Thursday VooDoo

Reports on CAIFI's Iranian Teach-in Last Sunday in 54-100

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Nick Lowe on Bass

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IS AN IRANIAN INSURRECTION INEVITABLE?

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From bottom left to top right: Professor Joseph Weizenbaum of MIT; Professor George Wald of Harvard; Professor Noam Chomsky of MIT.
by Homayoun Khalili

MIT became last week a true microcosm of Iranian political currents. The 300 people who attended the Iran teach-in on Sunday managed to give us a quick glimpse of the clashing values that have been rocking this society over the past year.

The basic issue at hand is whether a corrupt autocracy with almost no popular support should immediately be overthrown by armed and bloody struggle, or whether the regime should be allowed/pushed into evolving peacefully into a society based on consent and democracy.

The latter view is espoused by the sponsors of the Iran teach-in, C.A.I.F.I. (Committee for Artistic and Intellectual Freedom in Iran). They have long been arguing that mass struggle will lead to useless shedding of blood while the Shah maintains the alacrity of the 300,000-man armed forces which he has been pampering for so long with the dead-enders and most expensive of Western armaments. C.A.I.F.I., feels the problem must be attacked at its roots, i.e., by altering the state of affairs whereby the U.S. Government maintains its unwavering support of the Shah regardless of what he does. It alone of the myriad of Iranian student groups has made its goal informing the American public of the situation in Iran.

The teach-in on behalf of groups opposed to the Shah does not claim to win the battle for democracy one must fight for. The emphasis is not on the Shah himself, but on his power from a reassuring chat with the President on phone to the ferocity of the Islamic Movement. All of these tactics are aimed at making the people realize the counter, politics under the counter has been tottering under a combined onslaught from above and below, and that to win the battle for democracy one must follow his father into exile next year.
"The people of Iran differ from the rest of the world. While everyone else struggles for progress and democracy, Iranians want to remain in the dark ages of history. The Shah is trying to yank his people into the 20th century, but his people are fighting to remain in the 19th century."

—ABC News broadcast, September 9, 1978

"Members of the traditional Shiite sect are the most outspoken foes of the Shah's programs to redirect church lands to give back free freedom of religion, and to allowing them to discard the veil, attend Universities, and vote and run in elections."

—Associated Press news dispatch, September 6, 1978

U.S. Press coverage of the tumultuous upheavals in Iranian society over the past year leaves much to be desired, to say the least. As the American journalists have unleashed their bile upon the Mullahs and Ayatollahs who lead the Iranian opposition movement to silly extremes, making one wonder what motives underlie this act. A look at the European newspapers writing on Iran reveals the contrast in approach and attitudes by the Europeans. The important thing to realize about Iranian religion is that it has undergone a tremendous transformation over the past 15 years. A new wave of progressive theology students joined the ranks of the clergy, managing in a short period to completely revitalize the religion and make it relevant to the modern world. Foremost among these was the late Dr. Ali Shariati, a student of Jean-Paul Sartre at London University in Paris. Shariati returned to Iran to teach as a University professor. His novel ideas about the sociology of religion and its relation to modern times earned him a large following in Tehran, where he lectured in the 'Hosseinieh Ershad' sanctuary to huge numbers of people before its closure by the Government.

Max Weber is the author of 'The Protestant Ethic and the Capitalist System', a classic in modern sociology. In this book he analyzes what role the shift in ethics from pre-reformation Christianity (Catholicism) to Protestantism had on the structure of the subsequently created political/economic system of capitalism and democracy. He argued that the shift in morals to accepting the work ethic and the desire to acquire knowledge was one of the prerequisites to spontaneous economic development, and that the reason many countries had not achieved spontaneous economic development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was just that they lacked the required attitudes towards working and accepting knowledge.

It is very important to note that Progressive Shi'ite Islam has been a very influential factor since its inception. It makes a distinction between the spirit of God and the spirit of man. Since he has will power, he may choose to follow either of these paths, and this makes him responsible not only for his own deeds, but also to carry out the mission of the Almighty God in this world. He is the one who knows the concept of the Spirit of God and the different scientific facts. For man to know these facts means to realize the existing knowledge in the world, This by itself is mother responsibility for him, and the greatest one.

Shi'ite Islam also has an ingrained anti-authoritarian character. To this day, this sect knows the execution in the seventh century of 72 Shi'ite disciples by the orthodox Khatifs of Bushr (Arab) Islam. Religion played an important role in the Iranian Constitutional movement of 1906 and in other struggles against autocratic rule.

The Shi'ite and Ayatollahs are not ready to accept any type of secular authority like the Shah. Iran is a shadow of God on Earth and thus should not be bowing or acquiescing to the power of any other mortal, they say. Islam also has a very egalitarian aspect. It is the duty, enforceable by Islamic law of every person with uninvested capital (i.e., savings) to pay a 20% tax as charity to the poor in society. Charging interest or usury is banned and hence the motivation to invest interest in all of one's savings in productive ventures. One can see the implications such a norm would have upon capital accumulation and economic progress.

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TVD is published every Thursday of the school term at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Meetings are held each Monday afternoon at 5 pm in or near Room 201, on the second floor of Walker on the river side of the building. Bring your own. We are an independent and anarchic journal of what could occasionally pass for culture, and we actively encourage our readers to submit their contributions. We print features, arts, commentary, contests, and anything else or redeeming social value.
Weizenbaum: Our Silence Kills

"We must take it upon ourselves to still the bandwagons," said Laurence Weizenbaum, who mailed a few letters from people from various parts of the U.S. to their senators and representatives in Congress and in his study at home. "We must take it upon ourselves to put things right."

Next to speak was Harvard Professor of Biology Edward O. Wilson, who began his address by referring to the encounter he had had with a group of Iranian students outside the press conference of the students. "I had a feeling that the only reason to pick them out sometimes is that they are scientists or intellectuals or artists, that they are being mowed down in the streets in Iran, being buried up in the movie theaters..."

The Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) has been accused of sexist, racist, and nepotistic admissions by former admissions committee member James Ryan in a report entitled "Medicine in the BUSM Admission Policy -- 1970-1971." The report mentions specific incidents such as the inclusion of a son of a senator, whose science grade point average was 1.97 (2.46 is the MIT equivalent). Dr. Jacob Swartz, present Dean of Admissions at BUSM, was attacked in particular by the report.

"It is. I am talking not just to you, I am talking not just to our faculty and students, but to the whole country. We have seen how governments have been destroyed by the combination of sectarianism and political repression, a combination of sectarianism and political repression, a combination of sectarianism and political repression..."

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The Syracusan Disaster

"On my knees
in the latomies
of her heart,
I void my stomach-
the Syracusan disaster,
the curse of the mutilated Herms,
having trapped me at last.
"

I

I came to Syracuse as a tourist,
Fell in love with its twin harbors,
Was awe-struck by its temples,
Sought renewed youth in Arethusa’s tearful bed-
But somehow
I became an invader.
And here I crouch,
surrounded by stone,
far from the sea,
far from its sweet, salt kiss.

II

Blood on the stones:
Hard marble phalluses
litter the ground
severed and bleeding
like too, too vulnerable flesh.
Our omens, devoured,
our hopes, evaporated,
our future, given over
into the hands of barbarians,
into the power of the soulless,

III

"True, it is strange to inhabit the earth no longer,
no longer to stand on legs of flesh;
to dissolve into the rock,
crystallizing
as the Sicilian sun burns down;
to become as much a part of the rock
as the waters of the Thessalian plain.
To laugh at the irony,
to thirst and thirst,
no longer water
but a palmful of dust
clinging to the surface of the rock,
the last remnant of Attic glory,
evaporating in the afternoon sun
as the panic hour approaches.
White, so much white
and thin lines of gray:
our bones, and blood, and brains,
the last of our manhood.
And then:
White, so much white.
Pure white.

Robert Ingria
I watched my clothes spinning in the laundromat washing machine and I thought about buying a Coke from the machine at the front of the building. There was no water in my machine and I was a little bit concerned as I watched my detergent sitting about in the washer as dry as when I had put it in. I decided that I might as well buy a Coke and try not to think about my clothes. As long as there was no water in my machine I could just shake the hell out when I got home.

There was no water on the Coke machine and a little handwritten sign said “40¢ no change”. I put in two quarters and lost a dime. I guess it just wasn’t up to par because when I opened the door I found about a third of it beebled out onto the floor. Brushing the floor cleaner was greater. I walked back to the washing machine and sat on the table across from it.

There was still no water in the machine. I looked to see if anyone else had noticed my problem but there were only two old, wrinkled women near the end of the dryers and they weren’t paying any attention to me. I didn’t even see anyone who looked as though they might be in charge of the place. Well, I might as well make the best of this thought and open up some stories.

While I was reading and I took my empty Coke can and tossed it into a large cardboard box that was full of empty deputies, I noticed a lady with red hair and I was alone in the laundromat. My dryer stopped and the lady took all of my clothes out of the machine. The clothes had left and I was still without water. I drug one of those large party where everyone has suddenly stopped talking.

My sheets were almost too hot to touch. I have a big plastic bag from Jordan Marsh that I got when I bought a blanket and a pillow, and I stuffed all of my laundry inside. I rubbed the plastic bag inside and inside the washing machine before I left to see if I had forgotten anything and then I checked the dryer. Jack and Bill, my other roommates, were back home when I arrived at the apartment.

"Hey! You’ve been washing clothes I see," said Jack.

"Yes, but I’m not sure how clean they are because there was no water in the machine," I told him.

"Oh, Hi David."

"I’ve just been washing clothes and I wondered if you’d like to come over."

"Well?" She sounded surprised. "I asked you if you’d like to come over tonight."

"Hi Kristan. I realized that I forgot to say goodbye before I hung up and I’d like you to know that I’m not mad at you and I’ll still like you to come over."

"I told you I was washing clothes. Just think you might come over and I’m sure about Friday and Sunday. I’d been drinking a little too much and... well, look if you want to come over that’s fine and if you don’t I guess you don’t."

"I don’t think I do David."

"She sounded a little uncertain, but I didn’t feel like playing games so I hung up on her."

"It was too water?” said Bill. "Let me know which machine that was because I’m going to wash my clothes and I don’t want to use that machine."

"It was the last one on the far end," I said.

"Can you get your clothes washed there?" asked Jack.

"I told you I was washing clothes. I just wasn’t any too sure what size the machine was so I just turned the knob," I told him that Jack understood because he just gave me a funny look and backed off to cooking his dinner.

I took the clothes to my room and I dumped them onto the floor and put my Jordan Marsh bag in the closet. At the time I felt too lazy to fold them so I put the phone on my bed and called Kristan.

"Hi Kristan, it’s me David."

"I love to talk to people while I’m laying on the bed."

"I can’t say what exactly happened so upshot about."

"I’ll admit: 1. I didn’t speak to her at the party on Friday and 2. On the way out from the party I gave her a hard back to the right of my hand."

But I can explain that, I didn’t talk to her because she was with Arnold and I can’t stand Arnold. And I only swatted her on the butt because as I said I’d been drinking and I was on my way out when I saw that cute little behind of hers, and there she was talking to that dumb bastard Arnold and I just couldn’t help myself. I was hoping that Arnold would do something, but he just ignored it and she gave me one of his foamy, rinse and wash. I can hardly wait to put those clothes just as I was coming out for dinner.

I washed a couple of plates and glasses for Jack and I so we’d have something to eat of even if we didn’t have anything to eat on. Nearly two months in the apartment and we still didn’t even have a folding table to eat on. There was Shake and Bake chicken, hot applesauce with cinnamon, and baked potatoes all nestled arranged on the stove so that we could help ourselves.

Washing Clothes

by Randy Ross

I filled my plate and opened some beer for us as Jack put what was left onto his plate. It was a good thing that Bill had not stayed for dinner. We took our plates to the living room and sat down on the floor near the TV. I turned on the television and we watched Get Smart as we dined.

"Oops." I looked over and saw saucepans on Jack’s jeans and more on the floor. "Oh shit," I said and laughed.

"Can’t let the roaches go hungry," said Jack and he kept on eating without showing any intention of cleaning up. "Bill, do you want me to get you a paper towel?"

"OK, no, I’ll clean it up at the commercial."

"Okay, I said and went to get a paper towel for my stitting wet pants. I came back and was wiping my fingers when Jack said, "Gee, do you still live in the hell did I get stuck living with such mindless crazies."

"I’ll go get some beer," said Bill. "That Jack has got to clean up after himself before he gets back."

I hung at Jack and sure enough, his plate was by his side and he and the floor were still covered with applesauce.

"I guess you’ve just been sitting there?"

I didn’t think that even Jack could watch television that long.

"If I get beer, I’ll clean it up."

"All right you heard him. Go get that beer now," I decided that it was best to take charge of that situation.

"You want another beer Jack?" I asked him after he had cleaned his plate. I thought that Jack might have already had one.

"No, I have to clean this up first."

I brought him a paper towel and we tried to get it all cleaned up. I was sure that we could if someone calls me I can put you on hold and talk to them and then come back and wait for you to hang up.

"That’s neat. Your phone can do that," Kristan seemed impressed by the concept. "Yes, my phone can do that," I told her.

"OK, so you think I can stay out there and I’ll clean up after you."

I left the dishes in the sink for Bill to do and I went to my room.

My clothes were still on the floor. I thought about putting them back in the dirty clothes box but then I would have to wash them again and I don’t really like to wash clothes. So I began folding my clothes.

I folded them in order. First my sheets, which to be truthful I actually did not fold because they were going back on the bed anyway, so that’s where I tossed them, then my T-shirts, my jeans and more on the floor. "Shit," I said and laughed.

"I’ll go get some beer," said Bill; "But Jack has got to clean up after himself before he gets back."

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There was a concert at the Orpheum Monday night. So what, you say. That happens a lot.
That's true enough. But rarely do concerts featuring two certified Cult Figures and one genuine Legend hit this area. Of course that depends on your definition of 'legend' but let's not argue that.
You've been to enough concerts in your lifetime. You can usually tell how a concert's going to be by the behavior of the crowd waiting to get in. These people were practically dead. The occasional beer here and there but mostly lots of young pros and their well-oiled women discussing the latest Real Paper exposed.

Like dutiful cattle, we trotted into the Orpheum and claimed our seats. Most people sat there talking about the vagaries of jobs and school. The Lights dimmed. The usual arthritic, Midnight Special cheers climbed feebly to the mezzanine.

Dave Edmunds' Rockpile took the stage, With Nick Lowe on bass, the 'Pile are some of the most proficient exponents of what some writers call power pop. Everything I know tells me it's rock and roll.

It was energizing music to say the least. Dave Edmunds is a transcendent guitar player. The other guitarist in Rockpile, nameless to me, amazes even in his subordinate role.

Nick Lowe is, of course, Nick Lowe. Although my view of him was completely obstructed, his vocals were more than satisfying. His rendition of 'I Love the Sound of Breaking Glass'' was a minor pinnacle.

Back to the audience. After forty-five minutes of impossible-to-ignore music, what do they do? Clap politely. Add a few shouts of "GO HOME!" to the general serenity and you've got the scene.

By now I know you're convinced that nothing is wrong. "All warm-up acts get that treatment," you say. "Good or bad. People want to see the headliner." Yeah, but why should they be so narrow? Many hard-working bands suffer because of this tunnelvision.

You figure I'm bucking for saintliness, right? That I never pass judgement on bands or anything else for that matter. You must not have read this before. Of course I do. And a lot of times I am wrong. But at least the whole Orpheum doesn't know about it.

One of the worst judgements I've made recently concerned Van the Man Monday. Since he is an authentic Legend (legend being defined as having your name in the Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll) I had expected at the minimum a near-legendary performance.

What I got confuses me but I'm sure it's legendary. Because of this tunnelvision, you figure I'm bucking for saintliness, right? That I never pass judgement on bands or anything else for that matter. You must not have read this before. Of course I do. And a lot of times I am wrong. But at least the whole Orpheum doesn't know about it.

"Hey, man, this exam is Trivial!"

"Which of the 16 original major league teams has never won the World Series?"

The Clod is, according to some campus media, a woman. Actually she's not particular. Vicious when spoken to, she has recently acquired an axe for troublemakers. If you see her, keep this in mind. It could save your life.

That happens, you say. It's the chance you take. I know that but it doesn't help me like it any more. But then authentic Legends are always a letdown.

The rest of the audience didn't seem to agree with me. They lit their matches, clapped, stood up and screeched. I couldn't help wondering if they were just doing it from memory.

I'm setting myself up here as a bit of an ogre. The people who went to that concert genuinely like Van Morrison. And, like myself at any Kinks' concert, they could care if the hall burned to the ground and was reconstructed around them. They came to see Van.

And they saw him. Everybody's happy. Except the few of us who were there out of curiosity not confirmation. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't that terrible. I'm not ready to haul out the sackcloth and ashes, station myself in the Orpheum Alley and chant, "The End Is Near!" at all future gatherings.

Hopefully amongst all these words what I'm trying to say is evident (if so, it will be a first for this column). Treat your Legends like you do your friends. Don't be blind to their lapses and little mediocrities. It will do them and you a lot of good.

I'm SICK OF THIS AND AM GOING TO FLAME DEPT.: Sometime Tuesday night or Wednesday morning some vacuumheads that live in my gonzo dormitory decided that they would pitch shit into the street and yell at a car whose alarm was either faulty or being tampered
You, a faithful follower of this space, have been a mountaineer for some time now. You've studied the fundamentals, selected your gear and experimented with methodology. In short, you are nobody's fool. Nonetheless, you also know a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. So you want to learn more. Smart thinking.

First, you must realize that once the basics of mountaineering are mastered, it is only nuance which distinguishes the true artists from the merely adequate. Therefore, attention to detail, especially in matters of clothing, is vital.

Always protect the head according to seasonal fluctuations. In winter, a warm hat is mandatory. (The head, after all, is the chimney of the body. Avoid cerebral heat loss—it diminishes your psycho-physiological abilities.) In summertime, a sun visor or a billed cap will guarantee crucial visibility among the craggy peaks.

Pay particular regard to your footgear. Shoes should be sturdy and stable. A secure footing is of utmost importance. Without it, you are asking for trouble. Point of order: while mountaineering is pursued for fun, it is neverthe-

less serious business. If you are going to climb the mountains, rather than vice versa, you must be confident of your standing.

Between the head and the feet lies the area known to pros as "the body." Mountaineering bodywear is usually based on personal preference. However, keep a keen eye out for one common criterion. Your clothes should be comfortable and flexible, allowing for open movement, specifically in the vicinity of the arms. A free and responsive arm is a mountaineer's best friend.

Certain accessories, of course, complement and complete the regulation garb. Expedition flags to mark your territory in public places, connecting ropes for those who prefer the security of mountaineering in tandem and backpacks filled with beer mugs, bottle openers and other paraphernalia. Beyond these standards, wardrobe styles range from the rustic to the refined. And well they might, for mountaineers are a rugged and individual lot, joined only by a common taste for excellence.
Then there is the curious story of the fig tree, which always rather puzzled me. You remember what happened about the fig tree. "He was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, He came if haply He might find anything thereon; and when He came to it He found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it: 'No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever'... and Peter... saith unto Him: 'Master, behold the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.'" This is a very curious story, because it was not the right time of year for figs, and you really could not blame the tree. I cannot myself feel that either in the matter of wisdom or in the matter of virtue Christ stands quite as high as some other people known to history.

—Bertrand Russell, Why I Am Not a Christian

I like your smile, but I ain't the type,
Don't shake the tree if the fruit ain't ripe.
—Jerry Garcia

The Christian religion on the whole seems to have a kniship with some sort of folly, while it has no alliance whatsoever with wisdom. If you want proofs of the statement, observe first of all how children, old people, women and fools, find pleasure beyond other folk in holy and religious things, and to that end are nearest the altars, led solely no doubt by an impulse of nature. Then you will notice that the original founders of religion, admirably laying hold of pure simplicity, were the bitterest foes of literary learning.

—Desiderius Erasmus, In Praise of Folly

I would like to share with you some of the historical background of my immobilization as a psychological scientist. As I look back, I can see that there were three stages of my own ignorance. The first, which was by far the most happy, you could call the state of innocent ignorance when I was possessed of the notion that there were some secrets of human nature, there were some laws and regularities, some cause and effect relationships, and that through study, through experience, through reading, some day I would share these secrets and be able to apply my knowledge of these regularities of human behavior to help other people.

In the second stage, which might be called the period of illusion of non-ignorance, came the disturbing discovery that, although on the one hand I didn't know what the secret was, suddenly I discovered that on the other hand people were looking to me as though they thought that I might know the secret or be closer to the secret than they. None of the research I did worked nor did any of my activities provide any secret, but again I could always say, "Well, we didn't have enough cases," or "We must improve our methodology," and there are many other statements which I am sure you are familiar with.

One can postpone the moment of painful discovery, but eventually the unhappy truth becomes apparent—that although people may be looking to you and listening to you: you have patients and students and you're going to PTA meetings and they are looking to you for the secret—still eventually you begin to think that maybe, maybe you don't know what you're talking about.

—Timothy Leary, Feb. 23, 1960 speech at Dewitt State Hospital Auburn, California

The manifestation of the universe as a complex idea unto itself as opposed to being in or outside the true Being of itself is inherently a conceptual nothingness or Nothingness in relation to any abstract form of existing or to exist or having existed in perpetuity and not subject to the laws of physicality or motion or ideas relating to non-matter or the lack of objective Being or subjective otherwise.

—Woody Allen, Getting Even