

GI SPECIAL 7F16:

“The Other Four Were Dead”



June 7, 2009; Sgt. Al Smoot, of Harold, Calif., of a U.S. Medevac team, gives CPR to a U.S. soldier at the emergency room of the U.S. military hospital at Bagram Air Base, north of Kabul, Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)

Jun. 25, 2009 By JASON STRAZIUSO and EVAN VUCCI, Associated Press Writers

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan -- The urgent call came in: Roadside bombs had ripped through two Humvees and wounded eight or nine U.S. soldiers.

Medevac helicopters immediately hit the air to ferry the soldiers to the main U.S. military hospital. But when they arrived, they carried only five patients.

The other four were dead.

With 2009 expected to be the bloodiest year since the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, medical personnel at Bagram's SSG Heath N. Craig Joint Theater Hospital say they've already seen an increase in casualties and expect more. The flow of dead and wounded puts enormous strain on the soldiers and the medical staff who must face it head on.

“Everything I've experienced is boredom or terror,” said Air Force Maj. Adrian Stull, a 36-year-old emergency physician from Beavercreek, Ohio. “And if I have to choose between

the two, I'd have to choose boredom, because everyone goes home with all their fingers."

June 1 was a day of terror.

It started when two roadside bombs hit the same convoy of 10th Mountain Division soldiers only a couple of miles apart in Wardak, a province west of Kabul.

The damage was so severe that one of the Humvees split in half.

By the time the helicopters arrived, four men were already dead. Their comrades loaded them into body bags, tense with anger and grief.

In the meantime, the emergency room prepared to move from zero to a thousand miles per hour - "organized chaos," as medical Tech Sgt. Carol Granger put it.

Then the stretchers arrived.

Three of the soldiers had open fractures in their legs, raw and bleeding. The one being treated by Air Force Capt. Shannan Corbin was in his early 20s, with open leg wounds, dental contusions and a bleeding head.

Wounds from blasts and explosive devices are considered the hallmark injuries of the Afghan war. Because armor covers the body's core, injuries to arms and legs are common.

As the medics worked, with the American flag in the background, they sweated. The heat was turned up because critically injured patients cannot regulate their own body temperatures.

A soldier screamed, so loudly that emergency room physician Capt. Travis Taylor couldn't tune it out. The soldier, who had an open fracture, had just learned one of his buddies was killed.

"That one was tough," Taylor said. "He was really screaming, and it snapped me out of my focus on the patient I was with."

Another soldier, Pfc. Anthony Vandegrift, had broken both legs. His left eye was swollen shut. The two soldiers in the front of his Humvee were killed, along with the gunner who had been standing halfway out the top.

He called his father while still on the emergency room table.

"I said, 'Hey dad, remember how you told me not to join the infantry? Well, I don't regret it, but I got blown up,'" Vandegrift, of Mililani, Hawaii, said.

Recalling the blast, he said it was "like a video game almost."

"You're going along and everything goes black. I could hear everything but I couldn't see everything," Vandegrift said. "Everything went black and I just remember 'boom.' Not

sure if I passed out or not, but when I was able to move around I was upside down. My chunk of the Humvee was blown off from the rest.”

Doctors at Bagram say there is nowhere in the world - except other war zones - where physicians face such severe wounds day after day. That constant stream takes a toll.

Granger, who is stationed at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, said she tries not to personalize her work. “We have to process it later on, but at the time you have a job to do. We’ve seen a lot ... and I hope we can handle it when the time comes,” she said.

Corbin says home bases try to prepare the medical staff “mentally, emotionally and spiritually” for the deployment, but she’s not sure it works.

“You can see pictures. You can hear people talk, but I don’t know that anything really prepares you,” said the 39-year-old nurse from Biloxi, Miss. “We hope emotionally and mentally that it’s just another string of events. But I don’t know how we can walk away from this as just another string of events.”

In the intensive care ward nearby, Vandegrift lay beside the one other soldier in his Humvee who survived. The soldier may be paralyzed. Holding a guitar, Vandegrift strummed a song for his friend: “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Nine U.S. Soldiers Wounded By Two Baghdad IEDs



A Humvee after a roadside bomb attack in eastern Baghdad, June 25, 2009. A U.S. Nine U.S. Soldiers forces were injured in the attack. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

June 25 (Reuters)

Two roadside bombs targeting a U.S. military patrol wounded nine U.S. soldiers in Rusafa, eastern Baghdad, the U.S. military said in a statement.

Resistance Action

June 23 (Reuters) & June 24 (Reuters) & June 25 (Reuters) & AFP & June 26 (Reuters)

BAGHDAD - A roadside bomb on Monday wounded one policeman and one bystander in the Yarmouk district of west-central Baghdad, police said.

A car bomb targeting an Iraqi army patrol wounded one soldier in central Mosul, police said.

A roadside bomb killed a policeman and wounded another on Wednesday when it exploded near their patrol in central Mosul, and an off-duty policeman was killed on Wednesday during a drive-by shooting in southern Mosul, police said.

A roadside bomb killed five policemen, including an officer, in Amiriya al-Falluja, south of Falluja city, 50 km (32 miles) west of Baghdad, police said.

A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol killed one policeman and wounded three others on Wednesday in eastern Baghdad's Baladiyat district, police said.

A roadside bomb killed a police colonel when it struck his car on Wednesday in the north of Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

A bomb planted in a parked car killed one Iraqi soldier on Thursday, wounding four policemen in northern Mosul, police said.

Guerrillas wearing military uniforms attacked a convoy carrying a senior criminal judge in Mosul on Thursday, wounding one of his bodyguards, police said. The judge was not hurt.

A roadside bomb killed an Iraqi soldier and wounded two others when it struck their convoy in eastern Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATIONS**

**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
ALL TROOPS HOME NOW!**

“He Implored Iraqis To ‘Shed The Blood Of The Occupiers,’ Not Of Each Other”



Iraqi nationalists burn the U.S. flag after Friday prayers in the Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad, Iraq, June 26, 2009. (AP Photo/ Karim Kadim)

Jun 26 By Abdul Rahman Dhaher, (Reuters) & Kim Gamel, Associated Press

A bomb killed at least 13 people at a Baghdad market selling motorbikes and furniture Friday, the latest in a series of attacks that have intensified ahead of the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraqi cities.

“I ask, what is the Iraqi government doing about these explosions?” said firebrand anti-American [translation: anti-occupation nationalist politician] Moqtada al-Sadr, many of whose supporters live in Sadr City. “The government is powerless to protect its people.”

Sadr, who is believed to be in Iran and often blames the United States for Iraq’s woes, said in a statement the blasts “carry the fingerprints of the occupation forces ... especially as they have occurred a few days before the withdrawal of the army of darkness.”

He implored Iraqis to “shed the blood of the occupiers,” not of each other.

Sadrist protesters took to the streets in Baghdad’s Sadr City district and other cities after Friday prayers, burning American flags and denouncing the violence.

First Cav And MND-N Show Their Ass In Mosul;

“A Shocking Revelation To A Public Affairs Officer Whose Only Interaction With Real Iraqis Is Probably A Visit To Her FOB’s Pizza Hut”

June 24, 2009 By Alex, Army Of Dude [Excerpts]

This is everywhere, as it should be:

In a story on its Web site, the newspaper known as Stripes said the military violated a congressional mandate of editorial independence by rejecting a request to embed reporter Heath Druzin with the U.S. Army’s 1st Cavalry Division, which is attempting to secure the city of Mosul.

Public affairs officer Major Ramona Bellard denied the request of Heath Druzin, a Stripes reporter, to embed in Mosul after “various problems” in his reporting.

Major Bellard injected herself into the paper’s editorial process after Druzin reported “many Mosul residents would like the American soldiers to leave and hand over security tasks to Iraqi forces,” a shocking revelation to a public affairs officer whose only interaction with real Iraqis is probably a visit to her FOB’s Pizza Hut.

A spokesman for MND-N pumps up volume:

“U.S. Army units in Iraq remain committed to the media embed program and appreciate objective media reporting,” said Lt. Col. David H. Patterson Jr., a spokesman for Multi-National Corps-Iraq. “The relationship that Druzin established with the command during a previous embed did not facilitate being invited back.”

Translation?

“You didn’t pick the stories we wanted. Get lost.”

The problem with the whole scenario is the Stars and Stripes is a DOD funded newspaper that retains First Amendment rights. Congress created the newspaper in the 1940s with those guidelines specifically to prevent interference from commanders, the kind interference that we’re seeing now.

The Army is showing a pretty weak hand with their decision.

Their best argument is Druzin didn’t purposely seek out a fuzzy, feel good sunshine story.

What the good colonel and major fail to realize is that the opinion of Mosul residents is a very important story.

Especially on the heels of an Iraqi city pullout that may or may not include Mosul.

That the story doesn't sit well with some lite colonel is trivial when considering the men and women on the ground in Mosul.

They need to know if there is a certain resentment to their presence, especially in specific neighborhoods, so they can tailor operations to it.

Counterinsurgency principles demand acute awareness of surroundings, house to house and sheik to sheik. That includes the amount of gratitude, or resentment, that is in the air.

When I went to DC for the Milblogger's Conference a couple months ago, it included a visit to the Pentagon to meet with public affairs liaisons to trumpet the military's outreach to social networking and new media. They sought to bring down the wall that has traditionally separated the public and the military so a free exchange of information could occur.

This whole debacle flies in the face of the hardworking PAOs in the Pentagon trying to coexist with the new and old media. Denying an embed and giving the flimsiest of reasons isn't helping anyone and instead halts the advance of the information warfare front.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Foreign Occupation Soldier Killed Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan; Nationality Not Announced

June 25 (KUNA)

A soldier of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was killed in eastern Afghanistan on Thursday.

A statement from ISAF headquarters here said the soldier died as a result of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast today.

The statement did not release name and nationality of the soldier and exact location of the incident. Majority of the soldiers operating in the eastern zones are Americans.

Interpreter For U.S. Troops Killed In Khost

June 26 (Xinhua)

A local interpreter with the U.S. forces died of injuries sustained in an explosion Friday afternoon in Khost city, provincial capital of Khost in eastern Afghanistan, officials said.

One police officer, who was reluctant to give his name, told Xinhua on the spot that it occurred at around 5 p.m. (1330 GMT) in a vegetable market in Khost city when the vehicle of an Afghan interpreter working for Coalition forces suddenly exploded causing the tragedy.

Amir Baghcha Mangal, director of provincial Health Department, said the 26 years-old interpreter Mohammad Tahir died of wounds soon after reaching in hospital.

Earlier, the official confirmed that hospital received Mohammad Tahir, one of whose legs was chopped off in the blast.

Zabihullah Mujahed, the Taliban spokesman claimed responsibility for the killing adding it was a "punishment" for those working for government and international troops.

Resistance Action

June 22, 2009 Reuters & June 24, 2009 AFP & June 24 (Reuters) & June 27, 2009 Agence France Presse & News Limited

Three Afghan soldiers were killed when a bomber rode a motorcycle packed with explosives into a military convoy in Kandahar province on Monday, officials said. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack on the soldiers as they patrolled the highway that goes through Kandahar's troubled Zhari district to the western city of Herat.

The Afghan army meanwhile reported a major clash in the southwestern province of Farah late on Monday that left nine militants and two Afghan troops dead.

In another attack that police blamed on the Taliban, three Afghan aid workers were killed in a roadside bombing in the northern province of Jawzjan.

in Ghazni, Taliban ambushed a police convoy, killing a policeman, provincial spokesman Ismail Jahangir told AFP.

Taliban militants gunned down a detective officer and his police body guard in the provincial capital, Qalat, the provincial governor, Mohammad Ashraq Nasiri, said.

An Afghan soldier was killed in the southern province of Zabul when a bomb hit a military logistics convoy, the defence ministry said.

Insurgent bomb attacks in Afghanistan on Saturday killed a provincial deputy police chief. A roadside bomb killed the police officer for northeastern Kunar province as he was travelling in eastern Laghman province, the interior ministry said in a statement. Another man was killed with him, it said, without identifying the person. Three other people, including the officer's son, were wounded

In an explosion on Saturday, an Afghan civilian who was supplying containers to international troops in the eastern town of Khost was killed by a bomb put into his car, a provincial official said.

Taliban militants meanwhile stormed a police checkpoint in southern Helmand province overnight and killed eight policemen, the provincial government said. The ambush took place about 10km north of the provincial capital Lashkar Gah. Other policemen were able to escape the overnight attack, perhaps because they had ties with the insurgents, Helmand government spokesman Daud Ahmadi said.

UNREMITTING HELL ON EARTH; ALL HOME NOW



A U.S. Marine checks a road for explosives going through a river in Golestan district of Farah province, Afghanistan May 5, 2009. REUTERS/Goran Tomasevic

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TROOP NEWS

HOW MANY MORE FOR OBAMA'S WARS?



The remains of Tyler J. Trahan of Freetown, Mass. May 1, 2009 at Dover Air Force Base, Del. Petty Officer 2nd Class Tyler J. Trahan, 22, of East Freetown, Mass. died on April 30 while conducting combat operations in Fallujah, Iraq. Trahan was assigned to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit Twelve in Norfolk, Va., and was deployed with an East Coast based Navy SEAL team. (APhoto/Jose Luis Magana)

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



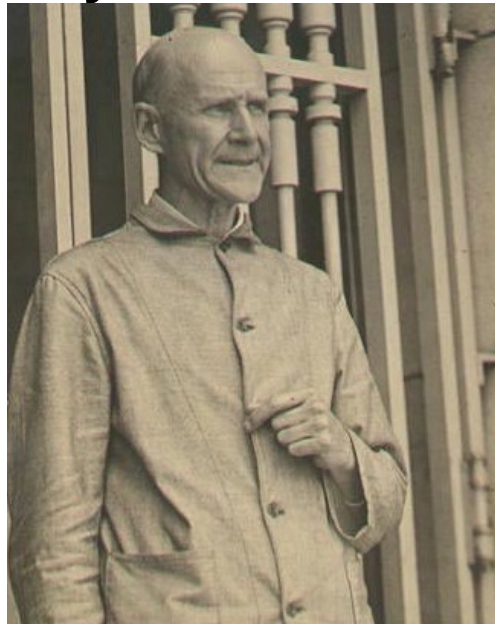
“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

June 26, 1918: Anniversary Of A Political Atrocity



Eugene V. Debs when he was a prisoner at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, sentenced for opposing U.S. entry into World War I.

U.S. Department of Labor, "Labor Hall of Fame Honoree"
<<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/laborhall/evd.htm>>

Carl Bunin Peace History June 25 - July 1

[S]ocialist organizer Eugene Debs was arrested for giving an anti-war speech in Canton, Ohio, 10 days earlier.

He was charged with “uttering words intended to cause insubordination and disloyalty within the American forces of the United States, to incite resistance to the war, and to promote the cause of Germany,” despite his repeated and vehement criticism in the speech of Germany and its landed aristocracy, known as the Junkers.

“And that is war in a nutshell. The master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles.

“The master class has had all to gain and nothing to lose, while the subject class has had nothing to gain and all to lose — especially their lives.”

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



CLASS WAR REPORTS

“Iranian Truck Drivers In Herat Told Similar Tales Of Voting Irregularities, But The Government

Crackdown Sparked The Most Debate”

“People Care About Their Votes, The Millions That Have Been Stolen,” He Said. “The People Who Stole Those Votes Don’t Love Our Nation”

“Actually The People In Iran Were Angry Before; They Wanted A Spark To Start A Fire, And Now They Have It”

Jun. 25, 2009 By PHILIP SMUCKER, McClatchy Newspapers

HERAT, Afghanistan -- Amid the tire irons and crow bars in a disabled Russian armored personnel carrier-turned Afghan tea house, Iranian truck drivers Wednesday debated allegations that their government rigged Iran’s June 12 presidential elections - and whether it did so by the thousands or by the millions.

“Of course, the government controls the media - that is how they rose to power,” snapped Jaffar, 59, a driver from Mashad, a major city in western Iran. “You can drive north to south in this country, and you are free. Our government would never cheat us out of an election.”

As Jaffar spoke, however, Maruche, 29, a Sunni Muslim truck driver from near Torbat e-Jam in eastern Iran, asked the older driver: “How can you say there was no cheating?”

The young man stormed out of the teahouse, but he invited a McClatchy Newspapers reporter to sit with him in the cab of his truck. He said that on Tuesday new anti-government demonstrations had rocked the city of Isfahan, where his trucking company is based, and he spoke angrily of what he said had happened in his village on election day.

“The election center was controlled by the government,” he said. “We saw that with our own eyes. I know about the ballot stuffing because my uncle is a police officer and was a supervisor in the polling station. He saw one man in the polling station put 100 ballots into a box.”

“No one can dare protest this in our village or they will simply disappear,” Maruche added.

Similar allegations of ballot stuffing have been made elsewhere in Iran, and the Iranian government has admitted that in 50 cities, there were more votes than there were registered voters.

For several hours, Iranian truck drivers in Herat told similar tales of voting irregularities, but the government crackdown sparked the most debate. Some drivers defended the government, calling the demonstrators “hooligans and criminals” who deserved punishment, while others defended them. Several drivers blamed their nation’s unrest on foreign powers, singling out the United States as a key meddler in Iranian affairs.

Though it’s impossible for Western reporters to work openly inside Iran or to verify the drivers’ accounts, the enormous truck stop near the Afghan-Iranian border is a window into the conflicts inside Iran. Those who spoke up did so in fear that government spies were watching.

Covered in grease, Mehdi, 41, a truck driver and father from Iran, took a break from beneath his broken axle to talk to a foreign reporter.

“Why shouldn’t we be outraged?” he said. “I drove through Tehran and saw government thugs breaking into university dormitories, dragging out our best students, even Ph.D. candidates, and beating them. I have two sons in that university demonstrating, and I’ve worked all my life so they can live in freedom.”

“We all deserve a voice, and those of us who dare to speak out should be prepared to die!” he said.

Mehdi, a round-faced, cheerful man, was careful, however, to use only his first name. As he spoke, another Iranian driver, carrying a new soccer ball for his son, sat down and offered everyone a cigarette.

“You shouldn’t talk to this man,” he told Mehdi. “Don’t you know that our intelligence officers are everywhere? They even murder opponents of the regime in Europe.”

“Nonsense!” insisted Mehdi. “I am just an ordinary truck driver, but in Tehran they will hear my voice. I drove right past the demonstrations when they were beating people and I took pictures with my mobile phone. When I left the city, I stopped into a coffee shop and heard that in the city of Shahrood, yet another man had been killed for protesting.”

Truck drivers such as Mehdi appear to be as curious as Western journalists are to find out what’s happening in his vast country under a news blackout. Mehdi said he’d telephoned a nephew in Mashad, about 300 miles from Herat, to learn that bands of demonstrators there came out on Ahmadabad Street to protest over the weekend, but police showed up and divided them with blows.

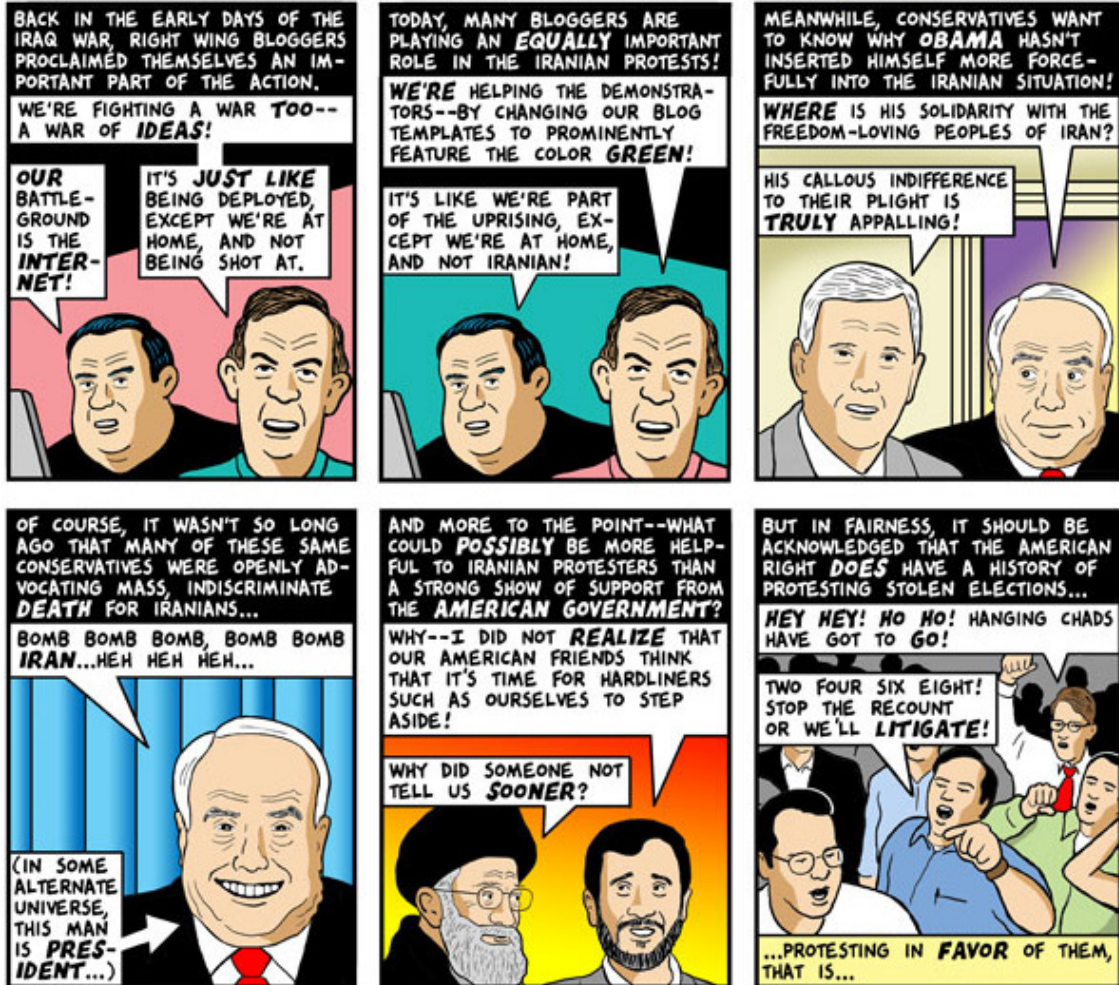
“People care about their votes, the millions that have been stolen,” he said. “The people who stole those votes don’t love our nation. Iran is a beautiful nation, but (President Mahmoud) Ahmadinejad is an ugly man, and now the world thinks of him now as a bad joke.”

Mehdi said that's because "they never even bothered to open the ballot boxes - and just made up the numbers. (Opposition candidate Mir Hossein) Mousavi is a brave man to stand up and demand that everyone's vote be counted," said Mehdi.

Even as Mehdi spoke, the driver from Khorasan broke his silence, insisting, "Actually the people in Iran were angry before; they wanted a spark to start a fire, and now they have it."

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



“Oppressors, Exploiters And Tyrants Of All Stripes Show Their Political Bankruptcy When They Portray

Movements Of Millions Against Them As Made Up Of Stupid Sheep Set In Motion By The Hand Of A Few Alien Conspirators”



Comment: T

Concerning analysis of developments in Iran, the following by Louis Proyect may be useful, illustrating that it is possible to walk and chew gum at the same time

Sweaty hyperventilation to the contrary, history is not created by the CIA today; Communist agitators stirring up the peaceful, happy South Vietnam of the 1950's; northern agitators stirring up the peaceful, happy segregated south of the 1960's; Al Qaeda and "Saddam Hussein dead-enders" stirring up the peaceful, happy Iraq of 2004; or Iranian secret agents and Islamic religious fanatics stirring up peaceful, happy fragments of what remains of Palestine today.

Oppressors, exploiters and tyrants of all stripes show their political bankruptcy and expose their weakness when they portray movements of millions against them as made up of stupid sheep set in motion by the hand of a few alien conspirators.

Propagandists who echo those lies to defend oppressors, exploiters and tyrants of all stripes play the same role as maggots in the physical world, consuming the rotting flesh on a corpse to feed themselves and grow fat on evil.

June 22, 2009 By Louis Proyect, Wordpress.com

The post-election crisis in Iran has prompted individuals and groups on the left to reduce it to an imperialist plot to foment a “color” or “velvet” revolution.

In doing so, they are following the lead of Ali Khamenei, the country’s most powerful leader and a man who has never run in an election himself. In a speech delivered to the country last Friday, Khamenei said:

“The amateurish behavior of some people inside the country made them (the West) greedy. They have mistaken Iran with Georgia.

“A Zionist-American millionaire claimed that he spent \$10 million to change the regime in Georgia through a velvet revolution. (What exactly is a Zionist-American, btw? Is that an ethnic category or what?)

“This claim was published in the papers. Those fools thought the Islamic Republic is like Georgia. To which countries do you compare Iran to? The enemy’s problem is that they do not yet understand the Iranian nation.”

As might be expected given its Manichean brand of Marxism that divides the world between the “imperialist” and “anti-imperialist” camps, the Workers World Party stood firmly behind Ahmadinejad.

After denying that fraud took place, they made the elections sound like a referendum on the world revolution:

“Ahmadinejad is closely identified with militant support for the mass-based resistance movements in Palestine and Lebanon, and also with the determined public defense of Iran’s nuclear power program. With a high vote for him, the Iranians thumb their noses at the imperialists. This also explains the strong hostility from the U.S. ruling class.

“In Iran, the reelected president is also considered a populist who will fight for economic concessions to Iran’s poor—which explains his strong popularity outside the middle-class and wealthy districts.”

James Petras, a retired Marxist professor who generally comments on the Latin American scene, offered his thoughts along the same lines as the WWP:

“The demography of voting reveals a real class polarization pitting high income, free market oriented, capitalist individualists against working class, low income, community based supporters of a ‘moral economy’ in which usury and profiteering are limited by religious precepts. The open attacks by opposition economists of the government welfare spending, easy credit and heavy subsidies of basic food staples did little to ingratiate them with the majority of Iranians benefiting from those programs.

“The state was seen as the protector and benefactor of the poor workers against the ‘market’, which represented wealth, power, privilege and corruption. The Opposition’s attack on the regime’s ‘intransigent’ foreign policy and positions ‘alienating’ the West

only resonated with the liberal university students and import-export business groups. To many Iranians, the regime's military buildup was seen as having prevented a US or Israeli attack.

"The scale of the opposition's electoral deficit should tell us is how out of touch it is with its own people's vital concerns. It should remind them that by moving closer to Western opinion, they removed themselves from the everyday interests of security, housing, jobs and subsidized food prices that make life tolerable for those living below the middle class and outside the privileged gates of Tehran University."

Blogger Steve Weissman focused on the role of George Soros wannabe Peter Ackerman in funding and organizing a counter-revolutionary student movement similar to the one that exists in Venezuela:

"A Wall Street whiz kid who made his fortune in leveraged buy-outs, the billionaire Ackerman was — and is — chair of Freedom House, a hotbed of neo-con support for American intervention just about everywhere. In this pursuit, he has promoted the use of nonviolent civil disobedience in American-backed "color revolutions" from Serbia to the Ukraine, Georgia, and Venezuela, where it failed.

"Ahmadi teaches medicine at Yale and co-founded the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, using initial grants of \$1.6 million in 2004 from the U.S. Department of State, according to The New York Times. Washington reportedly continued its open-handed support in succeeding years, allowing the center to publicize the abuses of the Ayatollahs in English and Farsi.

"Ahmadi and the center also ran regular workshops for Iranians on nonviolent civil disobedience. These were in Dubai, across the straits from Iran. Some of the sessions operated under the name Iranian Center for Applied Nonviolence and included a session on popular revolts around the world, especially the 'color revolutions.'"

Although Counterpunch started off printing articles that took the side of the protestors, it is now pretty much in the Manichean camp led by Paul Craig Roberts, their expert commentator on economics and Assistant Secretary of the Treasury under Reagan. Here's from his latest offering:

"The unexamined question is Mousavi and his motives. Why would Mousavi unleash demonstrations that are obviously being used by a hostile West to discredit the government of the Iranian Revolution that overthrew the US puppet government? Are these the actions of a "moderate"? Or are these the actions of a disgruntled man who kept his disaffection from his colleagues in order to gain the opportunity to discredit the regime with street protests? Is Mousavi being manipulated by organizations funded with US government money?"

Of course, this methodology of dividing the world between two opposing camps is nothing new.

The CP's perfected it in the 1930s, labeling Trotsky's criticisms of the Soviet Government as giving aid and comfort to the Nazis.

Here's what comrade Stalin had to say in a 1937 plenum report felicitously titled "Defects in Party Work and Measures for Liquidating Trotskyite and Other Double Dealers":

"At the trial in 1937, Piatakov, Radek, and Sokolnikov took a different course. They did not deny that the Trotskyists and Zinovievists had a political platform. They admitted they had a definite political platform, admitted it and unfolded in their testimony. But they unfolded it not in order to rally the working class, to rally the people to support the Trotskyist platform, but rather to damn it and brand it as an anti-people and anti-proletarian platform.

"The restoration of capitalism, the liquidation of the collective farms and state-farms, the re-establishment of a system of exploitation, alliance with the Fascist forces of Germany and Japan to bring nearer a war with the Soviet Union, a struggle for war and against the policy of peace, the territorial dismemberment of the Soviet Union with the Ukraine to the Germans and the Maritime Province to the Japanese, the scheming for the military defeat of the Soviet Union in the event of an attack on it by hostile states and, as a means for achieving these aims: wrecking, diversionism, industrial terror against the leaders of Soviet power, espionage on behalf of Japano-German Fascist forces-such was the political platform of present-day Trotskyism as unfolded by Piatakov, Radek, and Sokolnikov."

Speaking of Trotsky, he had to deal with Manichean tendencies in his own international movement.

In an article titled "Learn to Think" that deserves to be read or reread by everybody trying to make sense of Iran, Trotsky wrote:

"In ninety cases out of a hundred the workers actually place a minus sign where the bourgeoisie places a plus sign.

"In ten cases however they are forced to fix the same sign as the bourgeoisie but with their own seal, in which is expressed their mistrust of the bourgeoisie.

"The policy of the proletariat is not at all automatically derived from the policy of the bourgeoisie, bearing only the opposite sign – this would make every sectarian a master strategist; no, the revolutionary party must each time orient itself independently in the internal as well as the external situation, arriving at those decisions which correspond best to the interests of the proletariat. This rule applies just as much to the war period as to the period of peace."

Whatever Mousavi's intentions, there is no question that the students in Tehran have their own agenda in this battle which is to extend democratic rights.

Just about 10 years ago another confrontation broke out over the banning of a reformist newspaper:

"BLOODY clashes erupted in Tehran yesterday for the third consecutive day between pro-democracy students and Islamic extremists, raising fears that a long-expected national crisis is under way in Iran.

“At least 10,000 students crossed the line from suppressed anger to open defiance, staging a pro-democracy sit-in at Tehran University, in the heart of the Iranian capital. In the largest protest since the 1979 Islamic revolution, the students demanded the resignation of the country’s parliament and vowed not to end their struggle until President Mohammed Khatami took complete control of the country.

“The demonstration was the largest in three days of unrest which began on Thursday evening when hardline vigilantes attacked a much smaller protest across town at the university dormitories.

“About 500 students demonstrated against parliament’s approval of a new press law on Wednesday which severely restricts freedom of expression, and a court order banning the leading moderate Salam newspaper, which gives its backing to Khatami.”

–Observer, July 11, 1999

Just as is the case today, cops, militias and vigilantes attacked the students without mercy and prompted larger protests as the NY Times reported a day later:

In a new sign of militancy, at least 15,000 Iranian students took to the streets of Teheran today in what has become a protest against a divided Government whose security forces remain in conservative hands.

Witnesses said it was the angriest protest since the Iranian revolution of two decades ago, and it presented the most formidable test yet of President Mohammad Khatami, the moderate leader who holds broad popular support but has yet to consolidate control over a fractured political structure.

At its surface, the demonstration was merely the outgrowth of several days of anger over the storming on Thursday night of a university dormitory by security forces and conservative vigilantes. But it also reflected a deep discontent over the fact that Mr. Khatami’s popularly elected Government remains, in large part, in others’ hands.

The protesters aborted an early plan to march to the city center. But after three days of mounting anger, they left no doubt they were dissatisfied with an announcement by Mr. Khatami’s Government that it would dismiss the officers who had ordered the raid, Iran’s police chief, Brig. Gen. Hedayat Lotfian, and his deputy, who was not named.

“We are not going to be satisfied until people at the top resign,” one student leader said. “Khatami has to do something or resign.”

The protesters said students had been killed by the police and the vigilantes during the demonstrations, and had demanded the dismissal of General Lotfian, who reports not to Mr. Khatami but to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the cleric who is Iran’s supreme leader.

“Either Islam and the law, or another revolution,” the marchers chanted today, in a reference to the 1979 revolution that toppled the Shah, Mohammed Riza Pahlevi.

And also just as is the case today, the students were not willing to subordinate themselves to the reformists.

They told the Times that unless Khatami did something about the brutal cops who answered only to Khamenei and not to elected officials such as him, they would insist that he resign. Khatami understandably took umbrage at the students' demand that he stand up to unaccountable police power and soon found himself on a collision path with them:

Hardline vigilantes backed by secret police opened fire on the pro-democracy demonstrators who were rampaging through Tehran yesterday in the worst street violence since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

It was the first time in six days of protests that law enforcement agents had turned their semi-automatic rifles on the unarmed students.

Last night, the reformist president of Iran, Mohammed Khatami elected in 1997 with the support of students, women and Islamic intellectuals turned his back on the protesters, saying that their actions threatened his reformist policies.

'I am sure that these people have evil aims,' he said. 'They intend to foster violence in society, and we shall stand in their way we take the security of our country and our citizens very seriously.'

—Guardian, July 14, 1999

On the very same day the NY Times reported that the same grievances that exist today, according to some commentators, existed 10 years ago:

Mr. Khatami's clear statement of disapproval for the demonstrations is likely to disappoint many ordinary Iranians, from housemaids to retirees, who saw both the demonstrations and even the crackdown as the beginning of a process of change, even a change in the regime.

"Iranian people are not necessarily logical," said one engineer. "They are very emotional. They want an end to everything that they think has been a source of misery for them. It doesn't matter to them at what cost, or whether it's going to be followed by something much worse"

On the streets today, that emotional side was on display.

"I pray that we get rid of the savages who beat our children," said one middle-aged woman as she watched baton-wielding men on motorcycles chase pro-democracy demonstrators. "Savages, hooligans, that's what they are."

She also said she had seen a dozen vigilantes beat two women with clubs outside the university late Monday night.

Another bystander said he had seen vigilantes attack a small group of young men who were chanting, "Khatami, we support you!" The demonstrators were badly beaten with long batons, the bystander said, and another man who was walking by was beaten as well.

"I just want to get rid of the filthy regime," the man said. "Anything would be better than these clerics, even the worst criminals."

The level of criticism underscores a deep frustration. Iran suffers from an economy in crisis, high inflation and unemployment, low investor confidence and the lack of many freedoms.

Sixty-five percent of the people are under 25, and they know little of the revolution and the sacrifices of Iran's eight-year war with Iraq. But many of them do know the Internet and can watch American television beamed in by satellite. They want jobs and freedom.

"People are miserable! The clerics are acting like gods!" was one of the slogans of the day.

And like today, the supreme and unelected leader, understood the conflict in the same terms as the WWP, James Petras et al, as the Times article continued:

Radio and television repeatedly broadcast a speech delivered on Monday by Ayatollah Khamenei in which he blamed the demonstrations on unnamed "enemies," particularly the United States.

The Government, which can send hundreds of thousands of people into the streets when it chooses, is expected to mobilize masses of diehard Islamic revolutionaries on Wednesday to proclaim their allegiance to the Islamic republic and condemn its enemies.

After 10 years of this sort of haughty, above-the-law behavior by an unelected Supreme Council, no wonder the students are risking life and limb once again.

One of the main problems facing the pro-Ahmadinejad left is its failure to adequately theorize the problem of democratic rights and which proceeds along these lines: If Peter Ackerman is funding "pro-democracy" activists in Iran and Venezuela, how can we dare attack Iran for closing down newspapers or beating demonstrators?

We don't want to end up on the same side of the barricades as Tom Friedman, do we?

For so much of the left which calls for the need for a vanguard party—in our circles the equivalent of mom, apple pie and the American flag—there is apparently some unfamiliarity with the importance of such demands for V.I. Lenin, especially in the text that some treat as holy writ—namely

"What is to be Done"

"Why is there not a single political event in Germany that does not add to the authority and prestige of the Social-Democracy?"

"Because Social-Democracy is always found to be in advance of all the others in furnishing the most revolutionary appraisal of every given event and in championing every protest against tyranny..."

“It intervenes in every sphere and in every question of social and political life; in the matter of Wilhelm’s refusal to endorse a bourgeois progressive as city mayor (our Economists have not managed to educate the Germans to the understanding that such an act is, in fact, a compromise with liberalism!); *in the matter of the law against ‘obscene’ publications and pictures*; in the matter of governmental influence on *the election of professors*, etc., etc.

“Everywhere the Social-Democrats are found in the forefront, rousing political discontent among all classes, rousing the sluggards, stimulating the laggards, and providing a wealth of material for the development of the political consciousness and the political activity of the proletariat.

(emphasis added)

I rather like this V.I. Lenin, whose chief concerns seem so diametrically opposed to the Marxist partisans of Ahmadinejad whose sole litmus test consists of the amount of calories an Iranian family enjoys each day.

I would not be one to diminish such a criterion, but Lenin’s attention to matters such as laws against “obscene” publications and art, and governmental influence on the election of professors would likely cause him to retch at the material now circulating in defense of Ahmadinejad.

Finally, a word should be said about Kaiser Wilhelm II, whose feet the Social Democrats were holding to the fire.

Despite his authoritarianism, he had a record on “bread and butter” issues that would have put the Iranian clerical populists to shame.

It should not be forgotten that his father Kaiser Wilhelm I and his Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck were responsible for some of the most advanced “pro-working class” legislation in European history.

They pushed through the first Health Insurance Bill that covered 2 out of 3 workers, and followed up with a far-reaching Accident Insurance Bill in 1884 and an Old Age and Disability Insurance Bill in 1889.

So the Kaisers were no pikers when it came to the “everyday interests of security, housing, jobs” that James Petras referred to.

I should add that German Marxists, including Karl Marx himself, had a battle on their hands trying to draw distinctions between the class they oriented to and that which Kaiser Wilhelm I oriented to.

In “Critique of the Gotha Programme”, Marx did ideological battle with Ferdinand Lassalle, a “socialist” who also served as an informal adviser to Kaiser Wilhelm.

I suppose that in consideration of this ancient history, we can only conclude that Marxism is forced to keep refighting old battles over and over again like in the movie “Groundhog Day”.

Of course, Bill Murray finally figures out how to move forward and the movie ends on a high note.

Let's hope that we can achieve a similar success in our own terrain for the future of humanity depends on it.

“The Competing Factions Of The Iranian Ruling Class Are Hesitating Before They Make Irrevocable Choices That Could Shatter The Regime”

“Having Hijacked A Workers’ Revolution To Take Power 30 Years Ago, The Clerics Understand Full Well The Risks They Face”

“The Great Mobilization Inspired People Around The World Who Support Democracy And Social Justice--And Set Off Alarm Bells For Despots In The Middle East”

In office, Ahmadinejad was anything but a friend to the working class. He pursued policies of privatization to enrich his coterie around the national security apparatus and ruthlessly suppressed efforts at organizing independent unions.

The struggles of the Iranian working class--not the maneuvers at the top of society--are the key to taking the movement forward.

June 23, 2009 By Lee Sustar, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

BLOODY REPRESSION in the streets, political maneuvering at the top, and continued popular organizing from below signal a new stage in Iran's post-election crisis as the country's ruling class is increasingly haunted by the specter of revolution.

The crackdown intensified five days after the June 16 demonstration of up to 2 million people in Tehran protesting the disputed re-election claim of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Offices were shut down as large numbers of workers stayed away from their jobs.

This great outpouring recalled the 1979 revolution that toppled the Shah of Iran, the hated U.S.-backed dictator.

Many protesters revived the anti-Shah chant, "Down with the dictator."

Video and photos of the great mobilization inspired people around the world who support democracy and social justice--and set off alarm bells for despots in the Middle East.

While the Iranian protests began over a stolen presidential election, their increasing size and intensity raises the possibility of revolutionary change in Iran and beyond.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei declared during Friday prayers June 19 that there would be "bloodshed and chaos" if the protests continued. "Street challenge is not acceptable," he declared.

The basij militias--paramilitary groups that patrol the streets for supposedly un-Islamic behavior, such as immodest dress by women--made good on Khamenei's threats, attacking supporters of reformist presidential candidate Mir Hussein Mousavi the following day.

One killing captured on video--the shooting of 21-year-old Neda Agha Soltan on June 20--quickly came to symbolize the human toll of the vicious crackdown. But as with previous attacks, protesters fought back--even though their numbers were smaller than previous protests.

As a university professor wrote of his decision to demonstrate that day, along with students:

"After the Supreme Leader's fierce speech at the Friday prayers, we knew that today we would be different. We feel so vulnerable, more than ever, but at the same time are aware of our power. No matter how strong it is collectively, it will do little to protect us today. We could only take our bones and flesh to the streets and expose them to batons and bullets. Two different feelings fight inside me without mixing with one another. To live or to just be alive, that's the question.

He added:

"Here's a true battleground. And this time, it's huge. Columns of smoke rise to the sky. You can hardly see the asphalt. Only bricks and stones.

“Here, people have the upper hand. Three lanes, the middle one separated by opaque fences, under construction for the metro.

“The workers have climbed up the fences and show the V sign. They start throwing stone and timber to the street to supply the armament.

“I tell myself, ‘Look at the poor, the ones Ahmadinejad always speaks of.’

“But the president’s name is no longer in fashion.

“This time, the slogans address the leader, something unheard of in the past three decades. It’s a beautiful sunset, with rays of light penetrating evening clouds. We feel safe among people moving back forth with the anti-riot police attacks.”

That day, using batons, chains, knives and occasionally bullets, the basij injured and arrested hundreds of people. Security personnel also added to the death toll among protesters, which official reports put at 19 as of June 22.

The overwhelming security presence on the street, along with violent attacks on university dormitories and arrests of prominent opposition figures, made protest increasingly difficult the following days--police even prevented a funeral service for Neda Agha Soltan.

DESPITE THE repression, the mass movement that took shape around Mousavi’s election campaign has already been transformed into a broader fight for democracy.

It will not dissipate anytime soon, whatever the intention of the candidate and his handlers.

In Tehran, protesters unable to mount street protests have taken to literally shouting from the rooftops at night to show their continued defiance. The mass demonstrations may have subsided owing to the crackdown, but the movement has not been crushed.

The movement may be regrouping, but it has not disappeared.

This pressure has pushed Mousavi--a moderate former prime minister--into the unlikely role of champion for democratic reform.

A Facebook page attributed to Mousavi stated that he is “ready for martyrdom” and called on his supporters to carry out a general strike if he is arrested. And in an open letter to supporters issued June 21, Mousavi declared that, if allowed to stand, Iran’s election fraud would validate criticisms that Islam and democracy were incompatible:

“If the high volume of cheating and vote manipulation that has put a fire to the foundations of people’s trust is itself introduced as the proof and evidence of the lack of fraud, the republicanism of the regime will be slaughtered and the idea of incompatibility of Islam and republicanism would be practically proven.”

Such statements reflect the enormous pressure that the mass movement has put on the reformist leader.

“Poor Mousavi, we took the easel away from his hands and gave him a gun,” one supporter joked to the Financial Times, in a reference to the candidate’s turn to painting while he was out of the public eye for most of the last two decades.

Yet it is far from clear that Mousavi is willing to use the “gun” of wider mobilizations and general strikes to force a recount of the stolen election or a rerun vote, let alone thoroughgoing democratic reforms.

As an establishment politician and an integral member of the Iranian ruling class, he will be extremely reluctant to call forth the semi-underground labor movement that has waged intermittent strikes and protests since 2004.

Iranian reformers--like, for example, former President Mahmoud Khatami--have always oriented to educated and upper-class liberals while pursuing economic policies detrimental to workers and the poor.

As a result, Ahmadinejad was able to strike a populist pose to win the 2005 presidential elections--with the help of vote fraud to get into a runoff election, which he won handily against Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a powerful cleric, former president and one of the richest men in Iran.

In office, Ahmadinejad was anything but a friend to the working class.

He pursued policies of privatization to enrich his coterie around the national security apparatus and ruthlessly suppressed efforts at organizing independent unions.

He tried to maintain popularity through a nationalist stance, defending Iran’s nuclear energy program against pressure from the West.

And in the run-up to the June 12 vote, Ahmadinejad made much-publicized handouts to the poor and bonuses for government employees to boost turnout for the election.

He apparently assumed that middle-class liberals, disillusioned by Khatami’s failure to stand up to attacks on pro-democracy activists, would stay home, as they had in 2005.

BY 2009, Ahmadinejad faced a challenge from both Mousavi and Rafsanjani. These former rivals--Rafsanjani had ousted Mousavi by abolishing the post of prime minister in 1989--made common cause to stop Ahmadinejad from consolidating power.

The Iranian president, with the backing of Khamenei, had systematically installed figures from the basij and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) into key positions in government and the national oil company, displacing or squeezing the big capitalists around Rafsanjani, who jealously guard that turf.

Beyond personnel questions, however, Iranian capitalists are leery of Ahmadinejad's half-baked "development" projects that used state oil revenues to consolidate his base among the poor, rather than spending the money on strategic investments.

For his part, Mousavi was seen as an ideal candidate for the power brokers around Rafsanjani as well as the reformists.

Having stressed the social justice side of Islam while prime minister during the Iran-Iraq war, he can appeal to workers and the poor in a way that Rafsanjani never could.

He also has credentials as a hard-liner: as prime minister, he presided over the execution of as many as 5,000 political prisoners.

Nowadays, though, Mousavi portrays himself as a liberal by championing the rights of women and national minorities--an effort that helped revived an interest in politics among Khatami's voters.

Mousavi's support, which surged into the streets of Tehran and other cities in the days before the election, forced Ahmadinejad to resort to massive vote fraud to claim victory.

As the speaker of Iran's parliament, Ali Larijani, said on television June 20, "A majority of people are of the opinion that the actual election results are different from what was officially announced," adding, "Although the Guardian Council is made up of religious individuals, I wish certain members would not side with a certain presidential candidate."

As popular pressure mounted, the head of the 12-member Guardian Council, the body of clerics that approves election candidates, issued a surprising report June 22 that votes supposedly cast in more than 50 Iranian cities were actually higher than the number of eligible voters.

This vacillation partly reflects the influence of Rafsanjani, one of the most powerful members of the Guardian Council.

But if the council reverses course and annuls the election or orders a recall, it will be because the clerics fear a revolutionary upsurge.

Having hijacked a workers' revolution to take power 30 years ago, the clerics understand full well the risks they face.

Adding fuel to the fire is Grand Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, the country's senior cleric, who endorsed protests to "claim rights."

According to religious criteria, Montazeri should have been the successor to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founding leader of the Islamic Republic in 1979, but was shoved aside and later placed under house arrest for several years.

IN SHORT, the competing factions of the Iranian ruling class are hesitating before they make irrevocable choices that could shatter the Islamist regime.

For Ahmadinejad and Khamenei, the question is whether a crackdown would succeed in drowning resistance in blood--or provoke a wider revolutionary challenge to their rule.

For Mousavi and Rafsanjani, the choice is whether to accept a humiliating deal that would greatly diminish their power, or encourage the rebellion, and try to ride it to victory.

Meanwhile, the potential for far broader struggle for democracy is apparent.

The Tehran bus drivers' union, which has fought to improve wages and conditions, despite the beatings and arrests of union leaders, issued this statement June 20:

The fact that the demands of the vast majority of Iranian society go far beyond those of unions is obvious to all, and in the previous years, we have emphasized that until the principle of the freedom to organize and to elect is not materialized, any talk of social freedom and labor union rights will be a farce.

Given these facts, the Autobus Workers Union places itself alongside all those who are offering themselves in the struggle to build a free and independent civic society. The union condemns any kind of suppression and threats.

To recognize labor union and social rights in Iran, the international labor organizations have declared the Fifth of Tir (June 26) the international day of support for imprisoned Iranian workers as well as for the institution of unions in Iran. We want that this day be viewed as more than a day for the demands of labor unions to make it a day for human rights in Iran and to ask all our fellow workers to struggle for the trampled rights of the majority of the people of Iran.

With hope for the spread of justice and freedom,

Autobus Workers Union

It's impossible to predict the next turn of events in Iran.

But what is clear is that the struggles of the Iranian working class--not the maneuvers at the top of society--are the key to taking the movement forward.

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**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WARS**

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