

Iran: “Khiyaban”, special issue in English, October 2009

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Iranian revolutionary movement: a closer look

Introduction

This volume contains a collection of articles published in “khiaban”, an underground publication, launched at the beginning of the mass protests against dictatorship in Iran in June this year.

We have so far published 49 issues of the journal, and it has been distributed widely among protesters in Iran.

This English version is produced

by the helping hand of a variety of contributors, mostly anonymous, both inside and outside the country. Special thanks to *Revolutionary FlowerPot* and the editors of the journal.

We rely on the streets

“Khiyaban”, #1

By Simin Mesgari

Mousavi knows too well how deep the wound is. He also knows that his green bandage is only a first aid cover for this wound and not a cure.

Mousavi knows that he can't be both the cause of pain and cure at the same time. Mousavi knows that not all “this” is for him.

He knows very well, and we also know very well that had there been a “better” candidate than Mousavi with a “lesser evil past” which had chosen yellow colour for his campaign, the nation would have gone yellow and Mousavi would have demoted to Ahmadinejad's position. One can't know all this and not be scared about the consequences of what has been unleashed. These protests can get out of control.

The ultimate demand of this campaign is far from presidency of Mousavi, even though its official colour is still green. Velayat-e Faqih or the “Guardianship of the Islamic Jurists” is the red line which Mousavi has expressed he won't cross – this red line is now being crossed by those wearing green.

No longer can either of the political camps – [reformists and conservatives] –

control the streets, however both of them are trying to. One with guns and batons, the other by inviting people to mourn for the dead at mosques – which are traditionally the political powerbase for the Revolutionary Guards and Basiji (the voluntary paramilitary group) who are practicing their aiming skills on the bodies of our brother and sisters.

Streets are dangerous, not just for us but more for them. That's why they are trying to pull us from the street by inviting us to attend the Friday prayers after we have mourned for our dead brothers and cried over our destroyed homes. Ironically it is Mousavi who is inviting us to attend. To make a joke out of our protest, they are inviting us to attend mosques, because they are scared of "streets" but they should know that "we rely on the streets".

Media and the streets

"Khiyaban", #1

A bloody page in Iran's modern history seems to be turning in the events we are witnessing. In past days and nights, Tehran and many Iranian cities have not stayed calm as peoples' burning rage has thrown daily life into flux. The people in the streets are playing a game of cat and mouse with violent thugs; youth are in revolt, and the elderly rack their memories for re-learned lessons of the calamitous events of the 1979 revolution to pass on to the young.

Again, after thirty years, people are leaving the doors of their homes open [to give refuge] to courageous youth, and we hear from many how great people are, and how quickly they can change. Over the past days' witness to events, we were different people, different slogans. During

the campaign until election day, the huge crowds of people that had taken to the street with the green wave were spirited, the bliss of unawareness reigning over them. Yet since the results were announced, the situation changed and people became angry, and sought the crest of the wave to propel them beyond the ignorance, repression and hundreds of lies. During recent days and nights, the tide has again turned.

Like Azar of 1953 [CIA-backed anti-Mossadegh coup] and Tir of 1999 [reformist protests and regime crackdown], and
- according to many present at the time
- even like the protests of the revolutionary years and 1963 [clergy-led anti-shah protests]!!! Yes, we are seeing the naked face of repression. We see the green wave of reformism in its entire expanse, as it brings us into a shared arena with the existing system.

Killing us and calls for calm have only made the situation more acute. Now we have more questions; more than just issues with vote counting.

We want a different voice. We do not want to be sacrificed to corruption and graft again, for the nth time, our interests ignored. We do not want a slaughter that would set society back thirty years. We do not want a repeat of the fraud of 1979.

We do not have any media but the world has gotten smaller so we no longer see one thing on the streets but read something else in world media. We do not want the next generation to be ignorant about what happened on the streets of Tehran, Esfahan, Tabriz, Shiraz, Mashhad, Ahvaz, Kermanshah, and the rest of the cities, large and small. We will represent a new voice in this power play:

the voice of the people crying out in the streets. The people who have no delusions about colors and who demand.

A Safe Nest for the Seeds of Our Hopes

Khiaban #16 / Monday, July 6, 2009

By Seemin Mesgari

What has been happening over the past month in the streets of Iran leaves no doubts among any skeptics that the people know best what's in the paramount interest of their own country!

If until now, some have been holding onto the fantasy of exported peace and freedom of the Iraqi and the Afghani (!) type, or have put all their media effort into colorizing or velvetizing the people's uprising to the benefit of one of the ruling factions, people's struggle up to now has shown that the fate of this country is neither being figured in the hands of the imperialists nor in the internal lobbies of the ruling system, but in the streets and in every single house, and with the raised fist of every single fighter and activist.

Any hope in any illusion other than this fact is doomed to disappointment, and any effort at reducing this struggle to a family fight [between the ruling elites], is doomed to failure!

In view of the principle that any path to the elimination of the enemies of freedom, equality and popular sovereignty passes through the ranks of the people, the voice of every freedom- and justice-loving individual and group that cannot be present [in Iran] in this struggle can be turned into an effective voice. A prime example is the voluble voices of the Iranians outside Iran, who, from the very beginning of the struggle of the Iranian

people in the streets, though not literally shoulder to shoulder, have formed their lines of struggle outside the borders of Iran in the same spirit and voice, in unison with the Iranian people's demand for change.

The fact that every individual, organization and line of thinking comes to the side of the Iranian people for their own reasons is a separate discussion, which is neither in the scope nor the intention of this note. But, the tools employed by the Iranians living abroad, in their solidarity with and support of the activists inside, are limited tools which can mainly be summarized into demonstrations, bringing to the attention of the world media what is happening inside Iran, and trying to pressure mostly European and the American governments to unambiguously condemn the crackdown and the killings and the arrests by the Iranian government.

If we take a fair look at what has been done and being done outside the country for those inside, we cannot deny the positive effects of the information dissemination efforts and pressuring of the government leaders in those countries ...

But, what compels me to write this note is the exaggeration of some Iranians living abroad regarding the utility of putting any hope in world's statesmen/women. Of course it is very useful to keep up the pressure on world leaders, but holding out huge hopes about their steadfastness of assistance, given the record of the last thirty years, is not very realistic.

If the people's historical memory is short, all evidence points to the fact that the memory of politicians is much shorter. Let us not forget that in the political games played by the statesmen of the world it is self-interest, not humanistic or human rights considerations, which have the primary say.

After three weeks of killings and violent crackdowns and arrests and immoral and illegal, tortured confessions, it is the arrest of the British embassy staff in Tehran that turned the Iranian events into a crisis situation for the European parliamentarians, and got them to start considering an unambiguous position and some practical steps. And perhaps the possible freeing of those staff will be portrayed as a ‹positive step of building confidence› taken by Iran!

But, even in the midst of all this, European countries such as Italy and Germany that have the biggest capital investments and trade with the Iranian government, find themselves fighting against plans for and ratification of any proposals for actions against the Iranian government.

Therefore, focusing and trusting these governments, for consultation/pressuring, should not make Iranians living abroad overlook or neglect the main focus of the struggle and the ongoing events inside Iran.

The hope for a fundamental change passes through the ranks of the fighting people of Iran inside the country, and given the untrustworthiness of any other form of alliance, especially with any statesmen/women — all this renders the movement of our fighting people the safest nest for the seeds carrying the saplings of freedom and equality in Iran.

A Velvet Coup?

Khiaban #13/July 4, 2009

In a meeting with a group of families of those detained in recent days, [former president] Khatami called the recent events a ‹velvet coup›. This was an implicit

reply to Ahmadinejad's characterization of the recent events as a <velvet revolution>, which was defeated by the government.

However, to call it <velvet coup> is as much of a lie as calling it a <velvet revolution>. A coup that has murdered hundreds of people in the most violent fashion, that has shut down all the news and communication lines, that has arrested and subjected to torture a vast number of political activists, and has locked up thousands of youth and dissidents in torture/imprisonment camps — how can all this be called velvet like?

In a few coup's in the modern world history, such level of ruthlessness and violence has been employed; and in very few cases in the world has a coup stood in such absolute confrontation with the civil society. Numerous coup's, that in their own right would not be described as <velvet like>, operated with far less onslaught and killing than the Khamenei-Ahmadinejad coup.

Using the term <velvet like> by Khatami to describe it is to paint a gentler face of the coup, so as to secure himself and his friends the possibility of cooperation and friendship down the line with the coup regime. He has made up his mind about staying with the system at any price. Therefore, he has no choice but to justify the symbiosis of his faction with the coup regime at every step. Yesterday, Ahmadinejad's move was a coup d'état, today it's a velvet coup, and perhaps tomorrow there will only remain a colorful piece of velvet to be spread on the throne of the rulers.

But, as Khatami obfuscates, Ahmadinejad spins misinformation yarn: he claims to have defeated an American velvet revolution. A velvet revolution whose planners, like all velvet revolutions, were part of the power structure. He wants to deny the absolute opposition of the people to the ruling system.

But, a new era has begun. And nothing about it is velvet like.

18th of Tir/July 9: From 1999 to 2009

Khiaban #17/ Tuesday, July 7, 2009

By Amir K.

July 9th/18th of Tir is close. Both sides are preparing. Massive nationwide protests by the people, and their prevention by the state. The government has announced the day off, so as to reduce the traffic and Tehran's daily crowds. SMS services have been turned off again to disrupt the organizing. But, the people are organizing by the word of mouth, and using any cracks to inform as many people as possible about the July 9th protests, and forming numerous small cells, so as to descend upon the streets again with all their strength.

July 9th/18th of Tir, is the anniversary of a student uprising against state violence and the attacks of the death squads on the Tehran University campus, in 1999. In that year too the death squads and forces of crackdown attacked the Tehran University campus, watering the soil with the blood of students. Students' reaction was unequivocal: an uprising.

The state, however, came forth, wielding two blades: violent crackdown and deceit.

It was said to return to your homes and to pursue your grievances through legal means. A majority of the students, who still harbored illusions about Khatami, left the streets. They were promised that soon

some committees created by the people's popular president would uproot those who, vigilante-like, had allowed themselves the right to violate the university's sanctity. The more radical elements of the movement stayed, and the government's wolves went after them. Once the streets were emptied of the people, on July 14th, Khamenei's thugs took over the streets and bellowed out howls of victory. And the city was once again under the control of the government.

The law convicted a single soldier for stealing a student's shaver. All others were found not-guilty. Some were promoted to high-ranking embassy staff in Iranian embassies abroad. Some were promoted to directors and other cultural figures. On the other hand, the Ezatollah Ebrahimnejad's were buried in scorched earth. Numerous students spent many years of their lives in the regime's prisons. At that time, a generation of student dissidents was liquidated so that a dictatorial Islamic regime shall remain.

Ten years have passed. This time, it was not only in universities but in all of Iran that a line of blood was drawn. And again, some hands are working hard to turn the streets over to the enemies of the people, with the promise of pursuing things legally. But, this time, people have paid a very high price for their practical knowledge. They have realized that they are the many. The millions. And the power of their unity cannot be broken by any oppressive machinery.

Thinking of Action

Khiaban #18 / July 8, 2009

By Milad S.

Translated by "A Friend of the Movement"

The purpose of this note is to point out some of the obstacles to the expansion of the Iranian communists' activities.

1. For taking further and well-thought steps, we have to discard a number of erroneous notions. The first misconception is to perceive contemporary Iran as a 'post-revolutionary' society. Iran is not in a post-revolutionary situation, in which another revolution is necessary.

The current movement is a new sequence of the revolutionary process that started in 1978. The internal conflicts of the ruling factions, the machinery of oppression and the forms that people's struggle take, their slogans and demands, all these are parts of a historical period that started with the Iranian Revolution in 1978.

We should perceive the present popular movement in such a broader context, and discard any prevalent sort of sociological analysis, even those that in appearance seem class-based. We will explain this. This means that the movement that started on June 15 [2009] is a continuation of the people's struggle in answering questions, which they themselves had posed in the society through the overthrow of Shah's regime: How can we establish freedom, independence and a people's republic in Iran? How can we run the society based on people's sovereignty, and without relying on any of the pre-capitalistic institutions, without the royal court and its allies?

The first answer, the Islamic Republic, has failed that test. It was not the Iranian revolution that failed the test; such a statement is meaningless. Those political alternatives pertaining to the first sequence failed.

The revolution itself, however, is still young. This is not to say that the course of the events, forms of the struggle and the behavior of the forces

in this sequence are a repetition of what happened between 1977 and 1980. Quite the contrary, this movement is different in form and content, and its enemy is not the classic dictatorship of the Shah, but an Islamic regime, which emerged from the same revolutionary process and claims to have inherited the demand for republicanism, freedom and the independence of the Iranian people (this is a reference to the emblematic tripartite central slogan during winter 1978-79, trans.note).

In the historical events of June 15 [2009], this claim was unambiguously taken back from the ruling regime. When Moussavi and the Participation Front [jebhey-e mosharekat] end up in opposition to the main symbol of the Islamic Republic, i.e., velayat-e faqih [rule of religious jurists], and in effect stand alongside the people (not just in words, but in social objectivity), this is indicative of the fact that the Islamic Republic separated its path from that of the revolution, which amounts to the political suicide of the regime. From this point on, the 1979 revolution will anew seek its own identity and fate, is no longer an Islamic revolution as this regime called it; what it is will be determined by this very movement in its references to that revolutionary memory.

The easiest example is the 'Allah-o Akbar' slogan. The slogan was first used during the uprising in 1978-1979. Today, it is employed against the regime that once had transformed that symbol of protest to an ideological alibi for establishing political Islam. By employing the same phrase, people indicate the radical level of their demand that goes beyond the phrase. People are employing the religious Arabic wording 'Allah-o Akbar' as a metaphor for something else in Persian: *Death to the dictator*. Here the content goes beyond the phrase. If we don't see this difference, we will misunderstand people's slogans and, worst of all, we will

move away from the people and leave the initiative to others. Therefore, in the first instance, any radical political force in Iran must synchronize its behavior, position and outlook with the calendar and sequences of the Iranian Revolution.

This means: Don't interpret! Don't make up slogans that seem revolutionary! Be the thought for an action. (The word employed in the title of the article in Persian is "eqdam" which means the initial, commencing phase of an action, the intentional component of an undertaking. The title of the text reads "fekr-e eqdam", thought of/for an action, which is deliberately ambiguous; it both means a thought or idea discernable through action and the deliberations before an action.) An idea that pertains to such an action is the articulation of the very people's demands. Its point of departure is the people's — all the people's — pain and suffering, their capabilities as well as shortcomings.

The Iranian people, when they take the initiative to wrest back the political cause from their rulers, are not Muslims, nor idolaters, nor liberals or royalists, nor demanding the overthrow of anything, nor a sect wishing to establish a socialist republic based on premeditated plans. No people have ever been like that. If a people have overthrown any system, it has been because that system blocked the collective movement of the people; if a people in some places transformed their councils/soviets into a new form of republic, this was because in the course of their struggles, they achieved all-encompassing and universal goals, for which that form (the councils, soviets, etc.) was found to be optimal; if they rose to do away with private property in a factory, some neighborhood, this city, a given country, this was because in their daily battles they realized that this form of property was an obstacle to the realization of a humane life. We must think of communism as an equivalent to these

conditioned propositions, which means we must free our ideals from burdensome clichés. Anyone who wants to stage the last scene of another revolution as the first act of a revolution here is not thinking of any concrete measures for action. He is, at best, a plagiarist.

2. In the writings of leftist activists in Iran, we see two burdensome concepts, which have caused the scattered, oppressed and wounded figure of the left to turn even more scattered. One is the seemingly unproblematic concept of the 'middle class'. Interesting that this concept is seen precisely in such analyses that most certainly contain class in their titles, and in which quotations from Marx or Lenin abound. However, Marx has never used anything called middle class, with the particular meaning envisioned by these writers, in his historical analyses. On the contrary, this is a contemporary sociological concept.

'Middle class' is a deeply vague and ideological concept. Middle of what, and how did this middle become a class? In the present misery, hospital workers and staff, our school teachers, the factory workers and the youth who have been deprived of employment and who live in dormitories are not middle class. In the midst of the summer solstice in the third world, what middle class?

These are laboring forces, the very thing you have been looking for, and right in front of your eyes, in the streets of self-representation and in the alleys of common interests. They have, at least momentarily, felt their capacity to impose their presence in the public arena of our cities and from now on nothing will remain the same as before, including the meaning of democracy. The ashes of petty-bourgeois academism is incapable of understanding the simple fact that people who, reliant on solidarity, claim a

common objective for all are no longer the same as a formless mass.

Besides this, this movement has as yet not benefited fully from the independent presence of the organized poor. The current presence of a section of the rulers alongside the movement has also caused some confusion. The most wrongheaded policy in the current situation is to busy ourselves with polemics with this segment of the rulers to prove that they cannot be our fellow travelers. From the people's point of view, such arguments, no matter how brimming with revolutionary phrases, resemble the arguments of the two factions of the rulers. Such is not communist activity.

Expansion of people's movement means helping to build popular organizations amongst those people whose voice is not counted, not recognized by the state. Joining of the poor alongside presence of the laboring forces will show any petty-bourgeois ideological illusion to be what they are: moralistic speech making. It is at such a [historical] moment, but not earlier, that those few journalists advocating neo-liberalism will be forgotten. Do you see how the difference between people and their enemies is cognizable?

It suffices that people organize themselves around all-encompassing demands and grasp their own representation in a common cause. Slogans such as "Give me back my vote!" has, neither immediately nor necessarily, anything to do with acceptance of the elections game or parliamentarianism. We see that many people who had boycotted the elections participated in the rallies. It does not even relate immediately to Ahmadinejad and the overthrow of the Islamic Republic, but goes farther and deeper than these things.

This lack of immediate relation must be taken as our point of departure. The important point is the

collective uprising to claim our crushed rights; this readiness to rise up for the right to have a vote must be understood the way it actually is, beyond ideological imageries about elections, and must be expanded to include other rights of the people.

3. The second reason for lack of cohesion, I think, relates to a mistake by the communists about who the addressee is.

One component of such a mistake concerns the concept of 'enemy'. In short, it is simplistic to think that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, and, vice versa, to consider those who are not friends of the people as the enemy. Enemy and friend are asymmetrical terms. We don't determine the enemy by their beliefs and speech, but the criterion is their objective behavior in concrete conditions.

The enemies are those who take up arms against the expansion of the people's movement and are destroying their organizations. 'Enemy' is a concept, whose use is akin to that of a weapon, which must be pointed in a particular direction and at a certain target. Friends who are fond of Marx should believe that this is exactly what Marx says. Running hurriedly into the arena, and without any popular backing calling the people whose flags are not our desired colors 'the enemy', is akin to firing an empty gun in the darkness. Let us reach some conclusions from these three points:

A. If the communists are on the side of revolution, and are capable of discerning the historical demands of the Iranian Revolution, and are able to understand the logic of its development, then they must welcome the disintegration of the governmental coalition called Islamic Republic, and must welcome the joining with their ranks of segments of a republican system that claimed to have answers

to the demands of the Iranian Revolution.

They must not forget that this split among the different factions of rulers was caused by the very movement of the people, and not by the infighting of the two factions, as declared in sociological analyses. No! Any infighting within the ruling system occurs against the background of a revolutionary society, and always has three sides.

If we look at the behavior of the people from this angle, we can easily see how the people in effect are constantly pushing forward this segment of rulers [that has joined them] with all its resources, and at least for the short-term. Once, a while ago, it was possible for Khatami to avoid such a position, but for Moussavi any retreat is tantamount to political suicide or even a threat to his life. Intellectual friends, militant comrades!

Abandon exposing every inconsistency in their statements; in doing such things, you are actually looking at the whole thing from the top, and staring wide-eyed only at the surface appearance of their infighting, and by necessity you will be limited to playing the role of the permanent pen-wielding critic of the policies of those upstairs, without giving any space or chance to communism as a positive idea to be constructed.

From the point of view of the people's movement and its inventiveness, the separation of a segment of the rulers and its alignment alongside the people's demands is a non-negligible victory.

Without having any illusions about this segment or its historical background, this victory should be protected. Otherwise, and by proposing ideas about the class nature of this segment and by repeating hasty misreadings of the separating line between 'proletariat' and 'bourgeois', you would be underestimating the present

force of the people's movement.

Instead of this petty-bourgeois incredulity, turn to organizing the labor forces, turn to expanding the struggle among the poor and the workers, disseminate awareness among the people based on tangible given demands, get to work alongside them for formulating concrete and relevant demands, and thereby acknowledge yourself as part of a common cause.

B. The relationship between the people and the communist activists and intellectuals is not one of a passive 'addressee' and an active 'agent'. A lot of friends in the Iranian left seem unable to inspire confidence. They are trapped in intellectual labyrinths, in which workers or poor people can not recognize themselves, and at times they produce road maps such as would befit those by parties boasting millions of members. For communists, the dialectic of addressing is a complex one.

If an intellectual or an activist has more time to read and think, this does not make them a popular movement's engineer or an expert on budgeting and planning for the people's movement. This type of engineer-like thinking among the left has its own reasons. But, what is important here is that, the people, when in a struggle or when voicing slogans in a demonstration, are both 'addressees' and 'agents'.

Every time we address the people, it is because we want to make their own voices heard, and to make possible their right to address all.

This important fact must be present in the very first words that we utter publicly. This means that if we voice a slogan, it must express a demand that is achievable even though it appears for now impossible, and is based on a responsible examination of reality

and real capacities of social forces;
meaning, our slogans are consistently a
minimal expression that can embrace a
maximum of imaginable objectives, not a
blind maximalism that bears no relation
to the real conditions.

This means that
our slogans are part of the collective
understanding and our enthusiasm a
co-conspirator in the plans that the
people, before us, have forged against
the dominant grammar of power. "Do not
fear, do not fear; We are all together
here!" This slogan engages in no exaggerations,
nor does it encourage any
singular voice, and is not vague, either. It
is effective and encouraging, and paves
the way.

This togetherness of all for a
common claim beyond the governmental
powers and the media discourse is a
thousand times more radical and revolutionary
than using worn out clichés. This
inventiveness of the people is the source
of strength for the communists. Please do
not say that you would separate out and
arrange two camps facing each other,
and that "co-presence of all" is a bourgeois
slogan. That is not the case.

In its
best form, capitalism can only guarantee
the wellbeing of a minority among the
millions of people deprived of their rights.
'All' is both the 'addressee' and the
'addresser', a historical moment that
extends beyond the limits of capitalism;
class struggle signifies that a certain group, as a social class, stands on the
way of this progression.

To misread
Marx, Lenin and others is worse than not
reading them at all. That which is
encouraging for our young forces, is their
objectively better possibility of success,
compared to the period of 1978-1981. The
weakness and the scatteredness of the
leftist militants from the 1978 revolution,
at this moment can be a positive point for
the creation of new communist forces

that have learned from the past, and stand alongside the people to solve crucial problems of the movement, using their ideas and without concepts that are estranged from our lived experience.

I will end this note with a reminder: one of the best articles about the conditions of realization of historical demands of the 1978 revolution was written by the reformist thinker Sa'eed Hajjarian, published a few days before the [June 12, 2009] elections.

Hajjarian's thesis, in a reference to Rosa Luxembourg's slogan, 'Socialism or Barbarity', was that in today's Iran, the choice is between barbarity and civility. We must read this thesis correctly, meaning with the opposite intention of the writer. You have the best chance of success, because the Iranian Revolution at each new phase, each time clearer than before, shows that socialism, or better to say communism, is the only possible civility for the future of a free Iran.

If we do not act thoughtfully and intelligently, tomorrow we will end up looking blindly for the spent shells after shooting those bullet-less guns; something that some left-leaning friends have been busy doing for too many years.

People's Organization

Khiaban #22/ July 13, 2009

Amir K.

Thirty days have passed since what they called the presidential elections. Thirty compact days, during which in tandem with the terror, the bullets, tortures and the regime's lies, the collective consciousness

and awareness of the people have developed and morphed. The true nature of the Islamic Republic and its anti-human laws and regulations has been exposed to all, and people have discovered the power of their numbers and their togetherness.

Those wisps of illusion that had forced many into sweet thoughts of step-by-step change have been blown away, and the flames of awakening have spread across the rooftops in the country. In their fight against the coup regime, people have come to see the deep contradiction between a system based on velayat-e faqih [guardianship/rule of religious jurist] and a popular system based on people's will.

When their singing throats became the targets of the regime's bullets, the people saw the anti-human nature of the Sepaah [Revolutionary Guards] and the Basij. People found out all about the regime's daily, hidden crimes, when it became apparent to all that their social wealth had been spent to procure the latest and most sophisticated instruments of police oppression, and the most technologically advanced know-how at the service of spying and controlling the citizens.

Kamenei issued the command for the killings, and every day since a new corpse is handed to still another grieving, yet rage filled, family opposing them. That inept clown, Ahmadinejad, talked of freedom, while thousands of the country's youth were lined up in death camps, awaiting to receive their daily dose of torture. This regime wrote illusory letters to their promised Mehdi the messiah, while the nation's mothers in search of their disappeared children were insulted in the corridors of the Islamic halls of justice, and saw the catastrophe of the events in their shaken hopes.

This consciousness has grown and a collectivity has made it impossible to breathe the suffocating air any more. To make the passage from consciousness to proactive

action, to go from understanding the oppressive, unjust and corrupt social relations to changing those relations and building a just, free and equal society — this passage is dependent on organization.

Let them speak of easy solutions for change, those who are horrified of the people's power, and those who have tied their hopes to the replacement of a layer of today's rulers with a layer of tomorrow's rulers. Leave them with their dreams and ideas such as a Green TV station that would remote control the people from afar, and render them into political observers, not actors.

However, the people, who did not remain mere observers of the coup and intervened in their fate with their own lives if need be, are marching far ahead of the colored dreams of that crowd. The people have realized that to overthrow this organized injustice, they need their own organization. An organization that, unlike the party suggested by Moussavi, will not submit to an existence in the poisoned crevices of the coup regime's laws, an organization that will grow in order to smash open the cracks in the system and reach to the air of freedom.

A large people's organization is an association of small organizations, which sprout and gather strength from within the heart of the struggle against the coup, and which will guarantee the people's rule by defeating this anti-human system.

Local Solidarity Committees Against the Coup

Khiaban #23 / Tuesday, July 14, 2009

by Amir K.

How can we confront the coup? One alternative being spoken of with lots of fanfare is to keep our gaze on those

above: [they say] let's just wait for Moussavi and Karroubi and their fellows to form a political front, and then let's wait some more to see what actions they propose. Or else, let's put all our efforts into getting the U.N. and the developed nations to reject this coup regime and force them into accepting to hold free elections. Or else, let's just keep staring at the TV screen or the YouTube videos, waiting for them to tell us what to do.

This alternative puts its prayers in the 'greats' and the 'experts'; 'great' people whose source of greatness is far from clear. Have they earned their greatness in a struggle for people's crushed dreams? Or have they earned greatness through owning pistachio orchards, large import-export companies, daily presence on the television networks, or long history of service in the Sepaah [revolutionary guards], or blood connection to this or that ayatollah, and on and on?

In such alternatives, where are the people? Is it possible to change the current unjust social relations based on prejudice, without people creating new social relations through their struggle? Is it possible to act like a television audience and [expect to] create a humane government? Can we really keep our eyes fixed on those above and wait to see what conclusions are reached in Moussavi and Karroubi's meeting, or what Rafsanjani will say in the Friday prayers?

But, another alternative does exist. Decentralized and spontaneous forms of people's organizations have created a much more powerful movement, which — regardless of Obama's reactions and irrespective of whether the reformists in the regime stand with the people or stick to their own interests — has united to defeat the coup regime, and has put its trust in the power of the

people. This alternative
should
be supported
and participated
in actively.

Local solidarity
committees
against the coup
can be one of the forms carrying the task
of joining all the forces and the abilities of
every single individual, people who pay
the biggest price for the [current] social
existence. This movement can transform
the citizens from being victims of this
regime of velayat-e faqih into free and
equal citizens in a people's governance.

By forming committees made up of men
and women, of young and the middle
aged, in places of living and neighborhoods,
we can defend ourselves against
the coup, and fight them with a bigger
force. These committees can put to good
use the variety of capabilities of their
members and create a collective force.

In these committees, different methods
of resisting the coup can be discussed
and collective decisions can be reached.
We can discuss what kinds of slogans to
raise and how to participate in protests.

Some members of the committees can
gather a collection of news and analysis
and pass them on to other members and
their neighbors, and even put them up
in public places. If a family member of a
committee affiliate is among the latest
detainees or the
disappeared, we
can help them
either legally, or
financially, or
even by providing
them with a
car, a ride, etc.

The youth can
discuss slogan
writing [on the
walls] in the

adjacent neighborhoods, and devise suitable methods for it. We can give spiritual support to those who have experienced soul-crushing events. In working class neighborhoods, workers can discuss issues relating to mass dissents in factories and workshops, out of the reach of the company officials, supervisors and foremen.

We cannot and must not limit ourselves to the slogans and demands available on the [mainstream/official] media. We can unite around real demands and daily problems. In their fight to gain back their rights, girls and women — who in their places of work, face sexual harassment, discrimination, having to endure unbearable working conditions, unequal pay and rights, and other such obstacles that prevent them from a life of freedom and dignity — can use these committees to find people with similar thoughts and can then act collectively.

Those who, in the current system in order to make a living, have to leave the house at five in the morning and don't get back home until well into the dark of the night, can unite together to stop this death machine that has destroyed their lives. In these committees it can be learned that we do have rights, and we do have our own thoughts: whether about our daily problems or about big subject matters such as the running of the state, the running of the prisons and the courts and the police, and about the workings of the television and the newspapers.

This small minority, which in broad daylight is hostile toward any demands for the citizens' human rights, which resorts to cheating, lying and killing, has zero right or legitimacy in deciding our fate. People's solidarity against the coup is not a 'plan'; rather, it is a reality, a reaction that has already started among the people, exactly because the coup has stood for the absolute abolition of people's rights. Ordinary people have shown and

will show the most steadfast resistance, exactly because they are fighting for their lives, for a dignified living, which has come under open attack by the rulers.

Return to Law Or Create New Laws?

Khiaban # 26 / July 18, 2009

Amir K.

Yesterday, the city's streets belonged to the people once again. Rafsanjani's leading of the Friday prayer [at Tehran University] became a justification for mass gatherings and demonstrations in the city. On route to and from the Tehran University, from the early morning till long after dark, Tehran's streets were witness to huge and united crowds, who had opened a way through the shields and the truncheons, and filled the hot summer air with their slogans.

It is now more than a month that the streets have become the most important arena for struggle, changing hands in turns between the dissenting people and, on the other hand, the oppressive forces of the regime. At times, the people have taken back the control of the streets, at other times death squads have established their reign over the streets. The system knows that to consolidate a new era of sinister rule, it must control the streets just like before the electoral coup; and the people too know that, in order to put an end to decades of tyranny, discrimination and inequality, they must make the city streets their own.

The end result of this fateful fight will determine the people's future life. So, it is not without reason that the people, holding their heads high and ready for death, with steadfast steps and smiling lips, are

confronting the darkest and the bloodiest regime of the era. The rhythms of the accelerated waves of their movement has compacted their social history, and the seeds of their hopes and anticipations in mere moments have already turned into healthy saplings standing tall.

In the Friday prayer sermon [of July 17th], Rafsanjani did not stand with the organizers of the coup. But, did he stand with the people? His suggested solution was to return to law.

This demand, however, has no relation to the current demands of the people. Interesting how the fundamentalists too invite the reformists to submit to the law, and insist that Moussavi and his cohorts refuse to accept the legal institutions (particularly the Interior Ministry and the Guardian Council).

The truth is that the people, as a result of the experience of their glorious confrontation against the coup, have discovered that countless existing laws are in contradiction with a just and dignified life. In the very widespread presence of the people in the streets yesterday, once again vast numbers of people were subject to beatings, large-scale arrests, and reports of guns firing [at people] have been published. People are being oppressed by institutions, which gain their legitimacy from the existing laws.

For all the people, the opportunity for public assembly to dissent and protests is a right, and they are furious over the violent answer of the regime to dissent. Some have even come to the protests with placards displaying an article of the constitution guaranteeing the freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration by any group. However, these placards usually skip the rest of this article, which clarifies: "Unless it is against Islamic principles."

And by reading the constitution more carefully, we see that according to the

existing laws, in effect the regime has the option to decide which assemblies are against the [Islamic] principles and which ones are not.

As a result, when the murderous coup regime speaks of the illegality of the recent demonstrations, they are not far off the mark. For the current laws sanction a small minority, hovering above the people and beyond their oversight, to [legally] crush any opponents. However, although the behavior of the coup regime may even have a standing on the basis of the current national legal system, it has become clear for everyone that these laws are not based on justice, but are simply tools at the service of injustice and brutality against the society.

The people have entered the arena to reclaim their rights, and if there exists contradictions between the laws and the social rights [of the people], people are demanding the laws to be changed and want to create new laws that recognize and protect their rights. 'Returning to law', from the people's point of view, is nothing but a return to 30-year old subjugation.

People have taken to the streets in order to create free political spaces. They are fighting for the creation of new social laws. And this goal cannot be achieved but through the destruction of an oppressive and anti-human legal system, and the creation of a new set of laws based on citizens' rights, freedom and social justice.

The Fourth Corner of the Revolution Square

Khiaban #27 / July 20, 2009

By Milad S.

Many have woken up by the warm

gunpowder on the streets. The people's movement accelerates, casts its skin and paves its path. At the same time, at three corners of the Revolution Square in Tehran, old ideas comment on the movement.

1. Some, not few in numbers, declare, "Look! This is the twittering of the Green Reform on the internet and the victory of the Middle class! Look! This is the solution to the suffering of all, something like Embrahim Nabavi (a satirist, known for his anticommunism _ trans. note)." They say: This is the rare presence of a new generation that hates the Revolution; armed with reason and caring for capital and with genuine respect for public and private property, they have started their movement.

Guided by TV broadcasting from faraway places, they carry on a peaceful struggle. These people don't trespass the limits of the Islamic Republic because deep inside they are liberal Muslims, and being liberal means being contemporary, and contemporaneity is something like what in Persian we call the dialogue between civilizations plus multicultural music styles.

They also say that the young generation doesn't know anything about 79. They say that our middle class has generated a youth that reads Kant's Perpetual Peace, is tolerant and re-interprets Political Islam. This generation has supposedly found the precious essence of life: careless about social issues, in love with parliamentary democracy, and since this is an Iranian brand of love, it knows no limits; even the Council of Guardians (the institution that decides who is supposed to run for elections and monitors the elections, well-known for their support for Ahmadinejad) is the incarnation of Locke's ideas. They say that this youth just wants to be free, like all other youngsters that we have seen in American TV series. They want a normal life in this world order and their ultimate goal is

to found Islamic start-ups.

But the people on the streets, many of them seem to have attacked the symbols and limits of the Holy Republic. It doesn't look like they care much about World Bank and Council of Guardians. Sometimes, their faces and dress do not look like whatever is imagined to be the middle class. Their sneakers do not wear a known label.

If you pay attention, you realize that Moussavi's economic program didn't have much to do with world market guidelines. It seemed, for whatever reason, to claim a return to the "Pure Islam" of the first year of the revolution. At any rate, there was a significant difference between that program and those who believe economy is a science and neoliberalism a scientific proposition.

It should be said that this ideological superimposition upon reality does not fit the demands of today's youth. They suffer from unemployment, are fed up with university entrance tests, with being humiliated by their foremen, fed up with TV ads, unemployment, addiction and Islamic moral patrols. It should be said that they don't any longer stand for the impossibility of making their voices heard.

And above all, they have found a language for thinking in this popular solidarity that is books and cities away from those half-serious, half-journalistic, half ironic analyses. If you listen carefully, you will hear the echo of the 1979 slogans. To these people, remember, even though all schoolbooks are filled with the upside down story of what happened between 1976 and 1981, if you listen carefully, you will hear the sound of their steps on the brink of a conclusion: to turn the order upside down has a clear prospect.

Perhaps your ideologies are not a report from the movement, not a thought for this movement, but a simplistic and limited

interpretation of it, a reflected image on the surface of a pound.

We say that for a society issued out of a revolution, a society ridden by social injustice, a society in which the social rift is not only blatant but in all its cultural manifestations obscene, in such a society any ideology that propagates indifference towards millions who are not counted, who are not included as part of the society, conveys oppression and fascism - willingly or not. And if unwillingly, so much the worse!

2. Others say that this protest movement is the reaction of the rich against an offensive by the poor and the working class. The capitalist magnates stand against Ahmadinejad, and the Basijis are the real children of the depths. They ask, don't you see that this is a war between the children of the rich together with the middle class, against the deprived masses, particularly the peasants? Or they would say, don't you see that this is a war between two factions of power about their share of the wealth? Some would add that the historical epoch is that of the struggle for national sovereignty and Ahmadinejad is a variant of Bolivarism, an ally to Chavez.

These "class based" analyses would drop quickly before a simple and easily comprehensible piece of reality: Hey'at-haaye Motalefé (Associations of Merchants, or Chamber of Commerce). These lords of mercantilism, these multimillionaires, support Ahmadinejad wholeheartedly. What are they then, the national bourgeoisie the allies of the poor on earth?

Perhaps, you misunderstand the historical epoch you live in. National sovereignty in 2009 in Iran? Or Bolivarism in Iran? What could these words possibly signify? Besides, the conflict and the infighting between two ruling factions does not happen in the middle of the desert, it is happening in the heart of a revolutionary society. Both these factions are the

result of the revolution; they are not from somewhere else. You've read too many leftish western media who do not have a clue about this situation and suffer from inconsistencies in their own political theories.

Basiji militia is a paramilitary organization with strong presence in the poor areas. In the last eight years we have witnessed a re-orientation in their mode of operation. If earlier, for instance during the uprising among the poor in Eslamshahr (a suburb of Tehran), they functioned mainly as an instrument for control and oppression of the people's power, now under Ahmadinejad they have tried to attract the poor, to speak on their behalf. This was thought up as an innovation by the security-intelligence institutions and their advisers. They tried to coin a sort of Islamic Bolivarism combined with some lessons learned from the Lebanese Hezbollah. In reality, they filled the vacant space left by independent popular organizations, and created a privilege rentier system for a few among the poor.

The basis of their operation was the distribution of rentier income, in a very limited extent, among the poor in order to reduce their social demands to the possibility of a few to escape the misery. In exchange, these Basijis expect that the poor [recruits] should actively support their clampdown on the popular movement on the streets. They expect that the poor bow their heads before war generals who are stealing the fruits of the collective labor that belong to all the people. They expect that the poor should kill their brothers and sisters.

As we see it, this police state has committed a miscalculation. Their expectations do not fit the reality. The poor have no motivation for supporting this system, and not only that, in the course of events, they would build up their own independent organizations exactly due to the

regime's insistence and demand for their active support [in their efforts] against the presence of any protests on the streets.

The imperial discourse about the nuclear industry and nuclear weapons does not have much rallying power either in these quarters, because the independent sovereign state is not an issue for the poor and the workers. It is not an issue at all in Iran for many historical reasons. The issue for the poor is to get rid of poverty and to have the society recognize their rights. Perhaps, the poor will even start to organize themselves inside the mosques and Basiji organizations and cast this skin.

The financial bankruptcy of the government will not in the coming months allow the rulers to set up a new farcical version of some Islamic Bolivarism. To understand the real obstacles for selforganization among the poor is the main concern for communists. On the other hand people who are on the streets, will soon find out that the ideological imageries propagated by the first group does not correspond to their reality and the reality of their struggle. They will find their allies among the poor. Communists work towards such a development.

3. Still

another group claims that this is a movement with democratic and bourgeois demands. They say that since according to our statistics we have huge masses of peasants, and since this movement is driven mostly by petty-bourgeoisie, then this movement is part of a democratic revolution. The proof of this claim? Some quotation from Marx about peasants in Europe in the nineteenth century. They say: Since we are very precise in our theory, we have separated the democratic phase from the socialist phase of the revolution, and have a detailed roadmap for securing the victory of this movement. Bourgeois democracy, for a country like Iran, with its backward and uneven capitalist development, is still

progressive and so we support these demands.

We intend to conquer the castle of power, and we have calculated all the details based on a quotation from Lenin in an article in 1899 about capitalism in Russia. We are the civil engineers of the revolution and we will build a democratic bridge. Later, when the industrial workers are in majority, we will extend this bridge, and our state will abolish private ownership by a governmental decree; and all shall obey the state. We are so precise that we have separated socialism from communism, political revolution from social revolution, the democratic revolution from socialist revolution, politics from the mode of production. For now, we await the congress of councils of workers and peasants, which are democratic but not socialist, to join us in order to create a democratic republic in Iran.

Is that so?

Firstly, what peasants? Have you read a single volume on the current agricultural situation in Iran? 25% of the population lives on agriculture. Except for small northern provinces with a dense population, the rest are spread out in small villages across a vast desert landscape. Have you ever thought why the peasants didn't have any decisive role in any social movements since the Constitutional Revolution, during the twentieth century? The situation is changing but not in the shape or in the direction you are thinking. The peasants are abandoning their lands in increasing numbers.

Secondly, there is the claim that the capitalist relations in Iran are undeveloped or suffer from anomalies. There is not enough space here, but friends, honestly capitalism, when expanded into this land, has been and will be what we have. Its anomalies are its only normal way of functioning in a place like Iran. In their texts, these friends are inspired by some formula about

industrialization
through accumulated
capital gained
through peasants'
labor. They have
read some lines
about NEP and the
Soviet Union during
the 1920s and 30s.
But not even a line
or a word in such a
history corresponds
to Iran or to contemporary capitalism.

If we think that the demand for nullifying
the elections, at this stage, is progressive,
this is not because we believe Mr.
Moussavi would secure the hegemony
of industrial/productive capital against
financial-mercantilist and rentier capital.
It is because we think this slogan, at this
stage, creates a certain possibility for
intervention by the laboring forces in the
workplaces and living spaces. Otherwise,
over here, there is no such a thing as the
hegemony of industrial capital. Look at
the price of labor force and the cost of
industrial production in Iran, and compare
it with China and South East Asia before
making your roadmaps. At the age of
post-industrial capitalism, this capitalism
will never give birth to a majority of
industrial working class in Iran, unless
your Democratic Republic starts with
catastrophic measures concerning wage
and social welfare. This is not a brilliant
idea.

Thirdly, a mode of production is not
something apolitical. You are mistaken.
You limit all the different senses of the
political to parliament, the state and its
institutions. Intervention in the mode of
production in society is politics itself.
Intervention in how to run a factory or
a residential neighborhood is politics.

It is not necessary to quote Marx about
villages in Europe. What's needed is to
understand that Marx's *Capital* is not an
academic book of expertise in economics

but the articulation of the conditions of intervention in the mode of production; an intellectual work that accompanied the workers' movement. It was written with this purpose according to the author.

Finally, your bridge towards the top of the mountain has nothing to do with theoretical precision. Because there is no top and no Simorgh (Simorgh is a mythical bird residing on the top of a mountain in Iranian mythology. The well-known story relates that a large group of birds once attempted to search for this mythical creature; after an adventurous and perilous journey, they end up at a high peak wherein the bird was supposed to live; there is no fabulous bird called Simorgh at that place. It is an empty space. Finally they, who after the journey were decimated to thirty ('si' in Persian) birds ('morgh'), realize that Simorgh was their own flight and presence._ trans. note).

You become Simorgh. This means that people during their own struggle, in this factory, in that neighborhood, surpass the form of private property. It does not happen through a memorandum by the proletarian state. The question how exactly this will happen, under which exact forms, this is not determined by us. We do not know. This is because history and a movement are not the same as nature, not the same as the rotational orbit of the earth around the sun, and we are not sitting in an observatory.

On a more theoretical note, communism is not powerful because it is exact, but because it remains connected and loyal to the notion of truth. And truth, this current under the bridges of imagination, moves, runs its course, is a movement.

As a movement, it determines its course and finds its own proper names, otherwise it is not a people's movement, and won't be self-determined. Its depth and length depends on the resistance by the enemy, the degree of solidarity, the capacity to move beyond obstacles and to a

horizon that is clear. The horizon is clear but not exact. It is not up to intellectuals to bring out its exactitude.

4. I believe that all these three standpoints, three corners of the Revolution Square, regardless of their ideologies, are based on observations that are neither accurate nor completely false. Their mistake consists of inappropriate generalization of the observation.

Each of them, standing at three corners of the square, has seen one side and one part of the people's movement. In order to have an overarching view, it is necessary to stand in the middle of this square. In the centre of the square, you will see the unfolding of thirty years of revolution in each passing second of the collective presence.

The main question is not the wealthy classes and their children, nor the right wing ideologies, not the war between the poor and the rich, nor even the form of government. The main question in this movement is that people want to participate in running the society at any possible level; in their neighborhoods, their workplaces, local or nationwide. All this because their rulers have reached a point that they believe their absolute incompetence is actually a precious little dress befitting this people, and think of the people as the receivers of alimony and hand outs from the state institutions, under the name of a republic the people wanted to create.

The question that determines the direction and orientation of this movement is this: If we want to intervene and participate in running our own society, under which name do we claim such things? A nation? The Umma' (religious community), the wretched of the earth, the wretched awaiting the return of the messiah? Some minors under the protective supervision of the 'supreme leader'? And those who do not heed our demands, those who oppress us, by which right are they entitled

to do so? Because they are armed?

Because they are rich and have taken over the wealth created by our labor and the mines of this land? Or that God has given them such privileges? Or because they are defeated generals from the war against Iraq?

This movement is not ambiguous. Its horizon is defined by articulation of the possible answers to such clear questions. To formulate the question is half of the answer.

The communists, standing together with people will expend effort to find answers to these questions. Communists, outside the state power and state-oriented discourses, work towards organization of people in order to limit the state power and force it to abide by popular demands. This should be seen in their words and deeds and this is the source of people's confidence in them. Communists are not technicians of political science, concerned with taking over the state apparatus, and they do not write instruction manuals on how to topple regimes.

Communists work for expanding the democracy. Against discrimination, ignorance and injustice, they propose their programs. They translate the future into the protection of nature and the environment in which people live and work, everywhere and case by case. They carry out their programs with popular organizations, not by state power. They force the state power to abide by their demands or abdicate. The place of the idea of communism always and without exception is defined outside the state power and in popular organizations.

Our engineers will laugh at us: what a stupid idea when you can do all this in a more efficient way by taking the state power. It suffices to take over the state and start the work. To them we say, this belief has been part of the statist ideology

against democracy, ever since Athens. This has been the principle of the rich, all the way up to the modern bourgeoisie, against the political cause. For the communists, however, democracy is an interventionist movement and the very definition of the political.

The point is that the fourth corner of the Revolution Square, the point that connects the square to the revolution is not one of its angles, it is not at all a question of a two dimensional surface; this point is suspended in the middle of this space called Revolution Square.

Pressure from below, haggling above; or Pressure from below, people's power from below?

Khiaban No. 32 / Wednesday, July 29, 2009

Amir K.

People are not leaving the streets. Tomorrow, the city's streets will belong to the people again. Different groups of people and countless dissenting citizens are preparing memorials for the martyrs and the dead of the current Iranian revolution. Until now, names and details of 78 martyrs have been published. Many families, due to pressure from the regime's security and intelligence forces, have stayed silent and have not shared their immense grief with other people. These killings started with the direct and unambiguous order of Ali Khamenei, the leader of the Islamic Republic, in his June 19th Friday prayers speech. He said that from the next day anybody who took to the streets to protest would be held responsible for the loss of their own life.

People, however, took up this responsibility and, in the face of the supreme jurist's

bullets, machetes and knives, took to the streets to demand their rights from this regime of injustice. The brutality and ruthlessness of the supreme jurist's death squads was beyond compare. The order was to employ the maximum violence in order to impose an atmosphere of terror on the people and bring a graveyard-like silence to the society. That mediocre clown, Ahmadinejad, took up the directive of the supreme leader, using the dissent-killing machineries of the Sepaah [Revolutionary Guards] and the Basij.

The gangs of ruthlessness and brutality had their eyes on the 1980s experience and were imagining the absolute success of the state terror. What fools' dreams! This time, it was not merely a small, vanguard group at the forefront [of the fight], whose sacrifice of their lives even could not save the barricades of street resistance from falling. This time the entire society had risen and they had erected their street barricades against a criminal minority.

In this bloody struggle — in which the people, armed with their solidarity, hope, desire for freedom and a collective love were on one side, and a governance equipped with the most horrific instruments for murdering its own citizens on the other — countless of the purest of this land's children have fallen. Countless martyrs have become witness to the naked violence of a system of deceit and criminality, which has put its claws into society's lifeline, sucking its blood, growing corpulent. Countless youths gave their lives to bring to society freedom and a new world.

Their martyrdom was the result of an organized mass killing by a regime, which, after taking away people's right of free speech, right to dignified work, right of assembly, right of self-determination, right of clothing, and all their other rights in a most merciless fashion, is now taking away from them even the right to life. The

resistance of the people and the youth does not fit within the framework of the rulers' calculations, and the continuation of this resistance and people's solidarity against the coup regime is shaking the rulers' palace of religious despotism.

The fortieth day memorial of the martyrdom of Neda and all those who were killed the same day by the bullets of the regime, so that freedom and resolve would not fall, is a new day in the fight to bury the dark night of this land forever. People have stood up, and each day with their protests and innovations, they enrich and deepen their movement.

Some, with their thinking and beliefs rooted in the circumstances prior to June 12, are still following the "pressure from below, haggling up above" solution. In this view, people's movement in the streets, in their workplaces and places of living will give a section of the rulers — who, in this view are thought to be more with the people, and work for the good of all — a more powerful backing, and in the lobbies of power in the halls of the parliament and the cabinets, enable them to extract more concessions from the other group of rulers, who are openly and unambiguously the enemies of the people. In this view, by suffering the costs of building pressure on a despotic and merciless power from below, people will enable the more moderates within this closed circle of rulers to impose petty reforms on the other faction, which is reliant on oppressive military forces.

In previous years and in smaller and weaker movements, this logic may have had some buyers, but in the days after June 12, any tendency that takes up this viewpoint will isolate itself and lose people's support.

Today, people have concluded that they shall not give any blank checks to any layer of the ruling politicians, to any reformists and seekers of change [from above]. They want their own control over

all [social] matters. The rule of a religious group such as the supreme leader, the Guardian Council, the Assembly of Experts, which are backed by military and economic institutions that have no accountability to the people, stands in direct opposition to the governance of the people over their own fate.

The only thing that can lead to an improvement of the people's real life conditions is a pressure from below leading to the taking of power from below and by the people. People want to determine their society's public laws themselves, and want to do so freely. They want all social institutions to be elected by the society and be accountable to them and under their oversight.

The existence of military institutions such as the Sepaah and the Basij, which, in the hands of power thirsty groups, easily turn into instruments of killing people, are of no use to the people. The society wants to determine by itself which institutions are needed for its security and how those institutions work. A university president who has not been elected by the students, the professors and the university staff, but selected by powers standing above the society, easily and as it has happened, become collaborator with death squads killing the students.

Parliamentary representatives elected in a system other than one under people's control can come to reveal themselves, as they have done these days, not as representing the people, but as functionaries and paid, rudderless hoodlums at the service of a coup regime of terror. People want to create a new social system, in which in their places of work, in their places of living and in their cities, the methods of management and responsibilities are determined by the people and in realistic fashion, and in which the source of legitimacy and lawfulness is the people, not a group believing themselves to be religious scientists claiming

to be god's replacement on earth. It is for these demands and with such outlook that the society has entered the arena of struggle with all it has, with all that the regime has left people with: their lives. If you take a good look at their determination, you will realize that they will achieve their goal.

A General Strike or Tactical Strikes?

Khiaban # 33 / Saturday, August 1, 2009

By Amir K.

The Iranian people's recent leap against a criminal minority in power had a strange uniqueness. Which is that, as opposed to the usual trend of opposition and revolutionary movements, which start out as a series of small and scattered protests that end in large protests, transforming the social and political structures, the Iranian movement began with large protests. People, who were astounded by the announced election results and by the obviousness of the fraud, were only waiting for a call to take to the streets. Although the call for protests on June 15 was officially rescinded [by Moussavi], nobody could stop the millions of citizens from pouring onto the streets to show Ahmadinejad and Khamenei who the few specks of dust were, and to show whether the 'few' described the people or the rulers.

From that day on, large-scale demonstrations were replaced by small and scattered protests for two main reasons.

The first reason is that people's peaceful demonstrations were countered by the regime's bullets, and in effect martial law was established by the regime's death squads in Tehran and other cities. The second reason was Moussavi's refusal to

call the people to the streets. Moussavi and his colleagues preferred to keep the millions-strong presence of the people on the streets to merely a shadow of it, and, by resorting to threatening this monster that had escaped the bottle, convince the Khamenei-Ahmadinejad gang to return the rules of the game to the situation prior to June 12. Since the network of people's organizing cells and committees fighting the coup are still growing and are not able to organize coordinated, widespread demonstrations, large demonstrations have given way to a series of small protests, which as a result of their continuation and increased organization will again display their evolution to large demonstrations, during the days that this regime of oppression and terror will be overthrown.

However, from the very first days of the people's confrontation with forces armed to the teeth, the need was felt for the second arm of the people's movement; meaning, a general strike. Refusing to work and bringing to a halt the wheels of production is the most important tool and foundation from which people can enforce their power against a criminal minority in power. All the wealth that this money-hoarding criminal bunch has gained and so generously splurges on oppressing the citizens has been procured from the collective social wealth, which, due to the present workings of the system, could be expropriated, away from the overseeing eyes of the people.

The rulers are trying to show that they are the basis and foundation of society, and that people are mere beggars utterly dependent on them. But, in reality, it is the people who produce and reproduce the social existence, and the ruling gang an appendage of a lively and dynamic society, an appendage that feeds leechlike on the social order. However, just as the large, millions-strong demonstrations showed the system the level of regime's 'popularity', a general strike will show

the system and every individual in the society wherein the source of all life and wealth lies.

Therefore, the need for a general strike to help the movement, confronting terror in the streets with nothing in hand, quickly took shape in the society's collective mind. Especially given that the movement had just experienced huge demonstrations and imagined the start of strikes as large strikes.

But a general strike did not take shape. At least, not until now. This is because the speedy shaping of the [general strike] idea had not considered some of the preparatory work needed for a general strike, and had imagined the formation of a general strike as taking a similar path as the huge demonstrations of June 15. But, a general strike does not take shape with the call of a political leader, even if that leader is popular, or else the current of events has put them at the leadership of the movement.

A general strike needs nationwide unions of workers and employees, in different productive/industrial and service sectors of society. But, thirty years of constant repression of workers and union activists, the lack of possibility of forming independent unions at places of work, and such similar considerations, has minimized the realistic possibilities for organizing a general strike in the country.

Another problem is the lack of clarity of goals and demands of a general strike. After the millions-strong show of force by in the streets by the people — whose demands and needs go far deeper than those of the reformist leaders, who at this moment have the most means of communicating with the people (compared to political activists outside the regime) — the reformist leaders are incapable of determining the goals of a move such as a general strike. The goal of organizing another election no longer has the

reach it had before the start of the mass killings. At this moment, the people have come to see the important role of the supreme leader [valiye faqih] and the legal structures of the Islamic Republic in oppressing political and social freedoms in the Iranian society.

They want to see the murderers of people to be brought to justice, and this means specifically Khamenei and the leaders of the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij. But these goals are well beyond the goals of the reformists, who do not want any deep fracture developing in the political structures in Iran. As a result, the reformists are evading expressing any concrete goals. They are unwilling to voice their minimalist demands, thereby losing the people's support and in turn losing their only weapon in confronting the coup organizers. Therefore, the crucial demand for organizing the people around a general strike has remained blurred and unexpressed.

But the people know that, in order to defeat the coup and for re-appropriating the society from coup-generating laws, they also need their arm of strikers.

A phase will be reached when people, in the course of their long street struggle, will find a level of local and collective organizations that will daily enable them to coordinate and organize more widespread street actions; a network which in a not-distant future will be able to organize the final demonstrations. At that time, as a result of the evolution of tactical strikes a general strike too will take shape, and it can be reliant on a nationwide organization that will arise out of the unions/organizations that develop in the course of these tactical strikes. As a result of tactical strikes, people's demands too will find a clearer, more tangible shape.

We can point to different spheres. For example, in the area of the press and the

media, the current censorship dominating all publications has reached a suffocating level. A censorship much like that of the Shah's during the martial law period. The reaction of those journalists, media workers and staff [during Shah's marital law], in their strike with the goal of abolishing censorship of media, was able to have an important effect in the society, and strengthened powerfully the demand for freedom of the press in the people's movement. Or, take the sphere of lawyers.

The new judiciary memorandum, which completely eliminates the independence of the lawyers' guild, is a tangible and real problem for all the lawyers, and after much protest, Shahroudi [head of Judiciary] suspended the new rules for six months. A general sit-in/demonstration aiming to abolish the new rules completely can maintain the lawyers' guild's independence, and can initiate discussions for the complete independence of the entire judicial system.

The demands of productive/industrial workers for just compensation, which today are stifled on a wide scale by the regime, can not only facilitate the task of organizing the workers, but in a highlighted fashion can turn the right to a dignified life and the abolishing of class discrimination into a general demand of the society.

The ability to organize and consolidate popular organizations will grow and take flight in these very compressed days that will determine much. People's demands and goals will become clear and visible in the very course of their struggle: in the public and collective discussions and arguments over the general problems of society on the one hand, and the daily problems and needs specific to places of work, on the other. A general strike, much like a collective dream, is beautiful and will break the back of this coup d'état. The current system wants us to put aside our dreams, and to continue a real, excruciating

life under a fascistic [form of] Islam.

But, these days, we have seen the power
of dreams with our own eyes.
In tehran, the personnel of a hospital due to
the protest against the murder of demonstrators
and Prosecution of injured by security
foces were on a symbolic strike.

Field, Place, Trajectory

***Khiaban No. 36 / Tuesday, August 11,
2009***

By Milad S.

1. 17th Shahrivar

We are witnessing a gradual transformation
and redirecting of the slogans. It
took less than two months for the people
to move from the demand for annulment
of the elections to the collective
realization that the real nature and the
legal framework of this republic are the
real obstacles in the way of the movement.

The more elaborate forms of mass
meetings, organization of thousands of
small cells, the increase in capabilities
for printing and distributing nightly fliers
and news bulletins — these are all indicative
of a widened field for movement.
With the joining in of different regions,
the movement is also redefined at each
stage: the widening of the local protests
against [what happened in] Naziabad,
in 17th Shahrivar (southern neighborhood
of Tehran with a dominantly poor
population), is an example of the spreading
of the struggle from neighborhood to
neighborhood.

Alongside the evolving field of struggle
and the spreading of movement from
one neighborhood, one place to another,
the trajectory and the possible horizons

of this movement too undergo changes. The widening of the popular protests is not merely quantitative, just as the rising number of organized groups or the increased facility in printing and distributing two-page night fliers are not merely an improved dissemination of the news.

The slogans and the forms of dissent as well as the demands being raised can encompass yet larger segments of the material social reality. This is a movement in which we can already see the capability for the claims, and the inevitability of returning to the basic demands, of the 1978-79 revolution. The experience of the period of 1977-81 means understanding solidarity as organized popular demands. Along this trajectory, in the process of popular self-organization at any given place, the communists walk alongside the people.

If the people gradually reach the conclusion that the corrupt police patrols are not protectors of the people but aggressors against their lives and livelihoods, the worst kind of hoodlums, and if they realize from their own practical experience that self-management over their local affairs is a better guarantee for more security, peace and humane life; then this practical realization and the end of the humiliation, will mean the practical discovery of a common cause.

The experience of the winter of 1978- early 1979), the spectacular fall of criminality, the practical distribution of needed goods in different neighborhoods, particularly in working class and southern districts of cities, are all experiences still remembered today due not only to the mass mobilization of the people but especially due to people's foresight in forming neighborhood committees. The communists stand alongside the people so that this time around nobody shall hijack these committees in the name of ideology or for any particular economic

interests.

2. Communists

“Communists” means the collective practice of all those working for connecting the mass struggle for particular and localized demands, with social justice as their horizon, and with a belief in the possibility of self-management/control in places of work and living. Based on these principles, communists expend effort in organizing the laboring forces and the people. Acting among the people, in small groups, means multiplying the communist ideals.

I believe that this definition helps best in overcoming many obstacles. Communism is an old ideal. In this land of Iran, those in the Mazdaki insurrection (c. 496 AD) were among the forerunners of this ideal. This ideal is based on a single thought: by sharing the collectively produced wealth, by participation of all in the running of society, we will achieve social justice, legal and real equality, and the possibility of growth and freedom for each individual, regardless of color, creed or religion.

This old ideal, with the dawn of capitalism and the development of culture and sciences, nowadays is not only a possible vantage point but a necessary way out of the existing misery. Our world does not have much forte left for speculative total destruction and private benefit of a few. It is enough to look at the torched earth of Africa, abandoned by Capital, or to look at the destroyed environments in Iran or all over the world. This ideal, today more than ever, is attainable; it is enough to just see that humanity today has achieved levels of science and innovation unparalleled in human history.

Production and intellect are intimately connected. Even for farming a plot of land, you need at least some years of schooling. Such were inconceivable only two hundred years ago. The fact that

capitalism had a progressive role in this development is not disputed, at least not by communists who have read Marx.

The point, though, is that this progressive function is relative and historical, not eternal. And the last two hundred years have shown clearly that Capital's governing logic is today not only insufficient and unfeasible, but is in fact a detriment to both creativity and people's wellbeing. Shantytowns and slums, governance by corruption, torture camps such as Kahrizak and Aslavié industrial complex (a remote petro-industrial complex, infamous for its inhuman working conditions_ trans. note), the Basiji's, and the last thirty years of Iranian history, all attest to this.

Furthermore, I think that the specific form for struggle should be a function of the ideal. Political parties were one of the basic forms in the struggles during the 20th century. Political party formation in its widest social sense, not only in Iran but in the majority of places in the world, was synonymous to communists' commitment.

This, however, in my opinion, does not necessarily mean that this form is extrahistorical. Based on historical conditions, and the dominant social relations, including security considerations, we must responsibly ask: Is this form efficient today, does it contribute to multiplication and dissemination of the communist ideal and to organization of the people?

3. Analysis for doing what?

I think that the criteria for evaluating any concept, be it grand or small, about the world, the era, or Iran, is the conjectural conclusions of the communists' efforts and organizing experience; otherwise, abstract thinking will waste your labor, and academism will have us happily busy with rearranging and recomposing successive drafts. Understanding capital's mechanisms and dynamics, understanding the present antagonisms and the current

movement's place within the world
and the region, all these must be discussions
and arguments that, just like tools
of labor, aim at societal intervention. So,
perhaps the most appropriate thing to
do is to ask questions whose meaningful
absence is an obstacle in the path
of the new generation of communists.

Will the mercantilist capitalists, those
in the Chamber of Commerce [Otaaqh-e
Baazargaani] and Merchants' Association
[Hey'ate Mo'talefe], still exist if this
state falls, or will they perish? Why will
they perish? If the state were their representative
and not the other way around,
why would their existence be dependent
on this state? Why is it that for the last
thirty years, except for the war years,
we have faced a constant and increasing
growth of the service sector, educational
sector, and financial capital? What
is the exact nature of the foundations
[bonyaad's _ government run, formally
'private' corporations run crony-capitalist
style _ trans. note] and the Revolutionary
Guards? Why is it that the Iranian banking
system can be bankrupt, according to
the official sources of the regime itself,
yet some capitalists, whom some friends
have generously given the honorary label
of bourgeoisie, exist? Why didn't they
react? Is it because they still constitute a
weakling of a class, in transition? If that
is the case, then where does all this huge
volume of liquidity in circulation come
from, where does it become capital, and
where does it go; where is the circulation
of capital?

The experiential givens and tangible
facts, which fit our lived experiences and
are observable in the available data,
must be relevant for our analyses. Why
have some friends fallen so in love with
"Iran's transition from something to something,"
or with "Iran's capitalist malformation"?
Malformation can only mean that
there is a prototype somewhere else. I
think one problem is the frequently misunderstood
phrase, 'a capitalist society'.

Nowhere on earth is the society limited to capitalism, nor is capitalism a laboratory experimental phenomenon. Capital has its own logic, which is fundamentally alien to human considerations. It is the closed circuit of production, distribution and accumulation: neither humans nor their environment find any place in its calculations, unless they are factors for increase or stabilization of the rate of profit. The civil legal codes of a European society (if this is what the notion of malformed Iranian capitalism refers to) is not the exact copy of capital's logic, but the outcome of a long struggle between capital and the laboring forces, affecting the legal institutions of those societies.

Also, analysis must not be merely a 'know-it-all' type of expression. The objective is to better understand how Ahmadinejads can be reproduced in the heart of this society, and how these creatures and their state apparatus is connected to the world capitalist system. And from those two questions, firstly to arrive at conclusions that make it impossible for a system of oppression to exist, and secondly to allocate the material conditions for the possibility of communism.

In a forthcoming writing, I will return to these questions. In the current situation, I believe that the most important principle must be the readiness, with open eyes, to accompany the movement and to render blunt and ineffective the dreadful and oppressive violence. Wherever the machinery of oppression thinks they have driven us back, we have just avoided the range of their bullets, in order to set up new spaces in our next steps. The cooperation of the street and the work places, the neighborhoods and places of work will change the directions taken by the movement. The changes of direction, in order to become stable forms of selfmanagement, will need the knowledge and the effort of those who, in practice, believe in freedom and people's equality, regardless of color or creed.

Political gamesmanship with a burned lamp? (On the Organization of The Green Path of Hope)

Khiaban #39 / Saturday, August 22, 2009

By Amir K.

The decision to found the Organization of the Green Path of Hope was announced [August 15, 2009], accompanied with a wave of hoopla and media hype on the part of the reformists and political forces close to them. An organization purported to be neither a political party, nor a political front, but something beyond those and designed alongside the rich and extensive movement of the people. Living in Iran, however, has taught us all to look behind the stated claims, and through the cracks and seems of the purported claims to look for the actual truth.

What is the Organization of the Green Path of Hope? As has been reported so far, this organization is composed of a small central committee, consisting of four or five people, including Moussavi, Karroubi and Khatami. A larger consultative committee will be formed, composed of political and social experts and analysts; and its body has been stated as being the spontaneously created committees and people's innovations, whose formation is said to be based on social networking and will benefit from a high level of autonomy.

In this very initial proposal, the similarities between this organization's basic organs and that of any other political party's are obvious. It has a central committee, composed of a number of well known political figures, and a political bureau composed of political and social thinkers/analysts. For years now, the reformists have been critiquing political

party building as something belonging to the past (the era of the presence of communism in society), and have introduced different forms of campaigning and social networking as the democratic vessels suitable for the new age of globalization. Of course, we have to be fair and point to some of the differences between Organization of the Green Path of Hope and a contemporary understanding of a political party. In a modern political party, all the party organs are elected and the highest political organ is the party congress. The central committee and the political bureau are elected by the party congress, and during the time between two congresses, they lead the party with the aid of other party organs.

However, the reformists, the liberals and phony democrats, who for years now have been critiquing democratic centralism in leftist parties, and despite their waxing philosophical about, "You yourself are the leaders; you yourself are the media," and despite providing various arguments based on social networks, lack of central decision making, reliance on people's innovations and other such oratory — these same people are now founding an organization, in which the masses of the organization have no say in the choosing of the members of its leadership and its central organs.

The workings of this organization are very clear, and the blindness of some political forces regarding this is astounding. The behavioral model of the Organization of the Green Path of Hope is this: the members of the central committee are political figures, who are the symbols/ personification and actualization of the organization, and the victory of the organization translates into their coming to power. Standing beside these individuals is the consultative committee or the political

bureau or, if we want
to talk in more contemporary
phrases,
the main think-tank
of the organization,
chosen and invited
for cooperation by
a few in the leadership.
In his interview,
[editor-in-chief of the
pro-Moussavi newspaper *Kalameh*, and
senior aid to Moussavi, Alireza] Beheshti,
has said clearly that the members of the
consultative committee will be invited to
this committee. This group is responsible
for proposing solutions and organizational
tactics.

On a lower organizational level, we come
to committees connected to the high
level ones, which are formed in different
social spheres, where they carry out their
activities. At the depths of the pyramid
of the green organization, we come to
those groups that don't have a direct
connection to the organization, but have
been formed spontaneously and innovatively
by the people, and intend to share
their resources and capabilities with the
entire society.

The connection between
the leadership and this bottom layer is
not organizational but media-based,
and depends on possibilities created by
new capabilities that modern media and
information technologies, especially the
Internet, have brought about. It is this part
of the organization that is the subject of a
lot of advertising and, by whose aggrandizement
and highlighting attempts are
made to equate the organization with the
movement. It is said that, in order to become
a member of this organization, no
membership forms need to be filled. Anybody
can consider him/herself a member
of the organization and commence their
activities. Behind this people-oriented
facade, however, we must look at a few
unpleasant points.

Official membership in this or any organization in Iran bears a cost. Even today and under conditions where the members of the central committee are free, it is likely that any lower ranked member of the organization can be arrested, and charged with a thousand madeup 'crimes' by the regime, subjected to torture and execution. And that, with a central committee that, when confronted with murder, torture and imprisonment [and rape] of the movement's activists, merely calls for pursuing the matter legally through the courts of this very system. Now imagine a time when the regime starts to arrest the members of the central committee of this organization, the very people who have been part of this regime for thirty years; in that case, what do you think the regime will do to some unknown youth who is a member of the organization but has not a thread of a connection to this regime in any way, form or shape?

As a result of such potential dangers, the masses of the people will not be rushing to become members of an organization that is legal, and would consequently even hand over a print-out of members' names to the government prosecutors if they should ask for them, to prove the organization's good intentions to the court.

Looked at another way, the organization and its leaders are not interested in getting involved with the problems of defending their members' rights of political activity. Hence the need for the appearance of the phrase, 'autonomous social networks'. In this way, they circumvent the problem of having to defend the 'right of political activity'. Now, anybody can

consider him/herself a member of the organization,
without there being any document
that can be turned into 'evidence'.
Hence, the possibility for absorbing large
numbers of people and the youth.

Due to the lack of official membership of
the masses of people within the organization,
there will also be no need for organizational
responsibility and accountability
by the leadership to the rank and file, to
the members. Consequently, the same
group that decided the central committee
and invited the political bureau members
for cooperation can assume the control of
the organization forever and in any form
it wishes, since it has never been elected
in any party congress and is not answerable
to any such
congress either.

(Isn't it truly amazing
that some are
mesmerized by
this proposal for a
green organization
yet consider themselves
democrats,
and have subjected
to endless criticism
all Iranian parties
and organizations
existing till now,
calling them Stalinist,
though many of
these were based on much more progressive
and internally coherent mechanisms
than this green organization.)

But it is possible for some to say: All that
true. But, nobody's forcing those innovative
people into any activity. Every network
acts independently, and there is no
oversight or control. Who can force any
group or individual who's not an official
member of the organization to do any
kind of activity?

Yes, you are right. But, let's move a bit
farther out so that we get a wider point
of view, so we can see a bigger segment
of the process. The consultative committee

determines the general lines and solutions, which, in the lower committees — in the spheres of women's struggles, the youth, universities, sportspeople, etc. — are combined with the considerations of those specific committees and then advertised and propagated.

That large autonomous social network is active in units that have limited capabilities. Any innovative undertaking by this large social network that goes along or strengthens the general line of the organization will meet with approval and gets relayed and reflected. Innovations that run contrary, do not get relayed and get isolated. Through this mechanism, the organization benefits from people's help, without needing to follow up on people's demands, and without any differing or discordant paths finding a foothold in the organization.

If you are familiar with the website Balatarin, it is a revealing example of the way such a network functions. On the one hand, everybody is allowed to participate in it and to express her/himself. However, if your expressions don't go along with that of the majority of the network participants, with lots of negatives you find yourself falling farther away from the readers' eyes, and those with expressions along the network's majority line of thinking get lots of positive credits and find their writings right up front. The social networks under consideration by the reformists work in exactly the same way. By forming organizational committees in different spheres, this organization begins engaging in popular politics with an advantage. The political activists of this supposedly autonomous network, on the one hand are in contact with the leadership and the consultative committee and, on the other, with the mass media.

As a result, any autonomous member in this network

can only be effective if,
and only in so far as, she/
he spreads the political
line determined up above.
If anybody sings a different
tune, he/she remains
in the network, but will be
put on mute.

Even though the current
era calls for actions, the
reformists are still fond
of playing with phrases.

The Participation 'Front',
Green 'Path' of Hope.
They are desperately
trying to seem like an umbrella. Alas, the
storm leaves no umbrellas standing.

For Organizing

Khiaban #40 / Monday, August 24, 2009

By Milad S.

1. In the current struggle, the main force is the people. 'The people' means the laboring forces, the industrial workers, teachers and students, employees of the health and services sectors and the office workers, university students, the unemployed and the poor. Different segments of the population have joined the street protests to different degrees, ranging from general mobilization in some parts to hesitation and waiting in other parts.

The foundational principle is that the laboring forces, in widely varied working situations and at times without cultural or organizational continuity in a country consisting of different peoples, do not need centralized guidelines; rather, they need a multiplicity of guidelines, and different kinds and fields of activities.

Therefore, based on the heterogeneous conditions of the existence of laboring forces, the first principle of organizing is the definiteness of place.

This principle has two components. Undoubtedly, organizing industrial workers and organizing low-ranking office workers/staff or teachers are subjected to different circumstances, their demands too vary, and likewise the situation in a small town in Kurdistan is not the same as that in the country's capital. In the course of the collective overall organization of these demands, the heterogeneity of places rediscover each other through all-encompassing demands and move in the same direction.

The decisive factor here is that this co-direction of the movement, which based on its logic is a passing phenomenon, does not eliminate the place-specific multiplicity of demands. The second component of the principle is the logic of belonging. If we expend effort for the betterment of life in a specific neighborhood, the Shiite and the Baha'i, the Jewish and the Muslim, women and men, they all belong to this neighborhood.

If we are attempting to organize a strike in a factory, the Afghan workers, the Baluchi and Khuzestani workers too work in that factory, in that location. This belonging to this very place must be obtained as a right in its real effectiveness.

2. The second point is about the difference between organizations of intellectuals or supporters of the communist ideal and the people's organizations. At this historical moment and due to the existence of new communications capabilities, forming of a network comprising numerous small groups of communists, and creation of a minimum of coordination based on collective understanding and agreement is possible and more adaptable for social action.

A weakness of this

type of work is the time it takes to reach collective agreements; obviously a centralized leadership can reach decisions more quickly. In my view, however, this weakness can be compensated for with the improvement of the means of communication, especially with the help of the infrastructure available outside the country.

On the other hand, the very process of reaching collective decisions and agreements is part of the very definition and distinguishing feature of the communists' work. In this very process, we can correct the tone and content of our ideas. In other words, the central committee is this very pluralistic network, the communist ideal is the work of independent organizing of the people, and the polit-bureau too is the collective decisions.

However, these communist groups are not the same as the people's independent organizations. The goal of the organization of the labor force is putting forward people's demands and creating conditions for intervention in the process of production of social wealth. Groups of communist activists either bring forth the idea of forming these organizations, or in their actions they attempt to belong to such organizations or to their leadership.

To imagine that the mere formation of a communist group, reading some books and engaging in theoretical discussions is the same as communist activity is completely mistaken. The end result of the communists' work should be the organization of the people.

Any theory, any level of competence in discussing the details of the French or the October Revolution, or any sociological theory can help our work and help solidify our knowledge of organizing, but these cannot replace the people's organizations. An association of communists is only a part of the people's organizations. If this principle is not forgotten, the group itself can find ways of avoiding cliquishness and ossification

of their internal relations.

In some experiences, for example, in order to reduce the danger of becoming a closed circle, simple formal mechanisms have been used, such as limiting the number of members to an odd number, e.g. three, five or seven to a group. The oddness of number disturbs an internal relations based on pair relations and symbiosis to a certain extent.

Another experience is that when unanimity of ideas is impossible while the conditions are pressing, based on a lottery, one person is chosen as the leader for a short period of time, such as several weeks. This person's role is to cast the decisive vote when a group cannot reach consensus. This role is completely based on drawing lots, and not on any individual characteristics of the person. Specific actions: writing and distribution of night-fliers; or creating a preliminary cell in order to form a workers' organization in a factory, or in order to create a support fund for a teachers' or university students' organization, in order to create a secret or publicly announced local free health clinic or a free school; or any other project that is needed and doable, is an effort directed toward presence in a people's organization in their places of work or living.

3. Organizing of people is not a means or a tool; organizing the people around time- and place-specific demands is the realization of the communist movement.

In today's Iran, this very principle is in fact the only way out of the endemic crisis that has engulfed all the social spheres. To escape this historical crisis, no device or technique deployed by the state will solve the problems. The people's organized presence, without any ideological affixes or titles, is not only the dam blocking the way of the capitalist state apparatuses' aggression against the people's livelihood and integrity, but

today even their body. These organizations of the labor force, and the possibility of their spread to the poor, is the way out of the crisis for the entirety of the society.

To clarify the principle of the independent organization of people, a line must be drawn against a phenomenon that has become prevalent in the last two decades.

NGOs, or Non-Governmental Organizations, are deeply ideological structures. The boundaries of NGO activities are defined by the space separating the state power from the particular interests of different socio-cultural groups in society. This space, the civil society, has been defined in contrast to the private space based on private property, and in contrast to the state as the public discourse. This definition and this position, is historically specific to bourgeois societies. It is now decades since, in advanced capitalist societies, capital itself obliterated the boundaries between the private space and the public domain.

Today, capital is extremely social and no bourgeois is anywhere in sight; today, the suburb itself is a factory for producing surplus value. Capital has left no room for civil society, and there are no neutral or separating spaces in their bourgeois sense. Besides, capital's progress has never shied from aggression against the private space or the public/social resources. Contrary to what the orthodox would say, cultural products and creations, including cultural identities too, are not super-structural things. I don't understand the meaning of 'super-structure' exactly. The dominant culture, the media and visual representations today are part of the cycle of production and accumulation of profit in a modern society; sexuality, historical traditions and even childhood are commoditized and are spheres of investment.

Today, the defense of civility does not occur in the suspended

space between the state and capital. Exactly for this reason, a true liberal, not these pretences of being liberal in academic environs, but freedom-seekers and those truly against totalitarianism, had better join the communists.

The people's independent organizations are separate from state power, and this independence is gained by them based on their connections to the labor force, to the production process and the places of living. This means that these organizations, in any place where possible, will turn to self-management. To put it more theoretically, the operational space for these organizations is not the 'public space', but a space based on the definition of a common cause while forming these organizations.

That which distinguishes the work of communist groups from that of the NGOs is firstly the control that the people assume over their organizations, and secondly going beyond the civil society as an artificial space under the control of capital.

Let it be said too that, in my view, in today's Iran the space of social negotiation between particular interests and the state will either rapidly be transformed and move beyond the limits of particular interests, or become an appendage of the state, a charitable activity.

As a result, under conditions whereby the existing choices for a communist group is either passivity or engaging in cliquish discussions, being active in such organizations while being aware of their ideological limitations, can help in gaining an initial experience of social work.

4. Along the same lines, we must pay attention to a misunderstanding. To be a Muslim, either in good faith or just in pretences, doesn't have a jot to do with "Islamist", as in an adjective for [a

particular kind of] social interventionism.

Being a Muslim is an individual concern, and we can probably find as many kinds of personal Islamic beliefs as there are Muslims in Iran. One Muslim can be working alongside communists in a popular organization and still remain a very pious human, while another can be a torturer in the basement rooms in the Evin prison. And both could pray five times a day.

These beliefs are not the determining criteria for social behavior. The adjective 'Islamist', however, is a completely different creature.

The problem of the Islamists in Iran, both those ruling and those currently condemned, during these past decades is the conflation of the adjective 'Islamic' and being a Muslim.

This is an ideological and totalitarian manipulation of some people's Muslim-ness. And all this, based on fiqh [religious jurisprudence], meaning the same legal rulings of the 16th century, which were left behind almost one hundred years ago. A Sixteenth century jurist does what we see they try to do now. He cuts off people's hands in Sattar Khan highway (a highway in Tehran, named after one of the leaders of the Constitutional Revolution, 1906, which abolished religious interference in jurisprudence).

So, as you see, for the Islamists, "Islamic democracy" means the Islamist people, whose similarities with being a Muslim occur only in name and in truth cannot be anything but the state's functionaries, choose the best suited among themselves, but claim this selection should be valid for all Iranian people.

Such a fictitious line of thought is fundamentally incapable of understanding a thing called 'society'. Let alone democracy.

5. In order to spread a single word among the people, it takes efforts proving that one can be trusted. Those who want to shortcut history, make announcements in the name of the people, and proceed forward by manufacturing public opinion — they consider people dupes and want them to remain thus. Without having any roots in people's organizations, and without a people who have gained social consciousness in the process of fighting for their rights, calling on the people to engage in massive projects, no matter how radical they may seem, at least for the communists is meaningless.

The University: Green Politics and Deep Politics

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By Amir K.

The university has never been a warm and comfy house of learning. At least not in Iran. Here, it has been a long alleyway shaped by various struggles and fights paving its path; a compact arena of struggle between despotism and freedom, between dictatorship and self-management/autonomy, between the science of oppression and control on the one hand, and the science of liberation on the other; the main artery of the contemporary political history of Iran.

The Islamic Republic was strengthened by its conquest of the universities. I do not mean merely the shutting down of the universities in 1980 and the violent elimination of the vanguards of the student movement in Iran, which in itself was a seminal arena, and the courageous resistance of the students — who fought back when confronted with Khomeini's religious fascism and lost their lives, but

did not silently surrender to the cultural counter-revolution of the Islamic Republic — will shine in the history of the [Iranian] university. But also, declaring Tehran University to be the location of the Tehran's Friday prayers clearly highlighted the relationship between the university and the current regime. The spatial conquest of the university perhaps was primary to the conquest of the social discourse and the military-political coup of 1981 and the [total] closing of the social public space. [The process of] Islamizing of the university was an important part of putting shackles on the society by the new power bloc, which had just begun battering the body of the revolution.

The rapid consolidation of the ruling regime within the space of Tehran University was the response given by Khomeini and his murdering cohorts to freedom, diversity and the collective splendor that the 1978 revolution had spread across the green grass of Tehran University. Taking the Friday prayers into the university apace was done to guarantee the [continued] control of the university space by reactionary religious forces. [...] The goal of the Shiite clerics was to impose their own system of thought on the modern structures of the university. The weekly presence of numerous believers in Islam in a space which is [supposed to be] the main vessel of critical thinking, and the weekly sermons of the religious functionaries of the regime for the purpose of disseminating their thoughts and ideas, instead of disseminating concepts and ideas by academics and progressive forces, was a giant step in regime's attempt in burying the revolution.

Now and once again, the university has been turned into the heart of the society. People who, on September 18, raised the slogan, "When the university opens, Iran will see Armageddon!" (*Daaneshgaah ke baaz besheh, Iran qhiyaamat misheh!*), understand well the importance of fighting in the universities. The university

is that nerve center that, with its [youthful] enthusiasm and idealism, can blunt and nullify those mercantilist types of calculations of a dictatorship-ridden society. It is also a nerve center that can prevent deviation and cooptation of the people's movement, and be the center for providing consciousness and alertness as well as defense of the interests of those whose voices have been expropriated, who have no spokespeople, and the oppressed. The dictatorship too, with its trembling, shows us the importance of this fight. The organized assault against the student activists, the absolute militarization of the university, widespread expulsions and the habitual Islamizing of the university are the regime's strategies for defeating the people in the university trenches.

The battle in the university is one of appropriating that space as one's own. By determining the subjects, by [implementing particular policies for] student admissions, by enforcement of [gender] apartheid, appointment of instructors from their own ranks, dragging their own ceremonies into the university space, expulsions, and imposition of dispersion and spreading of waves of reaction, the regime tries to achieve its goals. But, the students too, just like the ordinary people at the beginning of their new revolution, have realized that in order to defeat the enemy they must capture the university spaces. They do not fear, for they are all together. They have the power to cut off the hands of the rulers from their educational and living spaces.

The university, up to now, has been a collection of classes, spaces, doors and gates, corridors and books as well as cold and regime-afflicted discussions that the students merely passed through; a collection brimming with student populations, who are nonetheless captives of the rulers. A victory for the movement, however, means taking back this space from the regime. Victory does not mean

huge gatherings in defense of this or that political leader, a gathering, at the end of which everybody goes back to their previous situations and only some photos of flags and placards will remain of it in some media. Overcoming dictatorship means the creation of free and social spaces. Without such creations, and without taking back the university from the dictatorship, only an illusion of victory will remain in place.

Green politics or deep politics?

The higher education institutions in Iran bring together within them millions of students and tens of thousands of educators. If we add to that number the staff and workers employed in these institutions, it can be observed that compared to this large population, even thousands of thugs, Basiji's and killers of the regime are insignificant. The Islamic Republic can maintain its occupation of the university only on the condition of the indifference of a majority, just as it had an absolute occupation established on the streets only until the collective street movement of the people. Today, however, nobody in the university is indifferent. And this is exactly our point of departure:

Green politics, in recent days has been focused on showcasing the general dissatisfaction regarding the coup. This policy tries to challenge the legitimacy of the current government and to legitimize its own political alternative. Visualization of its sign as the color green, slogan writing its swift tactics, and organizing green sit-ins and gatherings are the ultimate tactics in its arsenal. This form of politics is still confused because the reformist leaders are as of yet incapable of formulating their larger goals and strategies.

In this type of politics, the students keep doing busywork while they wait for further commands from the leadership headquarters. In deep politics, however, the main strategy is to take the university back from the ruling regime and to re-appropriate

it. Women students who, in their dormitories and university surroundings, are subjected to discrimination, ridicule or repression, can challenge the baseless power of the religious interference and university administration with the aid of their collective organizations; students can themselves determine the criteria regulating what to wear, how to behave, how to interact, etc. Their collective solidarity is their real power for taking back those spaces that in principle belong to them. In defending their right to engage in academic-related and political activities, a majority of students can organize themselves and break the blade of fear and oppression. They can voice their opinion about what to read and resist the imposition, by the clergy, of reactionary subjects on the university. They can take control of their dormitory spaces into their own hands and defend their living environment against the fascists. They can organize free seminars, extra-curricular classes, study groups, or organize their own gatherings and [political] actions and determine their contents and defend them. With such a strategy, with every step taken backward by the dictatorship, a free and democratic space is created which in turn prevents the return of the dictators. The commitment or the treachery of political leaders will become clear with their commitment to, or treachery against, these collective efforts of the students.

Such an effort will provide the foundation for a nationwide federation or organization of the country's students. An organization that is open to all, and different groups are active within it while maintaining their positions, as factions; an organization that includes all students, and for this very reason will turn into the organized power of the students in the fight to push back dictatorship and to achieve freedom.

Interview with Khyaboon, an underground Internet journal

(This interview with our publication was done by GlobalVoicesOnline and published in this address:

<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2009/10/07/iran-interview-with-khyaboon-an-underground-internet-journal/>

we find it helpful for our non-persian reader as an introduction. although the English version of interview is not completed as our original persian interview.)

Q: Why and when was Khyaboon first published and who was your target audience?

The first issue of Khyaboon was published on the 19th of June [one week after the presidential election] before [the Islamic Republic Leader] Khamenei's speech where he ordered repression against the people. At first Khyaboon was published daily for a month, and since then it usually gets published once every two weeks. Khyaboon has been available in hard copy and has also been sent to email inboxes. So far there have been 48 issues.

Our audience is all of the public, but we pay special attention to the part of society that is engaged in the street struggle. We publish guidelines and articles regarding protesting, including articles for internet security protection, facing tear gas, social confronting torture, and so on.

Our audience are the same people who are in the streets, the citizens who fight in the street and society, they are people who have been jailed, tortured and killed. Our news and analysis topics concern ordinary people in streets: their destiny, their voice, pain and bravery. These people do not get attention in mass media except coincidentally. We are trying to take back the media from the Ayatollahs and professional politicians, making it more accessible to workers, women, students, and all oppressed people. We

are a publication from within society and for society, and not for a submissive one.

Q: Why you do not have any website or blog?

Firstly, government filtering is the number one enemy for websites criticizing the authorities. Each attempt from our side will quickly be faced by their filtering. Instead we concentrate our efforts in an area that the government cannot attack. The second concern is security related. We are not internet security specialists and prefer to minimize security risks. A few months ago Revolutionary Guards announced that they were arresting several people with alleged connections to certain websites. The regime calls these sites 'immoral'.

It seems that security forces have capacities for repression in the virtual world that are unknown to us. If we work in a centralized manner, even in virtual world, our communications could be come compromised and our colleagues' lives could be endangered for what they write. Our invisibility and our non-centralized presence are helpful to our safety, although threats always still exist.

Q: Another publication Kalam Sabz is the voice of reformists whose voice are you?

In Iran there is always difference between the surface and depth of the society. You are facing in public and official places see a different kind of social life than non official places. In Iran women wear a kind of cloth in official places and wear differently in home or non official places. Reformists until a few months ago were a part of establishment and had their own parties, publishing their own journals and organized their institutions. They took part in establishment and had their own word to say but in the depth of society there are citizens who were repressed and voiceless. Kalam Sabz is the protest of society's surface and Khyaboon want to be the voice of depth of society.

Citizen/reporter/protester

Q: How you evaluate the impact of social networking such as Twitter on the protest movement?

Social networking and citizen media are the fruit of protests against the dictatorship. Submitting before a dictator means the absence of citizens' voices and social atomization. Dictatorships struggle to isolate people from distributed social networking. In a dictatorship a citizen has no voice and no media. Only rulers have the voice and they have the exclusivity to broadcast news.

In Iran, the Islamic Republic did its best to destroy any association. The Islamic Republic's favorite citizen is the one who lives alone, goes to work each morning and is lost in traffic jams and metro crowds, before coming back home at night. The Islamic Republic's favorite citizen is not a member of any association, syndicate, and has neither media nor a voice.

But a citizen who fights a dictator will organize him/herself, create social networks and find a voice. At least in Iran the reporter/citizen is not a precise word, an appropriate word is reporter/citizen/protester. Before the election, citizen media mostly belonged to students, women, and labour activists, who were on the frontlines of the struggle. But today, at the heart of mass struggle all protesters have become citizen/reporters/protesters.

A citizen who comes to the streets to protest the dictatorship and films it with his mobile phone is no longer the lonely human being of yesterday. In other words, social networking does not create today's protests, but is the fruits of our struggle.

The struggle of a society against an inhumane regime. Without struggle, these modern technologies can even be of service to the regime. But when a society fights for its life, internet including Twitter,

Facebook, emails and other tools are used by citizens. For example we do not need big publishing houses for Khyaboon, and we can distribute it safer by email than on paper. But without human beings to use them for the richness of their social life, these technological tools are meaningless.

“What do the People Want?”

Khiaban 8

By Amir K.

The coup d'état government did not expect the people to stand against it with such courage and solidarity and has lost its focus. The government continues to fight and try to stand on its feet again. But every action it takes backfires. During a revolution a regime digs itself deeper with every action it takes to preserve itself.

The government closes existing semi-independent media sources; freedom of the press becomes a demand of the people.

The government tortures detainees; outlawing torture becomes a demand of the people.

The government tramples on the people's vote and defends its right of rule by the few over society; rule by the people becomes a demand of the people.

The government sends the guards and the basij to kill and crush the people; the dissolution of these institutions of repression becomes a demand of the people.

The government throws political opponents in prison; the release

of all prisoners becomes a demand of the people.

The government represses young people and women; the young people and women turnout on the square for their freedom.

The government denies people the right to determine their own fate based on religion; the separation of church and state becomes a demand of the people. The government uses existing laws to repress the people; a change in laws becomes a demand of the people.

The government uses economic pressure to stop strikes; a society free from economic pressure on living standards becomes a demand of the people. The government prevents freedom of worship; freedom of worship becomes a demand of the people.

The government declares a ban on public gatherings; a system that officially recognizes freedom of assembly and protest becomes a demand of the people.

The government fires a bullet into the throat of a young woman; the voice of young women becomes louder and more enveloping.

The government is imprisoning writers; freedom of the pen is becoming more universal. The government is cutting off communications among the people; free and easily accessible communication networks are becoming a more universal demand. Owners of factories and manufacturing centers are fighting demands for strikes; labor control over industrial and manufacturing centers is becoming a demand of workers.

The government is jailing people accused of belonging to political parties and organizations; freedom of political party and organization activities

is becoming a more widespread demand.

The government becomes more barbaric;
a noble life is becoming more important.

A transformation is beginning. At the same time, pressure is building. New dreams are taking shape in the consciousness of society. Dreaming of all that seemed impossible has become universal with everyday of struggle. You see the spark in people's eyes. You see the revolution.

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