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The Tudeh Party of Iran and the land reform initiatives of the Pahlavi state, 1958–1964

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The period between 1953 and 1964 featured an assertive attempt by Shah Muhammad Riza Pahlavi to consolidate his authority over politics and society amidst the occasional resumption of overt and cautiously tolerated internal oppositional activity. Pressured by the Democratic administration of John F. Kennedy, the Shah acquiesced during this period to the rise to power of the last prime minister autonomous from the royal court, Ali Amini, who started his tenure amidst the suspension of parliamentary activity following the annulment of the elections for the twentieth legislature in 1961.¹

The Amini government laid the foundations for the ambitious programme of social reforms, later called the White Revolution, which was enacted during the term of Amini's successor Asadullah 'Alam in 1962–3. As aptly summarised by the Pahlavi-era insider Gholam-Reza Afkhami, the core tenets of the White Revolution rested upon 'two controversial foundations: land reform and women's rights.'² The six-point blueprint for the Revolution also consisted of four further reforms which had been initially approved by decree by the Amini cabinet: a law nationalising forests and pastures, the sale of state-owned factories to the private sector to secure funds for the purchase of land, ensuring the distribution of industry profits amongst workers and the creation of a Literacy Corps as a way to combat the still widespread illiteracy.³

The introduction of land reform was by far the most ambitious and contentious element of the White Revolution, as it sought to upend the foundations of the *arbab-ra'iyat* (landowner-peasant) framework which had defined national agrarian relations for centuries. Championed and spearheaded by the fiery and outspoken Agriculture minister Hassan Arsanjani, the land reform initiative marked the culmination of a long set of debates over the reform of the country's archaic patterns of rural land ownership which had emerged following the end of Riza Shah's reign in 1941. The land ownership issue retained importance into the 1960s, as around half of Iran's GNP still derived from the sector and the strong majority of Iran's population remained of rural residence into the latter part of the decade.

The White Revolution was a reform process carried out almost entirely within the confines of the Pahlavi elite and was significantly shaped by the latter's increasing interaction with American economic advisers. It did however come about during a period in which opposition movements such as the National Front and the newly-formed Liberation Movement, as well as former members of the Tudeh Party inside the country and the new leadership of the party abroad could make their stance known through their presence within domestic and expatriate public spheres. The Pahlavi land reform initiative also touched upon several remits which were initially broached by the Tudeh during the party's attempted mobilisation of the peasantry between 1941 and 1953.⁴ The Tudeh also notably produced the opposition's most comprehensive and substantial contemporary analysis of the core features of the White Revolution.

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This article will focus on the Tudeh Party's attitude towards the Pahlavi state's land reform initiatives between the first land ownership bill of 1960, which was stymied by the spirited opposition brought about by the senior Grand Ayatollah Husayn Burujirdi and the end of the first phase of the land reform programme. It will therefore also provide insight into the party's initial attitude with regards to the 15 Khرداد (5 June 1963) protests and the emergence into the political field of Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini and will gauge the extent to which the party's initial assessment and posture towards the cleric was due to its views over the land reform process.

This study will mainly draw upon the contemporary Tudeh press and internal party documents of the time, memoirs of party cadres and leaders as well as transcripts from the broadcasts of the party radio station, Payk-i Iran. It will only provide a broad overview of the White Revolution, which has been studied at length elsewhere.⁵

The state's approach towards land reform in the 1950s

The end of the Mossadeq era in August 1953 left the vexing issue of land tenure unresolved. Throughout the following decade and beyond, the large majority of Iran's population were of rural residence but did not benefit from ownership over most of the land they cultivated. According to a survey from various sources presented by Afsaneh Najmabadi, at least 60 per cent of arable land was owned by absentee landowners, with sharecropping being practised on at least 62 per cent of all agricultural terrain prior to the initiatives of the early 1960s.⁶

The first post-coup administration of General Fazlullah Zahidi merely resorted in April 1956 to slight modifications of the 1952 bill proposed by Mossadeq for the amelioration of the condition of the peasantry through a complex system of councils designed to foster progressive improvements.⁷ Land reform legislation, however, regained momentum by the end of the 1950s. One of the main reasons behind increased state attention to the agrarian question is attributable to the increasing impact of American aid in the development of agrarian strategies. This process started in October 1950 through the first Point Four programme, which consisted of 'an integrated health, agriculture and education project for improving living conditions in rural villages in Iran.'⁸ Najmabadi pertinently notes how the importance of Point Four went beyond providing technical assistance despite being initially focused on the training of peasants and the improvement of their existing conditions and 'was most instrumental in putting land reform on the development agenda for Iran.'⁹ In September 1952, Point Four expanded its remit to include advice and financial assistance for the Shah's own plans and ambitions within this remit, which were initially espoused during an extended visit by the monarch to the United States in November 1949. Speaking to the press at the Astoria Hotel in New York, the Shah explained that priority had to be given in Iran to agricultural and irrigation matters, with the aim of ensuring that peasants would live with 'comfort and dignity' and revealed that he had a plan in mind according to which landowners who had scant interest in their lands could sell these to the government, which would in turn sell them on to peasants in manageable 20–25-year instalments. The stated objective of this initiative was that of enabling Iranian peasants to practise agriculture on land they owned.¹⁰ In a separate speech, the Shah expressed his belief about the need to sell the lands under the control of the royal household by way of long-term loans and proposed the re-distribution of state-owned *khalisah* lands free of charge.¹¹

Such royal ambitions received an added boost with the start of the US Point Four programme's involvement within the Iranian rural scene. This partnership was first unveiled in January 1951, when Point Four entered into a technical partnership to redistribute the land holdings still under the Shah's possession in the form of small farms to be acquired at favourable rates by 50,000 peasants. The estimated income accruing from the sales, US\$25 million, was to be redirected back into the rural economy in the form of 'rural services and other benevolent purposes

for the direct benefit of peasants.¹² Asadullah 'Alam, the prominent courtier, scion of a land-owning family and administrator of the Pahlavi land holdings,¹³ travelled frequently to the United States during the 1950s to participate in agricultural seminars under the aegis of Point Four which featured the principle of a multi-phased land reform programme evolving out of the sale of crown lands towards the redistribution of private ones.¹⁴

This process went forward at a slow pace, to the extent that the journal of the Third Force movement, a socialist offshoot of the pro-Mossadeq National Front, calculated in 1959 that only 120 out of the 2,200 *shishdung* properties in Pahlavi possession had been redistributed at that point in time, and wryly postulated that it would take almost a century for the remainder of royal lands to be assigned to peasants at such speed.¹⁵ At the same time, commentary in major Iranian newspapers called upon the government to exercise urgency and speed, avoid wasting time in bargaining negotiations with landowners and prevent the same from 'erecting a dam in front of the nation's progress'.¹⁶

The state became increasingly invested in land reform by the latter half of the 1950s for further reasons. Most Middle Eastern countries and neighbours of Iran had by that point in time completed their respective land reform processes. According to Hussein Akhavi, who served as Agriculture Minister in the Manuchihr Iqbal cabinet between 1957 and 1959, two main reasons spurred the resolve of the upper echelons of the state. The first, which echoed the earlier remarks of the Shah in the United States, was the realisation that the efficiency of the farmers' agricultural output would be considerably increased if they possessed ownership of cultivated lands. The Shah backed such thinking on a number of occasions. During a press conference on 24 April 1960, he noted for example how 75 per cent of the national population, equivalent to approximately 15 million people, were engaged in agricultural matters and were of rural residence prior to observing that only six million hectares of the national territory were suitable for cultivation, a factor which placed Iran considerably behind advanced agrarian nations such as the Netherlands.¹⁷ The second derived from the notion, also put forward by the US Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, that land reform would act as an effective deterrent to the spread of communism.¹⁸ The political clout of the landowner class was also waning despite the majority of the members of Parliament still deriving from this social class. In a keynote address marking the third anniversary of the establishment of the Mardum Party, which he headed, 'Alam recalled his own landowning roots in May 1959 and noted how four fifths of the national population were either farmers, worked in agriculture, or had their livelihood depending on the same sector. He then called upon landowners to work for the common good and refrain from thinking exclusively about their own interests and therefore seek to obstruct measures put forward by the state for alleviating the condition of such a large majority of the population.¹⁹ He further noted that he was not in favour of confiscation but called upon large landowners to devolve holdings in excess of their need to peasants by following the Pahlavi lands example and reinvest profits accrued this way within the productive sectors of the economy.²⁰

The first bill specifically addressing changes of private land ownership was unveiled and presented to Parliament on 6 December 1959 by the cabinet of Iqbal and became known as the *tahdid-i malikiyat* (Limitation of Ownership) bill. The approach chosen by the government, according to the finalised text which was approved following a Senate vote on 16 May 1960, consisted of limiting land ownership to 300Ha of artificially irrigated lands or 600Ha of rainwater-fed ones.²¹ The Limitation of Ownership bill contained several loopholes to the benefit of landowners which were inserted during the intervening parliamentary debates. These included in particular the retention of ownership in case land was bequeathed to inheritors or *vaqf* foundations, or where cultivation occurred through mechanised means or the use of *qanats* deployed for irrigation. In sum, as pertinently noted by Bagher Momeni, the Limitation of Ownership bill should not be construed as a measure devised to bring about land reform proper but was rather a first attempt to limit the quantity of personal and traditionally-cultivated holdings of large landowners.²² It therefore relied somewhat idealistically on the willingness of

the traditional landowning class to heed the discourse brought forward in broader terms at the time by the Shah and his associates.

The 1960 bill was severely criticised from the outset within the political elite because of its significant practical shortcomings. According to Jamshid Amuzigar, who succeeded Akhavi as Agriculture Minister, the lack of detailed cadastral information meant that the bill's implementation could potentially take decades.²³ Alongside technical challenges in its implementation, the Iqbal bill faced stiff opposition from the still-considerable landowner component of Parliament, which engaged in obstructive tactics in order to water down the bill. The supreme Shi'i clerical figure of the time, Ayatollah Hussein Burujirdi, waded into the debate after the landowner contingent within the Majlis was unable to dissuade the Iqbal cabinet to withdraw the bill through other means and approached the *maraje* (or 'Sources of Emulation', the foremost position within the Shi'i clergy) of Qum with the proposition that the same would be detrimental to their interests, as it would also encompass *vaqf* holdings.²⁴

Burujirdi's determined opposition to the Iqbal bill effectively caused the indefinite deferral of its implementation and alerted the rest of the seminary to the effectiveness of resistance against government measures inimical to its interests. It also caused an initial collision between the Shah and the higher clergy. According to British diplomatic records, Iqbal wrote a private letter to Burujirdi, warning that the Shah was ready to engage in a 'white coup d'état' by suspending both branches of parliament and enacting restrictions against the clergy.²⁵ Nevertheless, the Shah refrained from enacting public measures against Burujirdi but would admit, once the later White Revolution phase of land reform was under way, that the 1960 bill as approved by the Majlis was comparable to the *shir-i bi yal va dum*, the creature in the famous Masnavi proverb which is physically similar to a lion but lacks the feline's fiery character and authority.²⁶

The state refrained from putting the 1960 bill into practice prior to Burujirdi's death in October 1961. By that time the Kennedy administration was pressuring the Shah towards a more assertive approach with regards to political and social change. Arsanjani was finally provided the opportunity to put his ideas into practice when he became the Agriculture minister of the Amini cabinet. Well known for his fiery temper and determination as well as his deep knowledge of Iran's agriculture and commitment to land reform, Arsanjani confided to the American scholar James Bill that the institutional setting was not conducive to fast and successful land reform, due to the widespread persistence of feudalism within the legal framework and as a consequence of the power of the landlords.²⁷ Nevertheless, he engaged in his remit through his characteristic boisterous attitude and rhetoric.²⁸

On 11 November 1961, a few weeks after Burujirdi's demise, the Shah issued a decree calling upon the Amini administration to prepare a modified version of the *tahdid-i malikiyat* bill. This request was enacted through a law approved by the cabinet on 9 January 1962, which effectively marked a wholly new provision.²⁹ As emphasised by both Amuzigar and A.K.S. Lambton, the key innovation in Arsanjani's proposal consisted of turning the village, rather than surface area, into the main unit of measurement through which the redistribution process was to be implemented. Landowners were now limited to an entitlement of a single village of their choice, with the rest of the hamlets under their possession being earmarked for purchase and resale by the state to peasants who were actively cultivating land.³⁰ Arsanjani defended this decision by stating in the run-up to the cabinet approval that the cadastral exercise required for the May 1960 bill would require thirty years and the considerable sum of 480 million tomans to complete.³¹ The modified law also included a provision which made membership within local cooperative societies which were in charge of common maintenance and improvement tasks a mandatory condition for receiving land deeds, a step which potentially further empowered peasants.³²

Arsanjani's intentions were for land reform to have an effect beyond that of offering a new beginning to peasants. In Spring 1962 he told British and American diplomats in Tehran that his initiative had offered 'an aim and purpose' to the youth of the country, and to all of its

'progressive' citizens. He also believed in having disarmed the opposition, particularly the National Front, whose main concern was that of being able to freely contest the elections for the 21st legislature.³³

Despite such a rosy outlook, other observers noted that the land reform initiative had failed to gain traction amongst significant parts of society. Shaul Bakhash, who would later become a prominent scholar of modern Iran, noted in a newspaper article a few months after the January 1963 referendum that the 'active national support' sought by Arsanjani was not materialising and urged the white-collar level of society to cease complaining and head out instead to the villages to participate in a programme of utmost importance for the country.³⁴

By early 1963, the Shah considered the land reform programme, which was first put into practice in the Maraqih region of Azerbaijan in the weeks following the approval of the 1962 bill, as an opportunity to consolidate his power vis-à-vis the remaining elements of society that maintained autonomy from the state. On the occasion of a Peasants' Congress in Tehran in January 1963, the second such event since the one organised by the Firqah-i Dimokrat administration in Tabriz in August 1946,³⁵ the Shah included the land reform programme in the aforementioned emerging six-point blueprint for a 'White Revolution'.³⁶ He would shortly thereafter explain, in an address made to an economic conference on 6 February 1963, that he had been considering enacting a 'revolution from above' since 1942 for the sake of ensuring an adequate quality of life for the entire population and thereby stymieing the possibility of a 'revolution from below'.³⁷ The monarch hence sought to consolidate his control and ownership of the process by including the land reform initiative within the broader remit of the White Revolution and submitting the latter's eleven initial principles to a confirmatory referendum. In this way, the Shah sought to confirm the main thrust of his initiative as being that of paving the way for the definitive consolidation of his rule through a new covenant with society which envisaged a diminished and marginal role for previously influential power brokers such as the pre-modern, traditional landowning class and the high-level clergy.

The Tudeh's revival in the Eastern bloc

The Tudeh party bore the brunt of the monarchical regime's backlash in the period following the August 1953 coup. While the Shah had spared all but one – the fiery Foreign Minister Hussein Fatimi – of Mossadeq's inner circle and ministers from capital punishment, the military governor of Tehran actively persecuted members of the Tudeh and its officers' organisation, which was definitively vanquished with the arrest and execution of its charismatic head, Khusraw Ruzbih, in 1957. At the same time the remnants of the Tudeh Party abroad were progressively consolidating a new organisational structure and setting the first stage for its existence as an exiled formation. Only six members of the party's Central Committee, Nureddin Kianuri, Muhammad Bahrami, Murtaza Yazdi, Hussein Jowdat and Ali 'Uluuvi, were in Iran at the time of the coup. Two of these, Kianuri and Jowdat, succeeded in fleeing the country by 1956.³⁸ They joined the rest of the Tudeh leaders who had progressively reached Moscow since the party's initial banning six years earlier. The party conducted a semi-secret Fourth Plenum in Moscow between 25 June and 17 July 1957, during which party cadres engaged in a vigorous critical exercise regarding the conduct during the previous stages of party operations, particularly the Mossadeq premiership which provoked a limited admission of error by the party leadership.³⁹

As the post-coup administration stabilised in the mid-1950s, the Soviet Union and Iran entered into a mutually-accepted détente based on the principle of good neighbourly relations. Partly for this reason, the Soviet leadership sought to relocate the Tudeh leadership to another part of the Eastern bloc. Throughout the 1950s, the newly formed Savak secret police conducted a thorough campaign aimed at destroying remaining party cells, rooting out the military

organisation and presenting the Tudeh as a spent organisation through the publication of a journal purportedly produced by repentant cadres in prison, *'Ibrat*, and two voluminous histories of the Tudeh prepared by military intelligence and replete with alleged extracts from the interrogations and forced confessions of senior party members. The Tudeh's ability to portray itself as having survived annihilation therefore hinged upon the resumption of activities abroad.

By 1957, the Tudeh leadership had been relocated to the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In stark contrast to its 1940s and 1950s heyday, the party was essentially bereft of the ability to engage in large-scale mobilisation, a network of physical associations or even hold public rallies within the GDR. Instead, a small nucleus of Central Committee members both full and alternate were clustered in Leipzig and East Berlin and would effectively function and feature as a think tank which would engage in active analysis of developing contemporary events. Relying on a tight-knit but well-placed network of cadres across Western Europe, the Tudeh would seek to influence other emerging emigré organisations such as the Confederation of Iranian Students from afar and establish in this way a presence amongst the growing expatriate Iranian university student and white-collar community.

The Tudeh's first regular publication from the Eastern bloc was *Subh-i Umid* [The Dawn of Hope], a two and the occasional four-page tabloid which was published between January 1958 and November 1960 for 55 issues from the new East German base. It provided mostly commentary on contemporary developments in Iran whilst remaining curiously lacking in any declared association with the Tudeh Party.⁴⁰ It did, however, espouse a line which was critical towards the Shah's establishment.

The publication of *Mardum* after a hiatus of over three years on 31 March 1959 marked the formal resumption of the Central Committee's established main organ in a bi-monthly format. In 1960, the party also revived the *Dunya* theoretical journal, the first and only previous run of which was edited in twelve issues between 1934 and 1936 by Taqi Erani in Iran. *Dunya* portrayed itself as a direct successor to the latter and often carried reminiscences of the interactions between Erani and members of the new editorial team.⁴¹ The reach of these periodicals was expanded through the innovative addition of Radio Payk-i Iran (Radio Iran Courier), a station which started off under the aegis of the international department of Radio East Berlin and subsequently developed into an autonomous entity based in Sofia, Bulgaria. It was through these means that the party remained invested in the pressing matters of the day.

The Tudeh Party and the first stages of land reform

The exiled leadership of the Tudeh started to pay increasing attention to the peasant issue during the drafting and various public stages of the *tahdid-i malikiyat* bill. The party's training section, which was tasked with devising internal publications for the purpose of educating cadres, produced an extensive treatment of agricultural and land reform from the start of the twentieth century through to the contemporary era. The analysis noted that the plight of the peasantry consisted of the 'most important and urgent socio-economic issue of present-day Iran', prior to pinpointing the remnants of feudal relations in the form of *arbab* ownership as major obstacles in the resolution of the land issue.⁴² The persistence of feudal relations was also considered to be the main impediment in the expansion of productive forces within the peasant community, the arrival of capitalism in the villages and significant modernisation in the means of cultivation, all of which were essential factors in the political mobilisation of the peasantry.⁴³

The analysis then sought to explain the reason behind the state's propensity to seek land distribution through sale from 1959 onwards by noting how the emerging class struggle in rural areas, where the peasants were increasingly engaged in confrontation with the *arbab* class since 1941, was being stymied by the state through the creation of a petty landowner stratum, which

in turn would prevent solidarity and synergy between workers and peasants, a potential cause for revolutionary upheaval.⁴⁴

This internal analysis also sought to produce hypotheses on the evolution of rural society in the forthcoming decades. It posited in particular that the mechanisation drive promoted by the government would result in an 'excess' rural population which would flow into the wage earning, capitalist urban strata by the 1980s.⁴⁵ According to N. Ghaziyani's interpretation of the 1960s bill, the same was not designed to yield land to the peasant producers cost-free, as persistently demanded by the Tudeh, but rather aspired to defend the interests of landowners due to its non-revolutionary, gradual nature. It then assailed the state's model of bringing about the distribution of land through 15–20 years' worth of instalments paid back to landowners, as the same would be conducive to a quarter century of stymied development, due to the considerable amount of peasant output which would effectively end up in the pockets of the landowners in the form of income deriving from repayments.⁴⁶ Moving over to the political reasons for the 1960 Bill, the analysis noted how the royal court was aware that the general poverty of peasants constitute a potential danger for the very persistence of the monarchy in Iran: 'There is no doubt that, should Iran's land ownership policies remain the same over the next few years, the condition of agriculture and farmers will be considerably worse than the present one and will only change by way of a broad and deep social revolution.'⁴⁷ It concluded by noting that the 'feudal' relations hitherto dominating the landowner-peasant relationship needed to be replaced by bourgeois-democratic reforms if necessary.⁴⁸

Despite colouring its criticism of the 1960 bill with predictable disdain for the Pahlavi regime, Ghaziyani's analysis did contain the admission that supplanting and eradicating the *arbab-ra'iyat* relationship in the countryside was a positive step forward even if performed by other, inimical forces. Such a vision was to a considerable extent shared through the party's public outlet. A commentary on the *tahdid-i malikiyat* bill noted how the same was a significant step in the backtracking of large landowners in the face of the necessary progress of society. It did, however, point out that the provisions contained within the bill, such as the landowners' ability to select their preferred lands for retention, or those irrigated by *qanats* or similar means, as being factors in the preservation of landowner privilege. It described the law as being a 'distorted and faded' depiction of the main demands of peasants, the cost-free assignment of land.⁴⁹ This analysis concluded that, despite its shortcomings, the bill acted as a 'limiting factor' with regards to feudal landownership, and would potentially act as a catalyst towards mobilising peasants towards the protection of their own rights.⁵⁰

The Tudeh reaction to the land reform bill of 1962 and the Shah's referendum

On 4 February 1961, the Central Committee organ *Mardum* began the first in a continuous set of detailed analyses of the various stages of the state land reform programme. After noting wryly how all the proposals tabled by the Shah appear to have been extracted from unspecified 'American agricultural textbooks' which it wrote off as being unsuitable for countries which feature 'medieval' relations in their agricultural practices, the Shah's initiative was compared to that of Tsar Alexander III of Russia in 1856, whose address to the nobility at the time contained the admission that it was 'much better to have land reform from above, rather than below.'⁵¹ It then postulated that the main obstacles towards the landowners relinquishing control over their lands consisted of 'greed, voracity and the penchant for accumulation', before concluding that only 'progressive elements' of society can engage in initiatives towards peasant emancipation.⁵²

The Tudeh's explanation of the state's rationale and ambitions with regards to land reform would be repeated frequently in *Mardum* articles as being that of preventing an uprising from below and of having been brought about by the 'social arithmetic' deriving from the evolution

of Iranian society into the 1960s. It retained a caustic view on the provision that each landowner could retain ownership over a village of choice, charged that ‘hundreds of millions of tomans’ worth of produce of agricultural workers would enter into the pockets of feudal and large landowners by way of instalment payments, which would in turn would also foster *istismar* or exploitation.⁵³ It then noted that land reform could at best result in a minimal ‘backtracking’ of landowner influence and authority in the countryside while the Shah’s regime remained in place.

The Tudeh’s initial take on the amended 1962 bill, which as noted above was the cornerstone of land reform as included within the tenets of the White Revolution, contained several considerations on the possible longer-term consequences of the same. It broadly converged with Arsanjani’s assessment on the new bill being a reformed version rather than a wholly new rendition of the previous *tahdid-i malikiyat* proposition and noted the Amini cabinet’s inability to bring about a more thorough modification of the latter. It then posited that the new bill would result in half of the peasant population eventually joining the ranks of the urban proletariat due to the fact that peasants who acquired ownership over smaller tracts of land, whether by way of cooperatives or through individual rights, would be forced by evolving economic relations to cede their land to big landowners. The peasants would hence be effectively compelled to join the ranks of urban workers and wage labourers.⁵⁴

Despite constantly retaining its time-honoured position in favour of the costless redistribution of land to peasants, the Tudeh analyses did not call upon peasants to react to the Amini-Arsanjani bill through solely obstructive means or immediately engage in resistance and revolt against the state. The peasants were urged instead to establish unions for the purpose of driving bargains for ensuring that the final price of land and of produce was as just as possible, prevent cooperative societies from falling into the hands of wealthy landowners and obtain low interest-rate loans from the Agriculture Bank for equipment and machinery, which would in turn pave the way for improvements in the sanitation provision of villages.⁵⁵ In a more elaborate follow-up, the Tudeh labelled the claims of parts of the establishment press, such as the weekly *Khandaniha*, which had alleged that the Tudeh was only keen on accepting a land reform initiative which featured itself at the helm, as a ‘false accusation’. It then reiterated its main criticism from Arsanjani’s perspective, namely that only 10,000 villages would, by the Agriculture minister’s own admission, be subject to the new bill, which would place a further 40,000 villages under the continued control of the landlords,⁵⁶ prior to adding:

We have already stated our opposition regarding Dr Amini’s plan. But do we mean by this that Iranian peasants should not benefit from this plan? In the current situation, making use of this plan and attempting to moderate the impact of its negative elements needs to be placed within the requirements for practical struggle. The slogans for the latter are prepared and oriented according to prevailing conditions.⁵⁷

The Tudeh’s relatively pragmatic view towards the evolution of the land reform bills promoted by the Pahlavi state elicited a peculiar reaction by Savak, which was actively seeking to stymie and neutralise the party’s propaganda efforts at the time. On 22 May 1962, *Mardum* sensationally revealed that Savak had resorted to producing poorly doctored copies of some of its previous issues. The Central Committee organ then published both photostatic copies and the text of the original and modified articles, which included the aforementioned explainer on the party’s attitude towards land reform as published in the 21 March issue.⁵⁸

Savak sought to portray the Tudeh as stubbornly refusing to see any merit in the Amini-Arsanjani initiative, which was decried in this manufactured article as being ‘all theatre’, completely beholden to imperialist powers’ planning and to be entirely written off. Land reform, the Savak-authored article continued, should only occur under the aegis of a ‘socialist government’. The genuine *Mardum* commentary reminded its readers on the other hand that the party was committed to the eradication of feudalism, but Iran was not yet in the *takamul*, or developed stage which would enable the socialistic goal of cost-free land redistribution to be achieved

through extra-statal means such as peasant or worker mobilisation. Savak was therefore accused by the Tudeh proper of interspersing slogans from various stages in the party's decades-long peasant mobilisation process with the aim of distracting peasants away from its genuine, multifaceted analysis of land reform and creating revulsion towards the Tudeh's supposedly doctrinaire, parochial and uncompromising stance.

Alongside the frequent but succinct commentaries which appeared in *Mardum*, the party also produced more detailed and reflective studies in *Dunya*. The inaugural issue of the latter's new series contained the first of three detailed overviews of the land issue produced by Nuraldin Kianuri, the future First Secretary who was on the sidelines of the party organisation at the time.⁵⁹ This article identified the land reform issue as one of the 'most pressing social questions' of Iran at the time, before lamenting the fact that Iran was in a very 'primitive' state, both with regards to the extent of land under cultivation and the efficiency of peasant work, when compared to neighbours such as Turkey.⁶⁰ As a proof of this point, Kianuri quoted a negative assessment published in the establishment *Ittila'at* daily on the pitiful state of basic welfare provision within Iranian villages, which featured for example one school for every 483 villages.⁶¹ He then termed the current situation as 'unsustainable' from both political and economic perspectives.⁶² Kianuri then intriguingly posited that the main reason behind the Shah's approval for the *tahdid-i malikiyat* bill was the fact that the national army's rank and file consisted of 'sons of peasants' and would therefore retain resentment with regards to the ruling elite and would not become a dependable form of support for the same in the hour of need, and would also provide the bulk of the army with an incentive to look forward to upon the completion of national service.⁶³ He then summarised the Shah's intention as being that of aspiring to create a kulak, or small landowning, class and in this way ostensibly shore up support for the Pahlavi state amongst the peasantry.⁶⁴

On the eve of the Shah's referendum, a *Dunya* article on current political developments in Iran authored by Ihsan Tabari, the main party theorist, contained a clear alignment with Arsanjani's oft-posed view that land reform was a missed fulfilment of the Constitutional Revolution.⁶⁵ Tabari called the land reform bill included as part of the six White Revolution principles the only component of the same which had a reformist nature and which would leave a potentially significant effect on the societal composition of the nation and of the Iranian village in particular. Despite heralding the political rise of the bourgeoisie, which Tabari noted as having entered the precinct of power during the Revolution and the subsequent Riza Shah era, the reforms it brought about within the police, judiciary or taxation system were not matched in the rural realm through the eradication of the *arbab-ra'iyat* system. The evolving challenges for the continued existence of the monarchy into the 1960s required its end.

The process initiated by the establishment was not conducive, according to Tabari, to the immediate establishment of the Tudeh's aims and ambitions with regards to the peasantry. Rather, it marked the gradual replacement of the hitherto preponderant feudal control with exploitative capitalism.⁶⁶

Despite attributing glimmers of potential for the land reform process, the Tudeh remained steadfastly opposed to the state's attempts at accruing political capital from the land reform initiative. Together with the rest of the opposition, it boycotted the 6 Bahman (26 January 1963) referendum on grounds that the Shah intended to make use of it to 'expand his absolute power, stabilise it and legalise [...] his illegal despotic rule'. It did caution, however, that 'boycotting [the referendum] does not mean opposing land distribution among farmers, abolition of the peasant-landlord [*arbab-ra'iyat*] regime, improvement of workers' status, abolition of general illiteracy and nationalisation of forests. The amended laws which are the subject of the referendum do not sufficiently meet these demands.'⁶⁷ In a post-mortem analysis of the referendum, the Tudeh observed that two groups within society were opposed to the same: an 'insignificant amount of landowners' who it believed to have attracted 'the interest and support of certain clerical milieus'. It labelled this kind of opposition to the referendum as *irtija'i*, or 'reactionary'.

The second societal grouping was composed on the other hand of the 'nationalist and democratic' circles and the large segment of society supportive of the pathway and method.⁶⁸

The Tudeh considerations mirrored to some extent the stance of the *Jabhah-yi Milli* (Iranian National Front), which published its own stern assessment of the Shah's aims and ambitions on the eve of the referendum. It explained its decision to boycott the vote as being based on the continued repression by Savak in the urban areas, the unremitting interference of government officials in rural lands and presciently noted that the country would experience a drift towards despotism because of the Shah's violation of the *Mashrutah* charter, which did not include any provision for the calling of a referendum by the monarch or other state body.⁶⁹

In the weeks following the referendum, *Dunya* featured the most extensive study of the first phase of the land reform process to emerge from within the ranks of the Tudeh and arguably the entire opposition of the time. The piece, once again authored by Kianuri, started with the realisation that part of the ruling establishment had reluctantly conceded to land reform some half century after the initial push for the same came from progressive forces. It then highlighted two factors, the pressure of social contradictions and the aim of delaying potential revolutionary action stemming from the previous situation, as the main causes for the 'backtracking' of the establishment from its previous 'archaic and indefensible stance'. Kianuri subsequently engaged in a broad review of the state's intention and praxis, which he premised on a backtracking from the previous 'archaic and indefensible stance' in order to avert revolutionary action stemming from the rising social contradictions within the country.⁷⁰ In a 'semi-feudal and semi-colonised' society such as Iran, the article continued, the limitation of ownership to a single village per landowner was to be considered a 'very important event'.⁷¹ The analysis concluded that a qualitative change had occurred within Iranian villages following land reform, one which would not result in any fundamental change to the underlying principles of Iranian society, but would result in a weakening of the *arbab-ra'iyat* relationship and a strengthening of the capitalist modes, despite the retention of the overall semi-feudal nature of Iranian society.⁷² The emergence of the new entrepreneurial mode was seen by Kianuri as being conducive to the fading away of the previous contradictions and the emergence of new ones connected to the new *tazad* (contradiction) between predatory capital and peasant labour.⁷³

The intended aims of the land reform programme were therefore couched in class terms and summed up as consisting of the progressive conversion of landowners to entrepreneurs, the creation of a new and more robust social support base for the ruling elite and its foreign 'imperialist' supporters by way of the new peasant/rural entrepreneurial class and the dispersion of the existing peasant strata of society into two segments with diverging aims: the smaller part who would own land and the broader strata of agricultural workers who would remain bereft even after the end of the first stage of the reform initiative.⁷⁴ It warned, however, that the large landowners would not relinquish their economic interests and would strive to shore up their position and seek a return to the *status quo ante*, in turn resulting in the emergence of contention and strife with their allies within the ruling elite.⁷⁵ The same analysis contained an admission by Kianuri that the party had estranged itself entirely from the peasant strata of society in the aftermath of the August 1953 coup and such a situation had been conducive to the party losing its vanguard role in devising slogans for that strata.⁷⁶

The Tudeh Party, the 15 Khرداد uprising and Khomeini's exile

The Tudeh's increasingly caustic view towards the landowners and their perceived allies within society at large, as espoused in Kianuri's extended analysis, would strongly influence its initial reaction to the 15 Khرداد 1342 (5 June 1963) uprising, which marked the first instance of a nationwide crowd-driven mobilisation against the Pahlavi state of the period after the teachers' strike of May 1961. In contrast to the major instances of political crowd activity prior to the

downfall of the Mossadeq government, the 15 Khurdad uprising came as a surprise to the Tudeh leadership and its remaining supporters in Iran, who largely kept off the streets and backed away from joining the anti-Shah protestors. The streets of Tehran and other major cities were on the other hand mostly filled with supporters of Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini, who flocked to the streets of traditional quarters of various major cities following the news that the cleric had been arrested in the aftermath of his fiery 4 June speech at the Qum seminary.⁷⁷

The extent to which the 15 Khurdad uprising was caused by or connected to the state's land reform process remains debatable. Khomeini devoted comparatively little attention to the topic in his sermons and communications in the run-up to the events, while being more involved in the clergy's attempt to limit the planned increased involvement of women in the electoral process, a remit which placed him at odds with the Tudeh position. The party lashed out at prime minister 'Alam in early January 1963, when it termed his backtracking on the concession of the right to vote to women in the local council elections as being justified by the 'ruse' of the apparent contradiction between female electoral participation and religious principles, and did not directly blame the clergy for the same.⁷⁸ In an article at the start of the Persian new year in late March 1963, which was ostensibly a reaction to the Shah's final announcement on 27 February regarding the extension of the right for women to vote and hold public office, the prominent female cadre Malikah Muhammadi praised this breakthrough as being due to the continuous collective struggle for emancipation by women and considered it as the start of a process to remove the considerable remaining iniquities, particularly within the economic realm.⁷⁹

Khomeini's public remarks on these matters were in considerable contrast to those espoused by the Tudeh. In a speech addressed at university students on 30 April 1963, Khomeini declared that the seminary system was not on the whole opposed to land reform, but had not been consulted in this regard by the government and defined the whole process as one devised to 'distract' peasants.⁸⁰ During the same speech, Khomeini stated that he was not opposed to allowing women to cast their ballots but called their election to public office as being tantamount to 'prostitution' and a matter which was of the lowest importance, due to the need to preserve the Mashrutah rights in the face of ongoing limitations on the freedom of expression and the press.⁸¹

The Tudeh's tone became strident after the events of 22 March 1963, when the centre of Tabriz became the scene of a heated confrontation between local seminary students, engaging in a protest held simultaneously with the Fayziyah seminary one in Qum, and what the state-controlled media defined as 'intellectuals and women supporting female suffrage'.⁸² Four days later, the party's Radio Payk produced a commentary which noted that the Tabriz clashes came about as a consequence of a move by the clergy to prevent women from obtaining a 'small token of their rights' following the backtracking of the government in this regard. It then urged the clergy to refrain from adopting a 'reactionary stand'.⁸³ By the middle of 1963, the Tudeh media had converged on a caustic depiction of the role of the clergy in Iranian politics and considered it as inimical to the party's cautious support for certain principles of the state's reform programme.

The 15 Khurdad uprising caught the Tudeh leadership in East Germany by surprise. The party had not issued a call for such a mobilisation in the preceding period and reacted to the unfolding events in the country with a mixture of wariness for the firm religious and clerical foundations of the newly-found street opposition to the Pahlavi state and trepidation for the resumption of significant popular momentum against the royal court after a decade of systematic repression. A detailed instant analysis by Savak produced in the days following the uprising listed members of the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI), both religious and National Front-supporting *bazaaris*, members of pious mourning societies, remnants of the Fadaian-i Islam radical group, supporters of Ayatollah Bihbahani and other senior clerics as well as knife-wielders from the southern quarters of the capital within the roster of the components of the crowd but found no substantial participation by Tudeh sympathisers.⁸⁴ Another Savak report based on the monitoring of the latter in Tehran found that while this group was usually eager to get involved in any

anti-government protest, this time round it mostly considered the protesting masses as being 'reactionary and supportive of the large landowners' and believed that a more reactionary administration would take hold if the uprising were to be successful.⁸⁵

The uprising occurred a full fifteen days before the next issue of *Mardum*. In the meantime, the daily programmes of Radio Payk became the sole carrier of the party's initial reactions. The first analysis was broadcast at the same time as a brief article published on the Soviet government's official organ in which the uprising was interpreted as a reactionary response to the anti-feudal land reform and the extension of voting rights to women and directly accused the clergy of taking its cue from the large landowners.⁸⁶

The Radio Payk initial analysis pivoted between an appreciation for the anti-regime nature of the protest and the previously voiced disdain for the attitude of landowners and clerics with regards to the White Revolution reforms. It somewhat idealistically defined the protestors as being 'thirsty' for far-reaching reforms in the economic, social and political realms and being driven to the streets mainly by the twin ailments of poverty and unemployment. It then warned that those who 'present this movement as the work of a handful of landowners and reactionaries' were mendacious,⁸⁷ before adding that 'a number of reactionary groups of landowners and religious men are trying to make capital out of the general unrest and the popular feelings against the regime, in the interest of their own class.'⁸⁸

In another commentary the following day, Radio Payk enlisted the free distribution of land to peasants, the 'eradication of "colonial influence"' and the 'granting of real freedom to women' as the current slogans of the Iranian people, and advised that the struggle to achieve such goals should remain 'free of the conspiracies of the landowners [...] and the reactionary men of religion.'⁸⁹ The notion that the protests could not have been instigated by the landowners and the clergy was reinforced through another speech two days later, this time in Kurdish,⁹⁰ which put in strong doubt the proposition that large cities such as Tehran, defined as 'one of the hotbeds for Iranian revolutionary movements' in the past couple of decades, would feature tens of thousands of protestors willing to 'follow a few men of religion and reactionary landlords and demand the abolition of land reform or be opposed to the emancipation of women.'⁹¹ While admitting that a group of 'rotten reactionaries who regrettably are dressed in religious robes' had penetrated the ranks of the protestors to further their own goals, this commentary insisted that the root cause of the 15 Khurdad uprising consisted of the conditions of the 'masses of the impoverished, hungry, deprived and oppressed people fed up with life', because of rampant unemployment, suffering, homelessness and another 'thousand and one misfortunes' and not the 'inspiration and instigation of a number of landlords and rotten, reactionary men of religion.'⁹²

The Radio Payk reports were to a great extent mirrored in *Mardum's* own analysis of the 15 Khurdad uprising. The Central Committee's organ explained that there was little doubt that 'reactionary elements have striven to use and abuse the religious sentiment of some', but remained confident that the protesting crowd was steering clear from this strand and aiming instead at broad political objectives such as the freedom of political prisoners, implementing free elections and above all seeking the end of the '[post-August 1953] coup regime'. It was Savak, according to this analysis, which was seeking to assign a reactionary and anti-reformist nature to these demonstrations.⁹³

The party therefore expressed its conviction that Khomeini and the other high clergy were unable to mobilise substantial masses through what it termed their own reactionary agenda, mostly consisting of opposition to female suffrage and collusion with landowners opposed to the state's land reform programme. It therefore shared some peripheral commonality in this regard with the Shah himself, who ironically often adopted the term *irtija'-i siyah*, or Black Reaction, to juxtapose the clergy with his other nemesis, the *irtija'-i surkh*, or Red Reaction, whilst vilifying both of them.⁹⁴

The Tudeh analysis shared similarities with other assessments of the 15 Khurdad uprising which emerged in its immediate aftermath. The Jamiyah-i Susyalistha Nihzat-i Milli, or Socialist

Society, the contemporary evolution of the Third Force, produced an internal analysis in the days following the uprising in which it noted that the point of departure of the protests as led by the religious leaders were indeed 'reactionary' principles such as opposition to land reform, particularly the fate of *vaqf* land holdings and the woman question, but the line of Ayatollah Khomeini quickly developed into an all-out struggle against the *istibdad*, or despotism of the Pahlavi regime.⁹⁵

In mid-December Radio Payk commented on a *Le Monde* analysis regarding the increase in Khomeini's popular support during the months following the uprising by urging the clergy to 'demand the total elimination of feudalism and the complete freedom of the masses of our society, including women.'⁹⁶ This report elicited a strong reaction in *Bi'sat*, a Qum seminary journal edited by some of the future statesmen of the Islamic Republic, which noted how the clergy was always in step with popular demands, but fell short of engaging with the broadcast's emphasis on land reform and women's rights.⁹⁷ A more elaborate distinction between the two types of clergy was provided a few months later, when 'progressive' clerics such as Khomeini and Mahmud Taliqani were separated from Shaykh Kazim Yazdi, Fazlallah Nuri or Abulqasim Kashani who were accused of collaboration with the royal court on various occasions. The contemporary clergy were hence asked to engage in the creation of a united front with all national and anti-colonial forces.⁹⁸

The Tudeh did not reconcile with Khomeini on the issue of land reform and women's rights and remained wary of the clergy's oppositional stance on these matters into the latter half of 1964. However, it progressively found common ground with the militant cleric over a more paramount concern, resistance against American influence and presence in Iran. Whilst the bulk of the foreign affairs part of Khomeini's Muharram speech in 1963 had centred on the cleric's attacks on Israel,⁹⁹ Khomeini tilted towards overtly anti-American rhetoric following his return to Qum. The controversial extension of the Statute of Forces Agreement to cover American staff employed by the Iranian state¹⁰⁰ triggered a new round of outrage amongst the opposition and was conducive to Khomeini's famous 26 October speech in which he virulently attacked the Shah and his government.

The Tudeh and the contemporary opposition's reactions to Khomeini's initiative were subject to a delay in obtaining his remarks, which meant that the exile of the cleric was announced prior to the examination of the cause of this. A brief mention which took issue with the BBC Persian radio's depiction of Khomeini as a 'determined enemy of the land reform programme' and stated instead that his struggle was against the Shah's despotism, rather than the *islahat* enacted by the government in recent years, appeared on *Mardum* two days after Khomeini's expulsion from Iran.¹⁰¹ By mid-November, the printed version of Khomeini's speech started to appear within opposition circles in Western Europe.¹⁰² A selection from it was first reprinted in the organ of the Iranian National Front abroad, followed by the Socialist League. Whilst repeating the main parts of Khomeini's charges against the extension of the Vienna convention, both publications omitted to reproduce a segment in which the cleric vented his opposition to the employment of women in male elementary schools and vice-versa, which he cautioned was an evident source of moral corruption, and the authorities' insistence that women be allowed to hold public office, about which he noted once again that 'its [moral] corruption and futility are clear for all!'¹⁰³ Additionally, both publications did not reproduce the only section of the text related to the state's land and electoral reforms, where Khomeini noted that these were conducive to the emergence of a black market which was in the hands of the United States and Israel, and hence vented his despair for the state of the country's economy.¹⁰⁴

The first mention of Khomeini's communiqué within Tudeh media came in the form of the quoting of salient parts in *Mardum*, with a predictable focus on Khomeini's rage against the United States. It specifically brought up his conviction that the extension of the Vienna Convention would cast the country into slavery and even carried his strong criticism of American support for Israel, which he accused of making Muslim Arabs homeless. However, there was once again

no mention of Khomeini's disparaging remarks regarding women's rights, or his assessment of the Pahlavi state's reforms.¹⁰⁵

The party chose to hold the line in a broader assessment of Khomeini's exile. It mentioned the *bazaar* merchants and the clergy as the main nuclei of the opposition to the exile decision, but effectively observed that the rest of society did not show a strong reaction to this development, particularly the modern middle classes. It did, however, single out the National Front in Europe's concern for the exile of Khomeini and noted the Tudeh media's coverage of the cleric. It finally made use of the opportunity of the accession of Khomeini to the ranks of the exiled opposition to call for the establishment of a united front against the Pahlavi state.¹⁰⁶

Together with the rest of the secular opposition, the Tudeh decided therefore to focus on the common ground between itself and Khomeini, and seek in this way to converge upon and benefit from his sudden emergence as a toughened and exiled opposition figure to the Pahlavi state. By doing so, the party effectively chose to avoid juxtaposing its elaborate analysis of the land reform programme and other aspects of the White Revolution with Khomeini's increasingly trenchant dismissal of it. This process can be considered as marking the decline of land reform as a factor through which the Tudeh would ground its relations with the rest of the opposition to the Shah.

Conclusion

The Tudeh continued to devote considerable attention to land tenure issues following the heady events of 1963–4. The tenth anniversary of the start of the Pahlavi state's land reform process marked an opportunity for the Central Committee to issue a lengthy communiqué which admitted to a certain degree that, despite the fact that the land reform programme could not be considered as a truly 'democratic' one, this should not be taken to mean that 'nothing had occurred in the Iranian rural areas', before adding:

Even this limited land reform process has dealt a significant blow to the medieval *arbab-ra'iyati* system, has weakened the political and economic position of large landowners as a class, has dampened the semi-feudal oppression [by large landowners], and has overall contributed to the increase in peasant landowners despite not resulting in the resolution of the land reform issue in favour of peasants.¹⁰⁷

In a detailed study published in 1973, Malikah Muhammadi, who specialised in land matters, further elaborated on the above points by asserting that the 'Alam land reform law of 1962 marked a step towards limiting the holdings of the 'semi-feudal' landowners and therefore accepted that the land reform programme had removed the *arbab-ra'iyati* regime's preponderance in the Iranian rural scene despite not eliminating it entirely.¹⁰⁸ It did warn, however, that this development did not detract from the 'anti-peasant' and 'neo-colonial' nature of the land reform programme itself, due to the considerable extent of rural areas which remained exempt from redistribution, such as mechanised land, which resulted in at least one million peasant families being deprived of the opportunity to own land.¹⁰⁹ The consequence of this, according to the same study, was a large-scale rural to urban migration, which would in turn result in an 'army of the unemployed' joining the sidelines of urban centres due to their lack of skills.¹¹⁰ Such a development was not considered as permanent as it actually became, however, and the belief was maintained regarding the possibility of a 'radical' and 'democratic' land reform:

Despite its superficial nature and considerable shortcomings, this land reform programme marks a step forward with regards to the *arbab-ra'iyat* relations. But this very same land reform programme, if compared with the main characteristic of our period, the transition from capitalism to socialism, has a reactionary attribute. Until the conditions are right for the implementation of a radical and democratic land reform programme, the [Tudeh] working class party will consider this very reform as an indirect fruit of the previous struggles of the peasants and will make use of the same to equip peasants to obtain further backtracking by the regime.¹¹¹

The lukewarm and recalcitrant backing of some elements of the land reform programme by the Tudeh between the 1960s and 1970s only partially affected its relationship with the contemporary opposition to the Shah, which also selectively embraced the reform programme. However, the party's initial reticence to support the emerging Ayatollah Khomeini during and in the immediate aftermath of the 15 Khرداد uprising, when it initially sensed that Khomeini and the rest of the high clergy were involved in stoking up societal opposition to the Shah at the behest of landowners, gave way to increasing support as Khomeini's second initiative against the Shah assumed a more markedly anti-American nature. After finally deciding to mention Khomeini's name directly in the party media from the summer of 1964 onwards, the Tudeh settled nonetheless on removing the derogatory mentions of the land reform programme from its publication of Khomeini's notorious October 1964 communiqué.

The Tudeh remained a proponent of a radical and 'democratic' land reform process into the 1970s, the decade which marked a definitive demographic shift from a majority rural to urban national population in Iran. The party analyses devoted to land reform issues by and large did not consider such patterns of internal migration as being permanent, and implicitly considered instead the possibility of a new re-population of the countryside and the coming to fruition of a just land reform process after a transfer of political power. Ultimately, however, the Tudeh remained a concerned bystander in a process which, unlike its ability to bring about a limited mobilisation of the peasantry prior to August 1953, largely resulted in the detachment of the rural scene from the party's core constituency.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. See Iraj Amini, *Bar Bal-i Buhran* [On the Wings of Crisis] (Tehran: Nashr-i Mahi, 2009) for an in-depth assessment of the political career of Ali Amini.
2. Gholam R. Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), p.227.
3. *Ibid.*, p.231.
4. See Siavush Randjbar-Daemi, 'The Tudeh Party of Iran and the Peasant Question, 1941–53', *Middle Eastern Studies* 56, no. 6 (2020) for a study of this mobilisation initiative.
5. Besides the aforementioned work by Afkhami, the White Revolution's intended aims and outcomes, particularly with regards to land reform, and the reaction of other elements of the opposition to the same have been discussed in detail in Ali M. Ansari, 'The Myth of the White Revolution: Mohammad Reza Shah, "Modernization" and the Consolidation of Power', *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2001), Fakhreddin Azimi, *The Quest for Democracy in Iran: A Century of Struggle Against Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp.157–357, Fakhreddin Azimi, 'Khomeini and the "White Revolution"' in Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (ed.), *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), Eric J. Hooglund, *Land and Revolution in Iran, 1960–1980* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), Ann K.S. Lambton, *The Persian Land Reform, 1962–66* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969) and Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Land Reform and Social Change in Iran* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987). None of these works, or those with an emphasis on broader Tudeh Party history such as Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), Sepehr Zabih, *The Communist Movement in Iran* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966) or Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels With a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*

(London: I.B. Tauris, 2000) provide insight on the Tudeh's attitude towards the various elements of the White Revolution. A succinct overview of the Tudeh stance with regards to the land reform of the 1960s is provided in Asghar Schirazi, *Islamic Development Policy: The Agrarian Question in Iran* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), pp.41–3. Mohammad Gholi Majd, *Resistance to the Shah: Landowners and Ulama in Iran* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000) contains a critical account of the Shah's land reform programme which is sympathetic to the large landowners who organised under the aegis of the Agricultural Union of Iran to oppose Amini and Arsanjani's plans but is similarly bereft of a treatment of the Tudeh reaction to the same.

6. Najmabadi, *Land Reform*, pp.46–48.
7. According to Lambton, *Land Reform*, p.39 these changes had the effect of skewing the composition of the local rural councils stipulated by the Mossadeq-era laws in the landowners' favour.
8. US State Department announcement on the start of the Point Four programme, 19 October 1950, reproduced in Yonah Alexander and Allan S. Nanes (eds), *The United States and Iran: A Documentary History* (Frederick: University Press of America, 1980), p.211.
9. Najmabadi, *Land Reform*, p.67.
10. The Shah's remarks during a press conference on 19 November 1949, reproduced in Muhammad Riza Pahlavi (ed.), *Majmu'ah-yi Talifat, Nutqha, Payamha, Musahibih-ha va Bayanat-i A'lahazrat-i Humayun-i Muhammad Riza Shah Pahlavi* [A Collection of Writings, Speeches, Messages and Interviews of His Royal Highness Mohammad Reza Pahlavi] (Tehran: Kitabkhanah-yi Pahlavi, 1968), pp.1205–06.
11. The Shah's address to Iranians resident in the United States, 20 November 1949, *ibid.*, p.1209.
12. US State Department announcement on Point Four aid to Iran in Land Distribution, 18 September 1952, as reproduced in Alexander and Nanes, *Documentary*, pp.246–47.
13. See Abbas Milani, *Eminent Persians* Vol.1 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), pp.44–55 for an insightful brief biography of 'Alam.
14. A detailed account of the Point Four and Ford Foundation involvement in this remit and the role of prominent consultants such as Paul Maris throughout the 1950s is provided in Najmabadi, *Land Reform*, pp.66–76.
15. 'Rah-i Hal-i Rijim-i Hazir Baraye Islahat Arzi Chist?', [What is the Current Regime's Solution for Land Reform?] *Ilm va Zindagi* 4 (Khurdad 1338 [May-June 1959]), p.22.
16. Bagher Momeni, *Masalah-i Arzi va Jang-i Tabaqati dar Iran* [The Land Question and Class War in Iran], (Tehran: Payvand, 1980), p.142.
17. Pahlavi, *Majmu'ah*, pp.2331–32. The Shah noted on this occasion that Iran could only muster 2 hectares of land for each peasant family unit, while the Netherlands could assign 12.
18. Akhavi's recollections in Hassan Akhavi, 'Namah-yi Agha-yi Sarlashkar Akhavi, Vazir Pishin Kishavarzi', [A Letter from Major General Akhavi, Former Agriculture Minister] *Rahavard* 35 (1994), p.267. The strategy of enacting land reform to stave off the rise of communism had been previously floated by American officials on various occasions. See for example the *New York Times* on 13 September 1950 carrying the remarks of a senior American judge, William Douglas, urging Iranian large landowners to distribute their possessions 'as a blow to Communism', or the same newspaper's commentary on 18 March 1951 on one of the main aims of the Shah's aforementioned first redistribution of royal lands in March 1951 as being that of making the peasants 'less susceptible to communism'.
19. 'Rah-i Hal', p.5. This is an extended analysis of Alam's speech which clearly caught the attention of political forces outside the elite with a keen interest in land reform, such as the remnants of the Third Force movement who edited this journal.
20. *Ittila'at*, 29 Urdibehisht 1338 [9 May 1959]. Such considerations would later be at the heart of Alam's land reform initiative after becoming prime minister in 1961.
21. Bill discussion in Momeni, *Arzi*, p.145.
22. *Ibid.*, p.146.
23. Jamshid Amuzigar, 'Namah-i Chaharum az Duktur Jamshid Amuzigar' [The Fourth Letter from Dr Jamshid Amuzegar], *Rahavard* 34 (1993), p.274.
24. *Ibid.*, p.273. Amuzigar adds that Burujirdi wrote a letter to the influential parliamentarian and scion of a clerical family, Sayyid Jafar Bihbahani in which he noted that, once he had heard about the government's intention to limit rural ownership, he had warned the Shah in writing and Iqbal orally about the violation of the Shari'a, and exhorted Bihbahani to block the approval of the bill after failing to receive a meaningful reply from either.
25. Quoted in Ali Massoud Ansari, 'Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and the Myth of Imperial Authority' (PhD Thesis, SOAS, University of London, 1998), p.222. Amuzigar recalls that the Shah pressed him to remind the deputies that he would make use of his legal prerogatives and dissolve Parliament if the bill was not approved. Amuzigar, 'Namah', p.273.
26. The Shah's speech during a land deed ceremony in the Dehpul village near Arak, 17 September 1962, Pahlavi, *Majmu'ah*, p.2870.

27. James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p.145.
28. See *Islahat-i Arzi dar Iran* [Land Reform in Iran], (Tehran: Vizarat-i Kishavarzi, 1962) for a compilation of Arsanjani's press conferences and radio addresses during his ministerial tenure.
29. Lambton, *Land Reform*, p.63. Parliament was suspended throughout the Amini administration, resulting in laws being approved and receiving validity solely by virtue of cabinet decrees.
30. *Ibid.*, pp.64–5.
31. Arsanjani press conference on 4 January 1962, as reproduced in *Islahat*, pp.34–5.
32. Text of land reform law, *Ibid.*, p.12.
33. Record of Conversation of Kellas and Rockwell with Arsanjani, 17 March 1962 in FO 248/1588, 'Land Reform in Iran'.
34. *Kayhan International*, 25 April 1962.
35. See Randjbar-Daemi, 'Peasant Question', on the land reform efforts in Azarbaijan during the Firqah administration.
36. Afkhami, *Shah*, p.231.
37. Pahlavi, *Majmu'ah*, p.3104. The Shah also remarked on this occasion how he believed that the time was now ripe for implementing this 'revolution from above', which was far more manageable than one from below.
38. Qasim Nurmuhammadi, *Salha-yi Muhajirat* [The Years of Migration], (Tehran: Jahan-i Kitab, 2016), p.23.
39. The plenum's procedural matters have been described in the internal party publication *Masayil-i Hizbi*, No.4, February 1958. Its resolutions were later published unofficially by figures external to the Tudeh in Khusraw Shakiri (ed.), *Asnad-i Tarikhi-yi Junbish-i Kargari, Susyal Dimukrasi Va Kumunisti-i Iran* [Historical Documents of the Worker, Social Democratic and Communist Movement of Iran] Vol.1 (Florence: Mazdak, 1974) and Nariya, *Upurtunizm-i Vaghiyan Mowjud* [The Really Existing Opportunism], (Tehran: n.p., 1981). Together with the only surviving stenographic account of the plenum which was drawn up by Parviz Iktishafi and is presented at length in Hamid Ahmadi (ed.), *Khatirat-i Sargurd-i Havayi Parviz Iktishafi* [The Memoirs of Air Force Major Parviz Iktishafi] (Berlin: Research Association for Iranian Oral History, 1998), these sources reveal that the plenum lacked an extensive debate on the peasant issue.
40. In later years the Tudeh would only occasionally confirm its association with the publication. For one such example, see Bahman Haddadi, *Matbu'at-i Tudahi* [The Tudeh Party Press] in *Chihil Sal dar Sangar-i Mubarizah [40 Years in the Trenches of (Political) Struggle]* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Hizb-i Tudah-yi Iran, 1981), p.276.
41. See in this regard the first article of the new series 'Rastakhiz-i Dunya' [The Resurgence of *Dunya*], *Dunya*, No.1, 1339 and 'Duktur Arani va Majallah-i Dunya: Khatirat' [Dr Arani and the *Dunya* Journal: Reminiscences], *Dunya*, No.4, 1348.
42. N. Ghaziyani (Hassan Nazari), *Darbarah Vaz'-i Kishavarzi va Masalah-i Arzi dar Iran* [On the State of Agriculture and the Land Question in Iran], (n.pub.: Hizb-i Tudah-yi Iran, 1960), p.3.
43. The text at this stage wryly notes how feudal relations had not been hitherto eradicated by 'revolutionary means', which can be considered as an implicit admission of the shortcomings of the Tudeh peasant mobilisation strategies prior to 1953.
44. *Ibid.*, p.6.
45. *Ibid.*, p.8.
46. *Ibid.*, p.9.
47. *Ibid.*, p.11.
48. *Ibid.*, p.17.
49. 'Darbarah Tarh-i Qanun-i Tahdid-i Malikiyat-i Arzi' [On the Law of Limitation of Land Ownership], *Subh-i Umid*, 30 Azar 1338 [22 December 1959].
50. *Ibid.*
51. 'Malikiyat-i Buzurg-i Arzi' [Large scale Landowning], *Mardum*, 15 Bahman 1339 [4 February 1961].
52. *Ibid.* The clergy are intriguingly left out of the roster of the 'progressive elements' of society here.
53. 'Shah va Islahat-i Arzi' [The Shah and Land Reform], *Mardum*, 1 Mehr 1341 [23 September 1962].
54. *Mardum*, 15 Bahman 1340 [4 February 1962]. This marked one of several instances in which the Tudeh accurately predicted mass rural to urban migration as a probably longer-term consequence of the state's land reform initiative.
55. *Ibid.*
56. 'Hizb-i Tudah-yi Iran va Rifurmi-i Arzi' [The Tudeh Party of Iran and Land Reform], *Mardum*, 1 Farvardin 1341 [21 March 1962].
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Mardum* published extensive details of the Savak forgery operation with regards to its issue 32, which carried the previously analysed statement article on the party's attitude towards the state's land reform, in the 1 Khرداد 1341 [22 May 1962] issue.
59. See Siavush Randjbar-Daemi and Leonard Michael, 'Nur-al-din Kiānuri', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, forthcoming, for an overview of Kianuri's activities during the early 1960s.
60. Nuraldin Kianuri, 'Siyasathā-yi Dawlat-i Kununi Darbarah-i Hal-i Masalah-yi Arzi', [The Policies of the Present Government with regards to the Resolution of the Land Issue] *Dunya* 1, no. 1 (1960), pp.68–9.

61. Ibid., p.71.
62. Ibid., p.73.
63. In a prior internal analysis on the causes of the August 1953 coup, Kianuri had singled out the Mossadeq front's lack of radicalism within the peasant sector of society as key cause of the success of the same. Randjbar-Daemi, 'Peasant Question', p.982.
64. Kianuri, 'Siyasatha', p.89.
65. Arsanjani held the view that constitutional revolutions were usually a process which weakened the feudal components of society to the benefit of the urban ones, but this did not occur in the Iranian case due to the persistence of the influence of feudal landlords in rural areas following the events of 1906. He therefore defined the Iranian Mashruteh process as 'very incomplete'. Arsanjani speech quoted in 'Masalah-yi Islahat-i Arzi', [The Land Reform Question] *Masayil-i Iran* 3 (1962), p.99.
66. Ihsan Tabari, 'Dar Mihan-i Ma Chih Miguzarad', [What is Happening in Our Nation?] *Dunya* 3, no. 4 (1962), pp.7-9. Tabari also charged here that the monarchy had developed a distinctively Bonapartist attitude in order to ensure its survival by way of the land reform programme.
67. Central Committee announcement on the referendum broadcast on 24 January 1963 by Radio Payk-i Iran, as reproduced in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (henceforth SWB), EE/1159/A4/1. Due to the fact that the referendum fell in between two issues of *Mardum*, this communiqué was not originally distributed in printed format.
68. 'Darbarah-i Rifrandum-i Shah [On the Referendum of the Shah], *Mardum*, 15 Bahman 1341 [4 February 1963].
69. National Front of Iran communiqué on Referendum, distributed in Tehran and Europe in January 1963.
70. Nuraldin Kianuri, 'Islahat-i Arzi dar Iran', [Land Reform in Iran] *Dunya* 4, no. 1-2 (1963), p.9.
71. Ibid., pp.9, 25.
72. Ibid., p.24.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., p.22.
75. Ibid., p.26. Kianuri mimicked in this regard the Shah's own contempt for what he frequently referred to as the 'Black Reaction' intent on derailing his reform plans. As shall be seen below, the use of such terminology across the Tudeh media sphere increased from early 1963 onwards and would significantly shape its attitude with regards to the June 1963 uprising.
76. Ibid., p.9.
77. See Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1999), pp.96-116, Iraj Pizishkzad, *Mururi bar Vaq'ayah-yi 15 Khurdad* [A Glance at the 15 Khordad Episode], (Los Angeles: Shirkat-i Kitab, 2008) and the analysis provided by British Ambassador Sir Denis Wright, 'The Muharram Riots', EP1015/81, 14 June 1963 in FO [Foreign Office] 371/170377 for accounts of the 15 Khurdad uprising.
78. 'Jiraqaha-yi kih Khamush Shud' [The Sparks which were Extinguished], *Mardum*, 15 Dey 1341 [6 January 1963]. This commentary did not address the fact that the government's initiative had been scuppered by the decisive intervention of leading clerics such as Kazim Shariatmadari and Khomeini himself.
79. Minu (Malikah Muhammadi), 'Sar Aghaz-i Yak Marhalah-i Novin dar Mubarizah-i Zanan' [The Start of a New Stage in the Struggle of Women], *Mardum*, 1 Farvardin 1342 [21 March 1963].
80. *Sahifah-yi Imam* [The Imam's Book] Vol.1 (Tehran: Muassisah-yi Tanzim va Nashr-i Asar-i Hazrat-i Imam Khumaini, 2001), p.191.
81. Ibid.
82. Reports in *Kayhan* and *Ittila'at*, 6 Farvardin 1342 [26 March 1963]. The confrontation resulted in the death of at least two people.
83. Radio Payk commentary, 25 March 1963, as translated in FBIS-FRB-63-059.
84. Savak special report on the 15 Khurdad uprising, 20 Khurdad 1342 [10 June 1963], as reproduced in *Qiyam-i 15 Khurdad bih Rivayat-i Asnad-i Savak* [The 15 Khurdad Uprising According to Savak Documents], Vol.3 (Tehran: Markaz-i Barrasi-yi Asnad-i Tarikhi-yi Vizarat-i Ittila'at, 1999), p.182.
85. Savak report on the opinion of domestic Tudeh sympathisers regarding the uprising, 20 Khurdad 1342 [10 June 1963], as reproduced in *ibid.*, p.147.
86. *Izvestiya*, 6 June 1963.
87. Radio Payk commentary on the demonstrations broadcast on 6 June 1963, as translated in SWB, ME/1269/D/1.
88. Ibid.
89. Radio Payk commentary, 7 June 1963, as translated in SWB, ME/1270/D/2.
90. At the time of the 15 Khurdad uprising, Radio Payk presented its habitual Persian and Kurdish services, the latter being managed by members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party such as Karim Hussami and Ali Ghelavej and had briefly commenced Arabic language programming from late March 1963, following the coup of the Arif brothers against Abdulkarim Qasim in order to provide propaganda support for the vanquished Iraqi Communist Party.
91. Radio Payk commentary in Kurdish, 9 June 1963, as translated in SWB, ME/1271/D/7.

92. Ibid. The opinion expressed in these radio commentaries would be airbrushed out of the party's retrospective account of 15 Khurdad after the 1979 Revolution, when the exigencies of the time mandated the Tudeh to claim instead that it had been a steadfast backer of the 'Imam's Line' at the time. See in this regard the section on the 15 Khurdad uprising in *Asnad va Didgaha: Hizb-i Tudah-yi Iran az Piydayish ta Inqilab-i Bahman-i 1357* [Documents and Viewpoints: The Tudeh Party of Iran from Foundation to the Revolution of February 1979] (Tehran: Intisharat-i Hizb-i Tudah-yi Iran, 1981), the three-part article on the Tudeh and 15 Khordad in *Namah-yi Mardum*, 12–14 Khurdad 1360 [2–4 June 1981] and the pamphlet *18 Sal Pushtibani Az Khat-i Imam: Hizb-i Tudah-yi Iran va Junbish-i Khunin-i Panzdah-i Khurdad* [18 Years in Support of the Line of the Imam: The Tudeh Party of Iran and the Bloody 15 Khurdad (5 June 1963) Movement] (Tehran: Intisharat-i Hizb-i Tudah-yi Iran, 1981), all of which contain a highly selective sample of the material contained in the present article.
93. 'Haftah-yi Khunin-i Khurdad Mah' [The Bloody Week in the Month of Khurdad], *Mardum*, 1 Tir 1342 [21 June 1963]. The article was alluding to the frequent statements by the authorities on the reactionary aim of the ringleaders of the uprising.
94. In a land reform speech in Kirman a week prior to the uprising, the Shah urged society to avoid both types of *irtija'* as if they were *hayvanat-i najis*, or 'impure animals'. This remark, which was reported on both *Kayhan* and *Ittila'at* of 6 Khurdad 1342 [27 May 1963] and later censored from the reproduction of the speech in the official compilation of the Shah's speeches and declarations, Pahlavi, *Majmu'ah*, pp.3218–25, was the subject of a strong verbal attack by Khomeini against the monarch in his famous 3 June 1963 address at the Fayziyah seminary which spurred his arrest and the subsequent rioting.
95. Savak document carrying the text of the Socialist Society's internal communiqué on the 15 Khurdad uprising, 14 June 1963, as reproduced in *15 Khurdad bih Rivayat-i Asnad-i Savak*, Vol.3, pp.240–41. In significant contrast to the Tudeh analyses of the time, the Socialist Society made direct mention of Khomeini and defined him as 'the most effective leader of this movement'.
96. Radio Payk broadcast, 18 December 1963, as translated in FBIS-FRB-63-245.
97. *Bi'sat*, 2, Day 1342 [December 1963].
98. 'Ruy Sukhan Ma ba Pishavayan Dini Ast' [The Target of our Speech are Religious Leaders], *Mardum*, 15 Murdad 1343 [6 August 1964]. This commentary was read out on Radio Payk a fortnight later and caused another caustic reaction within *Bi'sat*, 9, 31 Shahrivar 1343 [22 September 1964], where the Radio's depiction of Nuri, Yazdi and Kashani was chastised.
99. The Tudeh did not comment on this aspect of Khomeini's speech in its approach to the Ayatollah in 1963–64 for the likely reason of Israel's warm relations with the Eastern bloc prior to the Six Day War of 1967.
100. See Afkhami, *Shah*, pp.373–77 for an overview of the tortuous legislative process which led to the approval of the extension of the Vienna Convention to the American servicemen.
101. Savak transcript of the BBC Persian report on 4 November 1964, as reproduced in *Sayr-i Mubarizat-i Imam Khumayni dar Ayinah-i Asnad* [The Progression of Imam Khomeini's Struggle as Reflected by Documents], Vol.4 (Tehran: Muassisah-yi Tanzim va Nashr-i Asar-i Hazrat-i Imam Khumaini, 2005), p.491; *Mardum*, 15 Aban 1343 [6 November 1964]. This was followed a few days later by a similar report on Radio Payk as noted in SWB, ME/1706/1.
102. Khomeini's views on the SOFA agreement were delivered orally to a limited audience at his private residence in Qum and became known to the broader public through the widespread distribution of the printed statement. *Mubarizat*, Vol.4, pp.45–63 contains examples of Savak reports on the arrival of the communiqué in Tehran and other parts of the country, such as Tabriz or the Gilan province at the beginning of November.
103. Facsimile of Khomeini's communiqué in *ibid.*, pp.41–42 and Hamid Rawhani, *Barrasi va Tahlili az Nahzat-i Imam Khumayni dar Iran* [An Evaluation and Analysis of Imam Khomeini's Movement in Iran] (n.p., 1978), pp.734–35. This printed version is significantly different in this regard to the speech, the latter not including any mention of women's rights or the state's reform initiatives.
104. *Ibid*; Khomeini's communiqué as published in *Iran-i Azad*, Aban 1343 [November 1964], p.4 and *Susyalism*, Azar 1343 [December 1964], pp.1–2.
105. 'Ilamiyah-i Ayat Allah Khumayni' [Ayatollah Khomeini's Declaration], *Mardum*, 1 Azar 1343 [22 November 1964]. The text published here was most likely read out on Radio Payk on the evening of 27 November, according to a Savak report in *Mubarizat*, Vol.4, p.519 and SWB, ME/1722/1.
106. 'Mardum az Pishavayan-i Azadikhah Dini Pushtibani Mikunand' [The People are Backing the Freedom-seeking Religious Leaders], *Mardum*, 1 Dey 1343 [22 December 1964].
107. Central Committee communiqué on the evaluation of the Pahlavi state's land reform programme, *Mahnamah-i Mardum*, Aban 1350 [October–November 1971].
108. Malikh Muhammad, *Darbarah-i Mas'alah-i Arzi dar Iran va Shiva-yi Hal-i Dimokratik-i An* [On the Land Reform Question and Methods for its Democratic Resolution], (Stassfurt, Intisharat-i Hizb-i Tudah-i Iran, 1973), p.20.
109. *Ibid.*, pp.51, 57.
110. *Ibid.*, p.57.
111. *Ibid.*, p.60.