

Isfahan Textile Industries and the Soviet-dependent Labor Movement (1941-1946)

Abdul Mahdi Rajaei¹

Morteza Nouraei²

Loghman Dehghan Nayeri³

1 PhD Candidate of Local History, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

2. Associate Professor of History, History Department, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

3. Associate Professor of History, History Department, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

Abstract

Since the era of the Qajars, Isfahan had had the potential to develop textile industries. Finally, the first textile factory was set up in this city in 1925. Later, more textile factories were built so that by the end of 1941, 9 big textile factories were already active in the city. The events following the August of 1941, arrival of the Allied in Iran and the deposition of Reza Shah Pahlavi created an open political atmosphere which led to the emergence of Isfahan's Labor Movement. However, the Tudeh Party unhesitatingly took advantage of the situation and took control of the movement. This party forced its followers to pursue their cases in a violent manner and even oust their political and same-guild competitors. These conflicts eventually resulted in increased economic recession and unemployment. In 1946, by enacting the new Labor Law and establishing the Ministry of Labor, the government tried to play the Tudeh Party's role of mediation between the labor and the employer itself. The hypothesis of this article is based on the fact that the presence of the Tudeh Party gave Isfahan Labor Movement a violent character and eventually both the workers and the employers suffered damage. This article uses library study method and is based on the documents and newspapers of the period.

Keywords: Isfahan, labor movement, Tudeh Party.

Introduction

Wherever it appears, industry brings with itself a social class referred to as labor, a class which is not, unlike the industrial machineries, silent and quiet. It is a complex of human beings with common interests and with relatively equal social origins who are now standing before a domineering front i.e. the employer. The people in this community, due to the particular relations forming among them, will soon find the potential in themselves to unite and pursue common interests. The master key to all victories is solidarity. When individuals demand something from the employer, he can take action and dismiss them. However, when the whole labor body demands something unanimously, the employer cannot but listen to those demands and try to satisfy them in some way. These demands might be expressed by stopping working (strike), holding gatherings in the factory, slacking off on work and disobedience. This is common among all labor movements throughout the world. Another point of similarity between labor movements in the world is that this dynamic and alert class is quick in turning to and following any voice that promises them freedom from excruciating toil. From the beginning of the twentieth century when the labor class and leftist thinking came on top after the soviet communist revolution (1917), the voice disseminated by communism more than anybody else

captivated the workers around the world. Those who were after having an organization or union of their own and wanted a kind of leadership to have their wishes fulfilled were soon under the aegis of communist parties and whether knowingly or not became soldiers of this camp. This placed the workers in extreme opposition to their employers and their governments.

Rise and development of industry in Isfahan

What drew Isfahan to the textile industry at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century was first of all the thought of liberation from being dependent on foreign fabrics and the consequent perils which threatened the national industry. In this situation, the clergymen also came to the front along with the intellectual business class and tried their best to convince the religious mass to give up using foreign fabrics and use domestic ones. This frequently led to nearly boycotting foreign fabrics.

Finally, the idealistic will of the elite class of the Qajar period led to the establishment of a company in Isfahan named Mas'udyieh Company at the end of 1897, which based its constitution on producing and publicizing domestic fabrics. This company was run by a merchant named Haj Muhammad Hussein Kazerooni (*Habl-ul Matin Newspaper*, V. 22, April 1898). This company began its work with immense enthusiasm. The company's job was to rent the region's manufacturing workshops and put orders for manufacturing fabrics. Then, the company itself distributed the manufactured fabrics all over Iran. We can see some photographs of the company's activities in *Habl-ul Matin Newspaper* published in Calcutta. But *ISLAMYEHEH* Company did not last long and could not resist against foreign competitors. After seven years, the company announced that it would direct its activities towards trade and business (*Habl-ul Matin Newspaper*, V.18, 11 January 1904).

The Constitutional Revolution in Isfahan at the beginning of the twentieth century had economic motives. Along with their efforts and ideals for supporting national economy, some of the merchants of Isfahan formed a union in order to pursue their formerly-unfulfilled economic aims. At the first sessions of this union, there were debates concerning whether they should import a cotton spinning factory or support the city's weavers or existing traditional fabric manufacturers to increase their production (*Holy Union of Isfahan Newspaper*, V. 17, 27 April 1907).

However, the Constitutional Revolution had already been too busy battling against domestic conflicts and problems, Minor Despotism and even worse, roads' insecurity to tend to such infrastructural matters. These circumstances made it impossible for economic activists to revitalize the country's severely dependent and damaged economy under the aegis of the new system. World War I further confounded the situation. Roads' insecurity hindered business and importation of any industries. Furthermore, political and social instability had made investors too apprehensive to invest. These conditions persisted until 1922 when Reza Khan's coming to power and his quelling the bandits made business conditions more favorable; conditions that encouraged an educated Isfahani merchant in India, Ata-ul Molk Dehesh to import a textile factory from abroad. This factory was ready for production in 1925 when a dispute erupted between the factory's partners and finally two years later, Ata-ul Molk Dehesh entrusted his share to Muhammad Hussein Kazerooni, who became the sole owner of the factory thereafter (*Ettela'at Newspaper*, V. 285, August 1927).

Vatan Factory was the only fabric and blanket manufacturing factory in Iran for a period of about ten years. Meanwhile, the government tried to direct merchants and investors toward establishing industrial factories through legislative and encouraging policies. One of these policies was establishing a solid legal system. Then the “business law” was approved by the parliament. It facilitated establishing companies and created the necessary trust for the accumulation of investments and establishment of manufacturing companies among economic players. Despite all these efforts, however, merchants could not be encouraged to practice in manufacturing affairs because foreign competition was too challenging and Iranian markets were to a great degree dominated by European goods.

Nevertheless, these adverse conditions relented. What compelled Iranian merchants to import manufacturing factories was the passing of a law called “the law of government’s monopolization of foreign trades” on February 25 1931. Enactment of this law caused the economic boundaries of the country which had been open since the Treaty of Turkmenchay and had put enormous pressure on the national industry to be directly controlled by the government. These boundaries came into the hands of the government and in fact, only the government was considered Iran’s foreign tradesperson. In the single article of this law, it is stated: “All foreign trades of Iran are restricted to the government and exporting all natural and industrial goods and temporary or permanent determination of the amount of the aforementioned imports and exports are entrusted to the government effective as of the date this law is enacted.” In sum, the government defined import quota for many goods and this import quota was only granted to those individuals and companies that had exported proportionate goods. As a result of the government’s market regulation, domestic products found an opportunity to be known in Iranian markets. It was after this time that one after another manufacturing companies began to emerge from all over the country and “producing” became the dominant theory of the country’s economy.

One year later, in 1932, Isfahan Spinning and Weaving Company was founded. This company intended to import a factory to produce yarn and textile. Finally, Risbaf Factory was established in November 1934 (*Akhgar Newspaper*, V. 992, 22 November 1934). Soon, another factory called Zayande Rood was established which produced different types of fabric (*Akhgar Newspaper*, V. 1131, 16 April 1936). Conditions led to the establishment of 6 more large weaving factories in Isfahan. These factories were Shahreza, Wool Industries, Nakhtab, Pashmbaf, Rahim Zadeh and Barq Spinning. Thus, by the end of 1941, 9 large weaving factories had been founded in Isfahan to the extent that the newspapers and economic circles of the time called Isfahan “The East’s Manchester” or Iran’s pole of weaving industry. Beside these factories, a coal manufacturing company, a wool and cotton producing company and two high quality wool manufacturing companies, one state and one private, and tens of fabric distributing companies were established. In order to monitor and facilitate factories’ activities, the government created the Ministry of Industries whose branch, The Isfahan Office of Industries and Mines was established in January 1316 in Isfahan (*Akhgar Newspaper*, V. 1304, 13 January 1938).

Formation of Labor Class and its Situation

All these facts were one side of the issue. On the other side of the matter are the workers; the labor force which the intermediary between industry and production. It is a

significant part which, if eliminated, industry will not result in production. It is not possible to give an exact statistics of workers in Isfahan for these factories were rapidly growing and continually increased the number of their workers. However, number of workers in Isfahan's factories in 1320 was roughly 15 thousand people (T. Ahmadi, 1379, p. 153).

In regard with the class station and position of these workers, sources on this period show that most of those workers had nomadic and village roots. We may assume that a great number of these workers were among the forces of tribal bandits who robbed caravans passing through the roads around Isfahan in the period before Pahlavi I (cf. Nuraii, banditry in the roads of Isfahan Province and foreign citizens, 1383). Farmers and residents of the neighboring villages also formed a large part of factories' labor force. In the first days of the factories' operation (1927) when the government, under the pressure of world powers, banned or restricted cultivation of opium in the country, the representative of Isfahan in the parliament protested: "in Isfahan, more than ten thousand traders, commercial firm members, dealers and apprentices earn their living by this merchandise." (*Ettela'at Newspaper*, V. 312, 21 September 1927). These people had not stooped to unemployment and entered factories. In 1946, as an occasion demanded, *Naqsh-e Jahan Newspaper* stated: "there is no doubt that the major number of workers who are currently working in factories in the city are farmers who have abandoned their villages and come to the city." (*Naqsh-e Jahan Newspaper*, 27 May 1946). Factory work income was so good that the same newspaper warned "some villages are crippled and lands are left dry and uncultivable." (ibid). In 1950, once again *Isfahan Newspaper* emphasized that "every peasant and farmer who had lost his job in the country has rushed to the city, joined a party and forced his way into a factory (*Isfahan Newspaper*, v. 736, 5 March 1951). One Ezatollah Bagheri, from one of the villages of Chahar Mahalo Bakhtiari, who in 1317 had moved to Isfahan with his crowded family in the hope of finding a job in the factories, speaks about the population combination of factory workers: "factories' labor force was basically formed of villagers and bankrupts from traditional workshops. Other than these groups, there were a number of Kurds who were exiled to Isfahan at the time of Reza Shah and worked in factories. They all returned to their homeland after September 20." (Bagheri, 1387, v. 1, p. 162).

This population of thousands who had, of course, influenced city population was mainly uneducated. Therefore, Reza Shah introduced laws and established institutions to educate them. Every factory set up an adult school whose teachers were selected by the Ministry of Culture, which also issued final degrees (*Akhgar Newspaper*, V. 1422, 8 April 1939).

Thus, according to what has been said so far, we may conclude that a 10- to 15-thousand community that was mainly uneducated and had its roots in villages formed the major population of Isfahan's labor force. Some part of these people had probably settled down as bachelors in the city and some others commuted between Isfahan and their villages by bicycle. Clearly, we are allowed to call such a community a "human bomb" which would detonate in expedient time. Add to this an ancient strife and prejudice which had always existed between the city and the country dwellers in Iran. The villagers had always coveted the facilities city dwellers enjoyed and considered the city-dwelling landlord the cause of their destitution and misery. Former worker of Wool Industries Factory, Ezatollah Bagheri, who made the ends meet in Isfahan in the most

difficult conditions, expresses his feelings about employers and the affluent: "I hated the wealthy people unconsciously. It was only natural for me to feel hatred toward people who lived in extreme welfare." (Bagheri, 1387, v. 1, p. 174).

Economic Crisis and Opening of the Political Atmosphere

This expedient time was created under the influence of two simultaneous and abrupt factors after August 1941 and the Allied invasion of Iran: first, economic recession and second, opening of the political atmosphere. Consequently, only one month after the September events, conditions of Isfahan's factories started to fall into utter disarray so the extent that employers were forced to dismiss hundreds of their workers because goods did not sell. A local newspaper had predicted that if the crisis was going to last for one or two months more "undoubtedly, it would eventually bankrupt merchants, disable important factories and shut down the doors of craftsmen's workshops (*Akhgar Newspaper*, v. 1690, 11 October 1941). According to its observations, this newspaper writes, "every day, a number of factory workers who have lost their jobs because of the economic recession of the aforementioned national business activities appeal to anyone they can find and ask for recommendations for their managers or ask for a job in other national businesses and governmental departments." (Ibid)

The newspaper's prediction about the economic aspect of the issue was not fulfilled because the War caused the trading gates of the country to be shut and no country could, due to the insecurity of sea waters, ship anything to Iranian ports. On the one hand, European fabric and home appliance manufacturing factories started to produce weaponry and it resulted in the rocketing of the price of fabric and home appliances. On the other hand, presence of several thousand alien soldiers in Iranian territory opened a new market for the fabrics manufactured by Iranian factories. Therefore, despite a relative increase in the price of raw materials such as cotton and wool, the price of factories' products increased extensively. An economic monitor, Hassan Abedi, who had gone to Isfahan in 1950 as the representative of Planning Organization (Organization for Monitoring and Supporting Factories), describes the situation in a book: "firstly, since demand naturally exceeded supply after the inflow of imports had stopped, and secondly, providing for the needs of the alien forces occupying Iran caused some factories to reap considerable, yet temporary, profits disregarding the consequences. Manufacturing goods at maximum capacity entailed that machineries operate round the clock. As a result, number of workers increased and the raised payments were negligible compared to the enormous profits factories generated at the time. These conditions went on like this until the War ended." (Abedi, 1334, p. 107).

This situation continued until late in 1945 when World War ended. Japanese and European factories began manufacturing fabrics and trading ships could not easily deliver their goods in ports. Still struggling with the aftermaths of war including poverty, famine and inflation, Iran could not limit its foreign trade with the monopoly law. Therefore, the authorities opened the economic gates of the country and lifted bans from importing foreign fabrics so that the poor consumer could buy fabric with cheaper price; probably worse than that was the deluge of used American clothing that had captured the Iranian market. Domestic weaving factories were not at all prepared for this situation. For years, they had been the sole contenders of the domestic market with governmental support. Increased expense, obsolete machinery, expensive raw materials and excess workers prevented them from manufacturing fabrics that could compete with the price and quality

of their foreign counterparts. As a result, their products remained unsold. The same economic monitor pointed out in regard with this problem: "Roads were opened, customs barriers were removed and foreign products flooded the country. No longer did domestic product have its former customers, but number of workers remained unchanged and naturally payments stayed the same as before. Meanwhile, the price of raw materials also rocketed...consequently, factories' capital was lost. Pashmbaf, Shahreza, Noor and Risbaf factories were closed for a long period and discords between employer and worker reached its zenith. Risbaf Factory was closed for two years." (Abedi, 1334, p. 107).

Another issue that seriously threatened the economic enterprises of those days was the loss of trust between managers and severe ethical demise which undermined the management of these companies. Most of the companies were run as joint stocks. Obviously, when the mutual trust between managers, stock holders and workers is broken, it will be the downfall of the company.

The government and banks came to their rescue, but conditions got worse for they could take a breath when they received state loans, but they fell down again while owing billions of rials to the government. When this cycle repeated several times, the factory, which had itself been pledged to the bank for the loan, inevitably fell into the hands of the creditor or the committee of industry support which in any case ended in the hands of the government.

Reza Shah's leaving and the opening of political atmosphere and reformation of various parties heralded a period of overt expression and explosion of past conflicts and disagreements; a period brimming with protests and chaos in whose initiation and persistence the above four-year golden age (1941-1945) had a major role. When workers noticed that the factory's products were sold many times more expensive and its stock value had shot up, stock holders received 100% profits biannually and managers rolled in windfalls, their demands and expectations would naturally increase exponentially and they would ask for their share of this bountiful boon. Managers also responded to the workers' demands generously and increased their salaries several times. Increased living expenses and food prices accelerated this cycle to the extent that Millspaugh, Administrator-General of Finances, believes that during 1937 to 1943 prices had increased almost by eight times (Millspaugh, 170, p. 86). The "honeymoon" of the countries had ended. The war came to an end and due to reasons already mentioned, those enormous profits were cut. Gradually, the working capital of factories depleted. Now it was time to dismiss the excess labor (due to decreased production of the factory or working hours) and reduce their salary; these were the issues that made Isfahan Labor Movement confront factory managers. With the massive inflation and rocketing of prices, returning to the former situation was impossible for workers. They could see that the factories' business was stagnant, yet they expected the directors to pay their full salary as before and even spend their own properties and lands for them.

Concerning the workers' salary increase, it should be pointed out that at the beginning of 1943 when the worker-employer strife had aggravated, three people were dispatched to Isfahan by the Ministry of Commerce, Crafts and Arts. After a series of meetings with representatives of the workers and also with employers, a contract was drawn up in which the minimum wage for workers younger than 14 was to be accounted as 8 rials, for men 15 rials and for women 10 rials (Taher Ahmadi, 1379, p. 45). Six years later, with workers' demands and claims still going on and the Labor Law having been

passed, another delegate came to Isfahan and declared the new minimum wage as 34 rials according to the Labor Law (*Isfahan Newspaper*, V. 580, 8 August 1949). This translates to a minimum daily wage increase of at least three times.

Despite all this, the crisis between employer and the worker increasingly intensified. The Tudeh Party, which had at first gathered the workers under its umbrella under the name of “the Labor Union”, did not see an end to these demands. One of the first members of the Labor Union, Shams Sadri, who was also a laborer in Risbaf Factory, has provided us with first hand information regarding the formation of the Tudeh Party in Isfahan followed with the formation of the Labor Union. He states that an Ali Shamideh, who had been exiled to Isfahan in 1931 because of his communist activities, formed the Tudeh Party in Isfahan with the assistance of such party leaders as Reza Roosta and Ardeshir Avansian, who were founders of Tudeh Party in Iran (Sadri, 1330, p. 7). However, a solicitor named Taqi Fadakar was placed in charge of Isfahan region. In order to understand the relation between the happenings in Isfahan and the public atmosphere of the country, the book *Labor Unions and Dictatorship in Iran* could be very useful. This study points out that “the Labor Union of Iran known as the Central Council was established in the autumn of 1942 and reorganized in the winter of the same year. It was not surprising that all the members of the founding board were members of the Tudeh Party and most of them were communists (Lajevardi, 1369, p. 50).

Ezzat Bagheri, another worker in Isfahan weaving factories, talks about the first strike and consequently, formation of the first labor union which was formed in July 1942 in factories with the intellectual collaboration of Taqi Fadakar (Bagheri, 1387, V. 1, p. 207). After the formation of Isfahan Labor Union, which consisted of representatives from all the factories in the city, its first manifesto which was wholly apolitical and guild-oriented was published in 9 December 1943. This manifesto stipulated “supporting and protecting workers and their families, taking measures to establish laws for employer and worker, settling disagreements between employers and workers, preventing any violation of the workers’ rights by employers” (Sadri, 1330, p. 9). Indeed, these slogans were alluring enough for the Union to attract a great number of workers. In 13 February 1943, the first victory for of workers’ collaboration was achieved: in a meeting held in the Department of Crafts and Arts with the presence of the Labor Union and factory managers, it was determined that 1 rial would be added to workers who received a daily wage of between 5 and 10 rials, 2 rials to workers who received 10 to 20 dollars, and 3 rials to workers who received 20 to 30 rials (Sadri, 1330, p. 11).

After every strike or collective action, the workers won some privileges; this, however was only the beginning of the way for the Tudeh Party and the Labor Union. Having a huge social force, this party projected the overthrow of the capitalistic system and establishment of a labor class government in front of their eyes and meanwhile, directed this movement to violent methods to the extent that assaulting the managers and employers was also on the table. Assaulting Ali Hamedanian, president of Wool Industries Factory (Taher Ahmadi, 1379, p. 110) and assaulting Abbas Qoli Dehesh, president of Noor Spinning Factory (Sheikhi, 1383, Document no 1\3) were two of such violent actions. Even vandalizing factory machineries was considered some part of this war, a war which had been interpreted as the workers’ “legitimate right.” Positions taken by the party indicate that its writers saw the situation so black and white that they could not envision any compromises or middle ways. Therefore, they thought they had to

continue their violent campaign as long as they control a massive social force as the labor and as long as a social tension exists between the worker and the employer.

The extent of Tudeh Party's social influence in Isfahan in those years is revealed by knowing that the representative of this party, Taqi Fadakar, succeeded to achieve the highest vote of thirty thousand in the fourteenth parliament. Accompanied with a large group of workers in a splendid ceremony, he marched toward Tehran in 28 May 1943 (Sadri, 1330, p. 31). Therefore, the Tudeh Party at the beginning of the twentieth century had the power to mobilize thirty thousand people in the 200-thousand-people city of Isfahan. These thirty thousand people were a force who, due to injection of ideology and depiction of a classless and utopian society, was capable of anything which is evidenced by the violence and street brawls plaguing Isfahan's society every day.

The Tudeh Party was also becoming increasingly hostile and radical concomitant with these developments. In fact, it was this substantial social support that abetted the party's increasing radicalism, while by the same token, Tudeh Party's increasing radicalism increased its social backing. "At the beginning of 1943, the Tudeh Party had overtly become a pro-Soviet opposition party, which henceforth supported the workers' and farmers' campaign against landlords and capitalists in its agenda (Mas'udnia, 1386, p. 207).

Regarding the modus operandi of and the increasing and sometimes unreasonable demands made by the Labor Union, it worthwhile here to cite, as an example, a report submitted by Isfahan police to the governor of Isfahan. In March 1951, the chief of Isfahan police informed the governor that the workers of Wool Industries Factory had, because of overdue payments, stopped working and prevented the CEO from leaving the factory. Then, "the head officer and a number of policemen went to the factory and after negotiating with the workers and it is agreed that their payments be paid Saturday, 3 March 1951. This managed to appease the workers to some extent, but they continued their strike. Although Mr. Hamedanian had issued the order for payments and they were being paid, the workers were again provoked by some and they prevented yarns from being carried away. With the negotiations and exhortations of the head officer, the workers open the way for the yarn trucks. However, when the factory manager, Mr. Hamedanian, is leaving the factory, they block the path of his automobile for the second time and claim money for the days they had not worked. This Mr. Hamedanian orders to be paid as well. Since they had run out of excuses, they stopped working and continued to strike demanding that former benefits be paid. Negotiations made by the head officer and the president of the Labor Department did not influence them. They are still on strike and today they have blocked transportation of fabrics and yarns." (Sheikhi, 1383, Document No. 66(4). At the end of the aforementioned report, names of some Tudeh workers who had caused these events are mentioned. In 1946, when the fervor of the Tudeh party had slightly died down, a local newspaper divulged that members of the Tudeh Party had confined the factory's manager in the toilet and asked for salary raise (*Naqsh-e Jahan Newspaper*, V. 644, 3 March, 1947).

There are numerous documents about gatherings and speeches inside the factory by Union leaders. It frequently happened that workers of a factory desisted from working and abandoned the machineries in support of a worker who had been dismissed from their factory or another factory. These activities compelled the manager of Wool Industries Factory, Ali Hamedanian, to seek the help of city law enforcement departments on

several occasions. He wrote to the head of Police Department in 1951: "in this critical time when factories are closed one after the other due to lack of raw materials and workers' undisciplined conduct, some people are trying to disturb the peace and close the factories." In his letter, he mentions the names of some workers and asks Police's consent to dismiss them (Sheikhi, 19393, Document 67/1).

The Tudeh Party's jurisdiction was not limited to the factory sites. They staged violent demonstrations and perpetrated terrorization and hooliganism on streets. Their aim was to force factory managers and city authorities to submit to their demands by terrorizing and intimidation. Their next scheme was to oust their political rivals from the city's political arena.

Another major force which was challenged by the opposition of Isfahan Tudeh Party and its associated Labor Union was a faction coming out of the party itself led by Shams Sadri. Shams Sadri adhered to the Labor Union until 1945 when he realized that members of the Labor Union had become heavily dependent on the Tudeh Party, which was a blindly obedient to the Soviet government. Therefore, he decided to establish a union free from all political parties and fractions so that he could better defend the workers' rights (Sadri, 1330, p. 59). What divulged the Tudeh Party's allegiance to the Soviet Republic in a nationwide scale could be the North oil episode. In November of 1944, the Tudeh Party put tremendous pressure on the Iranian government to grant the North oil concession to the Soviet Republic (Lajevardi, 1369, p. 88).

The Tudeh Party's reaction was very radical. This time, a faction branched off the Labor Union which was backed by a large number of workers. Thus, the difference of positions and disagreements between the former Union and the new one were soon revealed. This led to hostilities and in the June of the following year, Amir Keyvan, one of the leaders of the new Union, was assaulted and lost one of his eyes (Sadri, 1330, p. 107). Next victim was Hussein Sarrafan who was killed by the assassination squad of the Tudeh Party's members. Dissidents had ambushed around the site of the new Union and ripped his stomach open with knives (Taher Ahmadi, 1379, p. 116). In sum, the Labor Union and the Tudeh Party called the new Union "the union of the rich" (Sheikhi, 1383, Document no. 67/14) and in their meetings referred to them as traitors and chanted "down with Shams Sadri." (Ibid, Document No. 67/13). In factories in which the Tudeh members were the majority, they drove the members of the new Union out of the factory (Ibid, Document no. 67/26).

One of the activists of the Tudeh Party explained years later why they used such violent methods against the Labor Union: "those days we were in the midst of those fights and our feelings had been aroused under severe stress. We actually wanted to take revenge and cool off." (Bagheri, 1387, V. 1, p. 246) Interestingly, the Tudeh Party's policy, unlike this tactic, was always feigning innocence or in other words "heckling".

Naqsh-e Jahan Newspaper compares the city's general atmosphere at the beginning of 1946 to Heydari and Ne'mati wars: "as it appears, the opposing parties are equipping themselves increasingly better and more. There are firearms and weapons freely handed from various sources to both sides. There are bats and clubs, and daggers and broadswords distributed among people and anyone you see on the street is equipped with a weapon. The government should find a remedy before it is too late...today, the situation in Isfahan is so that no one, be it rich or poor, employer or worker, teacher or student is

not safe and the right to walk through the streets freely has been taken from them (*Naqsh-e Jahan Newspaper*, V. 432, 22 April 1946).

Despite all the violence displayed by the Tudeh Party, developments were not in favor of the Union associated with the Tudeh Party. Several factors caused Shams Sadri's union to overcome its rival. First of all, according to Shams Sadri's own report, the then governor of Isfahan had supported him and had even resisted the request made by the consulate of Soviet Republic to send him to exile (Sadri, 1330, p. 97). In addition, in the report made by the group of investigators sent from Tehran regarding Sarrafan's murder, it was pointed out that the opinions of city authorities "were not impartial and to some extent were supportive of the new Union." (Taher Ahmadi, 1379, p. 124) It has been said that employers, too, supported the new Union. Lajevardi believes that once Taqi Fadakar, who was a moderate person, left Isfahan for Tehran in 1943 Isfahan Labor Union was split into a radical Tudeh branch led by Ne'matullah Bahrapur and a non-Tudeh moderate branch led by Shams Sadri. Obviously, by supporting the moderate branch, employers assisted the new union in driving Bahrapur out of the scene (Lajevardi, 1369, p. 289).

Another thing that caused the demise of the Tudeh-connected Labor Union was Ghavam-ul Saltane's extreme measures against the Tudeh Party in his second round of office. The succeeding premiers took the same severe measures; measures which, after the failed assassination of Pahlavi II in 4 February 1949 and declaring the illegitimacy of the Tudeh Party were, in fact, final blows to the plight of the Tudeh Party at the time (Lajevardi, 1369, pp. 119-163). From this time until 1951, Shams Sadri's Union was almost the only dominant force in the labor society of Isfahan.

In 1946 when the Tudeh Party's activities had subsided and its social support had reduced, criticisms of this party's actions began in local newspapers. The party, which had been considered the savior of and a haven for the workers, was now considered the cause of their unemployment and misery because the Tudeh Party had made employers and investors frightened of investment in manufacturing projects. As a result, business had weakened and production reduced. "We believe that the Tudeh Party committed the highest treachery when it instigated the workers made them bold against their employers and today's unemployment is the result of that treachery." (*Naqsh-e Jahan Newspaper*, V. 644, 3 March 1947) One of the consequences of the Tudeh Party's infiltration in Isfahan's Labor Movement was the dissemination of the kind of thinking that saw contradictory interests and white/black view and "surely, if such thinking dominates labor market institutions in order to demand their rights, the consequence of labor organizations' fighting against employers, whether in form of strikes or closing of workshops, will be eventually detrimental to the economy of the country, workers' unemployment and market stagnancy." (Mir Muhammadi, 1387, p. 114) Few decades later, a penitent, former member of this party who had been one of the top members of the Tudeh Party and labor unions in Isfahan sincerely stated that the party had instigated a false sense of pride in them which "did not let us understand what the employers had to say and listen to their reason. We were persistently after ridiculous disputes with the employer and were always irreconcilable in workplace and in factory." (Bagheri, 1387, V. 1, p. 250) He maintained, "We should have tried to draw them to ourselves and defended the national industries of our homeland against the invasion of foreign goods." (Ibid, V. 2, p. 117) From this perspective, we may say that the influence of the Tudeh

Party on labor organizations of Isfahan had taken away any chance of constructive interaction between the worker and the employer and eventually caused damage on both of them.

Government's Involvement in Worker-Employer Relationship

As mentioned before, one of the main reasons political unions and parties recruited factory workers was that workers were after establishing an organization of their own through which they could transfer what they had to say to the employers. In fact, they wanted an intermediary between themselves and the employers through which they could channel and fortify their demands. The complex and tense relations between the labor and the employer finally made the government take action and assume the position of the intermediary itself by passing laws and establishing an independent department. Hence, the Labor Law was approved in 1946 and Ministry of Labor was established some time later.

The first president of Isfahan's Labor Department was a Mohandes Sheikh-ul Eslami (*Naqsh-e Jahan Newspaper*, V. 529, September 1946). Subsequently, Dr. Shapur Bakhtiar was appointed head of the Labor Department in Isfahan. In a press conference, he announced, "the worker's business is only with the Labor Department and only and only this department has the authority to handle the affairs related to the labor." (*Naqsh-e Jahan Newspaper*, V. 587, 29 December, 1946) Thus, the government tried to play the role of the intermediary between the employer and the worker itself.

Conclusion

The period of five years addressed in this article was a period which started with the interference of the Tudeh Party and ended in the mediation of the Ministry of Labor. As stated previously, the economic crisis caused by the Second World War led the way to dissidence among workers and a social crisis. Different parties and factions sought to take advantage of this situation and increase their social influence by introducing themselves as supporters and representatives of the workers. Among these parties and factions, it was the Tudeh Party that succeeded. However, they aggravated the conditions by adopting violent policies and creating a polarized atmosphere and avoiding any interaction with the employers and even with rival factions. Their actions made the employers extremely worried and divested them of their power of management to overcome the economic crisis and it also led rival parties to various reactions including branching and violent responses.

References

Abedi, H. (1334). *Isfahan: Economy and Society* (1st Ed.).

Bagheri, E. (1387). *From Vanan to Vienna* (7th Ed.). Hana Publications.

Lajevardi, H. (1369). *Labor Unions and Dictatorship in Iran* (Z. Sedqi, Trans.). Nashr-e No: Tehran.

Mas'udnia, H. (1386). *Causes and Function Analysis of the Rise of Political Parties in Iran (1942-1954): with Emphasis on the Case of Isfahan* (Unpublished PhD. dissertation). University of Isfahan, Isfahan.

Millspough, A. (1370). *Americans in Persia* (1st Ed. A. R. Hooshang Mahdavi, Trans.). Alborz Publication: Tehran.

Mir Muhammadi, S. M. S. (1378). *Investigating the Role of Labor Organization in Labor Market Developments and Labor Strikes* (1st Ed.). Tadbir-e Eqtesad Research Institute: Tehran.

Sadri, Sh. (1330). *Duty Calls*. Khodaii Publishing Shop: Isfahan.

Sheikhi, E. (1383). *Isfahan, Political Heart of Contemporary Iran* (1st Ed.). Dadyar: Isfahan.

Taher Ahmadi, M. (1379). *Documents from Labor Unions* (1st Ed.). Iranian National Documents Organization: Tehran.

Newspapers

Akhgar. Editor: A. Q. Amini. Published in Isfahan.

Chehelsotoon. Editor: M. Sadr Hashemi. Published in Isfahan.

Ettela'at. Editor: A. Mas'udi. Published in Tehran.

Habl-ul Matin. Editor: M. E. Kashani. Published in Calcutta, India.

Isfahan. Editor: A. Q. Amini. Published in Isfahan.

Naqsh-e Jahan. Editor: H. Noor Sadeqi. Published in Isfahan.