

Letters on Iran and public opinion

30 June 2009

On "Iran and public opinion"

Thank you both, Barry and David, for the analysis contained in this piece. It is excellent, and correct, in my opinion.

There is *nothing* "progressive," much less revolutionary, about the current movement in Iran, whatever it really has amounted to. This movement, of unknown and dubious proportions, rather represents much darker and ominous developments about which even "liberals" should have more sense than to swallow. And they are so arrogant with their compliance to the media-spun fabric(at)ions!

The viewpoint expressed here in this piece and in others published in recent days on the WSWS is correct. Please keep up the fantastic work, as I know you will.

Thomas P
New York, USA
27 June 2009

To address only one small part of your commentary, I think you have hit on a fundamental truth about the protest movement in the United States—they got what they wanted and ceased to care about the working class.

It always seemed to me that a large portion of the Sixties radical movement were the middle class and upper-middle class college students who could afford to be against things because they had parents who would take care of their needs if things got tough for them. When they completed college they stepped immediately into a middle class lifestyle that further allowed them to become involved in what you refer to as "life-style politics." Don't get me wrong—I appreciate that there was a protest against our involvement in Vietnam, but I wonder why this war in Afghanistan doesn't stir their souls in the same manner. I'm glad that they protested against "The Man" and the oppression of civil rights in this country, until they, themselves, became The Man, endorsing foreign occupations, the Patriot Act and attacks on our Constitutional protections.

It has been disheartening to see the so-called radicals from the 60s and 70s turn into tools of capitalism. Dennis Hopper is doing ads for financial investors; Jane Fonda became an exercise guru and married a rich media mogul; the Grateful Dead are multi-millionaires, as are Neil Young and Bruce Springsteen, living in mansions. John Lennon was living in one of the most expensive apartments in New York City when he was killed.

Is this what all the protesting was about—so they could get their own big piece of the pie? Again, don't get me wrong here. I know that not everyone has capitulated and stopped looking at current events from a critical standpoint, but as your article points out, far

too many of the "liberal" media icons have shifted pretty far to the right just when we need to be vigilant about holding our elected officials' feet to the fire.

Troy J
Arkansas, USA
27 June 2009

Thank you for providing your perspective on this issue (Iran), as we are constantly bombarded (I think this is the appropriate term) with basically one point of view. And as you pointed out, just because a "revolt" declares it is doing so for democracy doesn't make it so. Actually my wife pointed out how this country reacts to demonstrations such as Seattle in 1999—or just dismisses the millions in the streets protesting the invasion of Iraq only a few short years ago.

Ken A
Oregon, USA
27 June 2009

Thank you for writing this article. To imply that WSWS or any of its readers are indifferent to the loss of life is narrow minded and a response made in anger.

I have seen the same argument over and over in many forms all over the internet and in the mainstream media. The common points are: The assumption that a difference exists in "left or right" in relation to political parties is more than dubious; the naivety that any election is without manipulation; the ignorance to authoritarianism spreading throughout the very nations that preach democracy and liberty to others; the inability to see that imperialism, globalization, capitalism have played a major part and will continue to play that part in destabilization, violence, oppression, intolerance, exploitation, the concentration of wealth and power along with destruction of diversity in all countries around the world.

The blind belief expressed that the US and others—with their advanced military attack plans (including destabilization) for Iran after already invading Afghanistan and Iraq—even remotely cares about the welfare of Iranians is laughable.

This is ignored or deemed irrelevant by most governments, most of the media and many of those who choose to comment, because the above indicates liability, widespread hypocrisy and true indifference socially. Coupled with the deaths of protestors, many articles that look at the broader picture are met with an emotional response and perceived as an attack on either personal or structural beliefs, regardless of the articles' relevance.

More than 50 people were blown to pieces at a funeral in South Waziristan by a drone attack on Tuesday. Perhaps a wider

perspective should be taken before dismissing imperialism and other root causes as outdated.

Keep up the good work.

John R

Australia

28 June 2009

There are none so blind as he that will not see; none so deaf as he that will not listen.

Instead of understanding your critic you transform him into a straw man and then show how superior to him you are. He doesn't say or think that what you write about US imperialism is irrelevant or unimportant or that it plays no role in what is unfolding in Iran. He is furious that you deny the theft of the Iranian election and then as people take to the streets willing to die for their dignity and the right for their votes to make a difference, that instead of telling that story and standing with those people you blather on about well known and oft-repeated facets of imperialism as though stuck in a time warp. Some, but not many, of those people know that the Ayatollah came and grabbed the revolution from their hands and they want it back. Your critic understands vividly that you reject solidarity with the people who throng the streets of Tehran.

You might have reached that man and others like him had you admitted the election theft and then gone on with a headline, "Comrades, Do not Follow Mousavi! He Will Betray You!" In that context and with that fundamental admission, you might have earned an audience broader than yourselves for your important analysis of the larger picture. Without it, to many, everything else you say sounds like blather. I told you so.

You also write:

"Over a period of decades, the middle-class layers that dominated reformist, liberal and even 'radical' organizations have seen their economic position and social status improve. They have grown complacent and satisfied, to the extent that their own complaints have been taken care of.

"Their political outlook has become dominated by identity and what might be called 'life-style' politics."

I don't know any middle-class layers that have seen their economic position and social status improve over the past decades except the upper crust of the "middle-class." The middle-class itself including many professionals has been devastated and decimated and pushed back down into the struggling and working poor, or else has been faced with cut-backs and belt-tightening that affect its esteem as well as its standard of living.

The transition to identity and life-style politics is part of a deliberate design from the early 1900s that has been skillfully chronicled, sometimes with profound insight, by Adam Curtis in his four-hour documentary "The Century of the Self." It spells out the decades of careful sculpting of the social selves and consumer desires of the American and British populace, and the concomitant replacement of broad principle-based political discourse and perspectives with consumer-oriented target ads meant to fulfill immediate desires that trivialize the political process and participation in it. It demonstrates why not only the "middle-class" but what you recognize as the working-class in America is

not and probably cannot be a revolutionary force.

Curtis's latest documentary, "The Trap," which is not available on DVD, is not so powerful, but nonetheless spells out the theoretical basis for constructing a stable society of rationally scheming competitive individuals for whom it is true that the marketplace is and must be a better servant of their needs than a government, and much more "democratic" to boot. You often wonder aloud why it is so difficult to reach the American public and how the degradation of political consciousness has come to be; these documentaries answer your question.

Regards,

Michael G

California, USA

27 June 2009

Trotsky writes in *Their Morals and Ours*: "Let us note in justice that the most sincere and at the same time the most limited petty bourgeois moralists still live even today in the idealized memories of yesterday and hope for its return. They do not understand that morality is a function of the class struggle; that democratic morality corresponds to the epoch of liberal and progressive capitalism; that the sharpening of the class struggle in passing through its latest phase definitively and irrevocably destroyed this morality; that in its place came the morality of fascism on one side, on the other the morality of proletarian revolution."

The middle class left that gravitate around the *Nation*, Obama and social democracy, have assemble behind the barricades on the side of imperialism—they are good for nothing at all.

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