploiting middlemen between the workers and consumers, giving the employees themselves more control over their work situation. "80"

**10- Reforms in civil service legislation:**

Fundamental change were required to reform the administration of the civil service: there was a large wage inequality which worked against the junior staff, who thus commonly accepted bribes, thereby corrupting the civil service administration, nor was discrimination made for those employees with large families to support. The Tudeh urged for a similar trade union movement to be set up, and also demanded that more educated currently unemployed young men be employed by the civil service. "81"

**11- Equal social, economic and political opportunities for women:**

The Tudeh party was the only party genuinely interested in a comprehensive improvement in the status of women in Iran. Women were exploited by the male society because of their economic dependence; the Tudeh aimed at establishing women's independence, leading towards a more humanitarian society. The employment of women would on the one hand create this independence, and on the other, would in the long run benefit the Iranian economy since the number of those working would be dramatically increased. "82 "

**12- Fundamental reform in education and health services:**

The Tudeh saw education and health services as a basic human right and as such it was the responsibility of the government to promote them: free and compulsory education up to a secondary level, with the inclusion of both art and political science in the curriculum (also at university level); a national health service covering the entire country, available to all on request.

**13- Reform of the tax laws:**

Social equality is the necessary foundation of society, and a fair distribution of tax impositions should require proportionately more from the wealthy than from the poor. Bribery of tax officials by the rich should be stopped. Linked with this, the Tudeh advocated a nationalized industry – otherwise, the profits accrued in private business went into the

pockets of individuals, and not into the state treasury from which the whole country received support.

Government should also subsidize staple foods and provide mortgages, while of the same time setting up co – operative schemes whereby the working class could purchase low – priced goods.

#### **(4)THE ORGANIZATION AND INFLUENCE OF THE TUDEH PARTY: 1941-47**

Even in an embryonic stage, the Tudeh party created an extremely efficient organization, which proved a firm foundation upon which to develop. Although it attracted many fee-paying members, its influence extended far beyond these, while they remained its core. The conditions for membership were three – fold: any candidate of Iranian birth, over the age of 23. “83” and who accepted the party manifesto was eligible. He was thereupon required to produce a written recommendation to the party signed by two party members, there thence admitted for a 6 months probationary period, during which he was expected to demonstrate his loyalty and enthusiasm for the party. If his behavior satisfied the party he was then made a full member.

His first obligation as an official member was attendance at all cell meetings and payment of membership fees: 30 rials for men, 15 rials for women and young people, monthly. Within the party, a feeling of unity, together with strict adherence to the regulations was fostered, and all members were expected to acquire such methods and knowledge as was necessary for the fight against the enemies of the party, and to actively engage in propaganda activity in their immediate environment. “84”

Each member had the right to vote and stand for election for any post within any organization of the party structure. “85” He also shared in policy decision – making, participating in the group discussions held for that purpose, and was free to raise objections against either a particular point or person. Praiseworthy behavior – enlisting mass support or gaining financial aid, for instance – was encouraged by verbal or written commendation, while conversely, measures leading to expulsion could be taken against detrimental activity: disciplinary measures were taken against non-attendance of cell meetings non-payment of fees false accusations against fellow members or creating factions within the party: expulsion could be enacted in the case of traitors who betrayed the party. There was, however a right of appeal against expulsion taken before the National Congress which set up a special commission of investigation.”86”

The organization of Tudeh was founded upon the democracy and conformity to the party line as, expressed through a chain of authority. This chain represented the from the single cell unit through various levels of gradation, from the central committee of the party - the structure of all Communist organizations; the Tudeh similarly multiplied committees etc. in order to reach as many people, of varied class and background as possible.

The cell(hawza) forms the active centre of the party structure. It operates with a minimum of 3 persons, and is the place where plans are made, and the party line and doctrine expounded; its meetings were normally held in the work-places of its members - schools, factories etc. A secretary, responsible for the functioning of the cell, was elected every 6 months.

Where a number of cells exist in localized area delegates from each are elected onto a co-ordinating committee, which in turn elects 5 delegates yearly to the local committee the executive organ of the party in that area. Above the local committees are the regional committees which cover districts or even provinces. These are made up of either 7 or 15 delegates elected from the local committees every 2 years. Meetings these committees are held quarterly, when a report for the past 4 months is given and an outline for the next presented. Also present is a delegate from the central committee who informs the members of policy developments to which they are expected to conform.

The supreme organ of the party is its National Congress. This meets every two years to discuss top level party policy, with a view to adapting or changing it if necessary, and to elect a Central Committee. At the first National Congress of the Tudeh in August 1944 "87" it elected 11 members to this Committee, and set up at the same time a nine-member Control - a political bureau - to replace the office of President and a three-member Secretariat, which was reduced to one general secretary in 1946 to facilitate the work of organization.

The party also established its own publishing house the leadership, while realizing that the press was the most effective means of propaganda for gaining support and spreading the party's influence were rather shortsighted however in their indifference to the fact that the readership limited to was intellectuals living in Tehran(where most of the publications were produced); even if the newspapers were distributed throughout other cities there was a 77% illiteracy level among a the very people they were hoping to influence. Despite this a continuous stream of publications flowed out starting with Siyasat, issued a few weeks after the party's reception in 1941. Siyasat was succeeded by a new organ after the Tehran Conference, when a special section for publication was created In 1943, the daily Rahbar was started but was replaced by Razm when Rahbar was censored by the government - this immediate substitution being a standard procedure of the party .The official papers of the

party were, as a rule, published clandestinely. Thus, through its own publications and also through those who supported the Tudeh party line, such as Nabard, Azhir, Farman, Iran-I ma, Darya, Damavand, Najat-i Iran, Ali Baba, Arman-i Milli, Zafar, Shu lavar, Tawfiq, Iran, Umid, and Mihan Parastan- "88" the party exerted extensive influence both over and through the Iranian press.

The areas of the Tudeh's most intense activity were: the North the provinces of Azerbaijan, Gilan and Mazandaran (as well as Isfahan), because of their proximity to the Soviet Union the south, where the Anglo-Iranian oil field were situated as the party was eager to foster nationalist feelings amongst the Iranian workers against the imperialist' British and naturally, in the capital, Tehran.

In spite of concentrated effort in these Northern provinces however, the Tudeh had an only limited success .The peasants in these areas were largely ignorant and illiterate and easily manipulated by the wealthy landlords antagonistic to communism. The tribes, too, were a stubborn element: in the North, they were almost solidly for the Shah - as the Shah Savan(Lovers the Shah) tribe in Azerbaijan exemplifies: while in the South, they were under the thumb of the British who manipulated them with financial and moral support and threatened them into resistance to the Tudeh's successes, which, as a result, was virtually nil. The party had somewhat greater success among the minorities living within Iran- the Armenians, Kurds Assyrians etc. It promised them equal rights and status with native-born Iranians, but it was still in Azerbaijan the province most heavily affected by the Soviet occupations that they had most influence; this was substantiated later on, when in 1945 the Azerbaijan Democrat Party was formed, with whom the Tudeh collaborated.

The greatest influence exerted by the Tudeh was really among workers and intellectuals (students and professors). The party was able to create the very powerful Central Council of Workers Syndicates in Iran. which by 1945 numbered some 100,000 members and which gained much ground for their demands through strikes and demonstrations. The appeal of the Tudeh to students is evident in the fact that in 1951 up to 75% of students studying at Tehran University had pro-communist leanings, while many lecturers, secondary and primary school teachers were sympathetic to the movement. The party also organized a special recruitment drive among religious students with a large measure of success some of the religious leaders Baga T for example - were even attracted which, however proved to be shortlived "89" A limited number of government officials lent their support, as did substantial core of young army officer but a mass response was elicited from woman in Iranian society, since the Tudeh was the only party interested in promoting and fighting for their welfare and advancement: including the equal status with men."90"

The Tudeh was thus faced with three main obstacles the resentment and antagonism of the ruling and middle-classes who traditionally benefited from exploitation of the peasantry and lower classes: strong opposition from the central government, as well as from the British, both of whom fiercely resisted any form of communism and restriction caused by the weight of Islamic orthodoxy within Iran, which was naturally anti- communist. Despite these difficulties, however, the party built up a solid mass of support in a very short time and quickly became a driving force and catalytic influence within Iranian society.

### **(5) CAUSES OF THE FAILURE OF THE TUDEH PARTY**

Several clearly defined areas can be identified as connected with the reasons for the failure of the Tudeh Party. One resides in the class structure of Iranian society. Another is the nature and expectations of that society and a third Centres upon the Communist element within the Party and government-inspired reaction to it.

Leaving aside to begin with this last point, the manipulation of society played a significant part in the lack of success which the Tudeh Party achieved. A wide gap existed and continued between the Party organization and its supporters because of the fear created in the atmosphere. Tudeh ideology, initiative and leadership came mainly from the Western-educated elitist middle-class. Its main appeal was on the other hand, to the working class, which it genuinely considered to constitute the grass-roots of society. Although successful amongst the Trades Unions and workers, the Tudeh never completely bridged the class chasm because of central government claims that it was intolerant of alternative ideologies the manifestation of this governmental resistance lay in the fact that the Party received little support from upper- class elements. This capitulation of socialist ideal to personal interest is a universal phenomenon.

Another popularly-propounded claim was that the Tudeh gave little recognition to minority groups. The central government manipulated the suspicion within rural communities of Marxist Persian-speaking leaders with Shi'ite backgrounds who controlled the Party from the capital and, it was believed neglected minority problems. In fact there was steady adherence of various minority groups and this interest was strengthened and developed after 1945 in the context of the Firga-yi Democrat movement although much suspicion was fuelled by insular perspectives in certain areas.

Any success by the middle-class in revolution is worthless without rural support. The Tudeh Party faced with the choice of peaceful parliamentary reform or violent extra-parliamentary revolution, chose the former (yet failed and to prepare alternative program if the principal

measure ended in failure). The Parliamentary solution, however, was never viable as long as the rural community was tied to the landed elite since this alliance prevented radical middle-class from attaining a majority in the Majlis. It seems then, that the Tudeh Party should have opted for violent action in that situation and to counter governmental propaganda. Popular dissatisfaction with Reza Shah's regime was such that this course may well have worked.

The period of active Tudeh campaigning was much compressed because of suppression against the party: the effect was that the party took every chance it could to get its message across to the masses: hence, for example the coalition with Qavam, which was entered for this reason though I agree it was a bad idea because it came to be suppressed.

The Tudeh could not create a united front in time and could not harmonize all the democratic forces against the governmental plotting. If, for example Tudeh had more successfully created a united front with centralized leadership in the case of the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan in 1945, it might thus have supported and protected the democratic government and survived central government suppression. In other words, the causes of failure amongst democratic movements must be sought in the disunity of the progressive forces of Iran.

These errors of judgment and approach were exploited by the central government to label the Tudeh Party as treacherous and to create popular antipathy. Marxist-Leninist ideology smacked of atheism to the devout masses. In a country with a 75% illiteracy level, knowledge of communism was limited or reduced to an ideology of godlessness a popular assumption of which the central government made much capital. Secondly, due to widespread political ignorance communism was indissolubly linked with the Soviet Union all communist parties were, by definition, instruments of that country. It was an easy task for the landowning classes on both accounts to portray a Party so openly identified with communism as a threat to personal and national integrity.

A caveat must be added here however. Despite the common association of the Tudeh and communism, it is not a straightforward or simple connection. The Party was a strange admixture of paradoxical contrasts. The backgrounds of a number of its leading figures indicate a religious influence that was not entirely suppressed. At the same time the Party exhibited both patriotic and nationalist tendencies - its upholding of the Constitution and Law, for instance. Thus although the Communist factor was obviously one of importance it should not be used as a criterion on a simplistic or reductionist level.

The strength of the existing government and military loyalty and power was matched by such strong religious faith that undisguised diluted communism was unacceptable. Left or on its

own, the Tudeh helpless, mainly due to a lack of was armaments .The Party was ultimately defeated by internal reactionary forces and their Western backers, and its own tactical errors.

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