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Iran: a 30-year-old tragedy

FdCA statement on the Iranian revolt

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

26 June 2009

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The myth of the people's Islamic Republic in Iran has finally collapsed in a sea of blood.

The bloodbath being carried out by the leaders of the Islamic Republic is crushing the peaceful opposition of the people, putting an end to the myth that Islam-inspired States are different from the West's so-called "secular" States: when the classes in power, be they a secular bourgeoisie or a religious bourgeoisie, are called by the people on the streets to account for their power, their abuse of power, their privileges, their limitations on the freedom of opposition forces, the result is always the same — fierce repression, people being shot, security forces savagely launching themselves on the people to destroy the demonstrators physically, be they workers, women or students.

Thirty years ago, we anarchists were not among those on the left who welcomed Khomeini's clerical revolution, just because it was anti-imperialist and anti-Shah. We knew that a new, even bigger tragedy was awaiting the Iranian people, one that they would have a very hard time getting rid of. And in fact, over the years all the various secular and left-wing organizations have been destroyed,

every autonomous trade union voice has been silenced, and the oil-rich south has been militarized. Iran began a policy of setting itself up as an emerging regional power and a model Islamic State, taking full advantage of the opportunities it was presented with by the two Iraq wars, the war in Afghanistan, the Israeli wars in Lebanon and Palestine and by the emergence of the new economic power that is China.

A corrupt and exploitative clerical, authoritarian elite governs a country where unemployment is at 25–35%, where a bonus of between 50 and 600 Euro was distributed to supporters of president Ahmadinejad, where the president allowed banks to produce credit cards plunging many Iranians into debt, where the ferocious Basij militia has a membership of between 3 and 5 million, where oil neither creates wealth for the country nor provides energy, where people survive thanks to bread and transport subsidies. Today, this elite is wracked by internal clashes which the presidential elections have served to bring to the fore. But the price is being paid by the thousands of demonstrators whose demands seem relatively mild, except to the powers in Iran who cannot stand to see demands being made through direct action from below, without waiting for benevolent concessions from above. What the people are asking for is toleration of the freedom of expression, for opposition newspapers not to be censored or closed down, for the death penalty not to be applied to minors, for greater work opportunities in the public sector for women, for radical students not to be imprisoned, for greater protection for women in divorce cases.

The mullahs' theocratic leadership is in favour of joining the WHO, of privatizations and of neo-liberal policies. It has a huge pool of low-cost manpower for the penetration of Chinese capital and joint ventures on gas and oil corridors heading east and west. The USA and the EU know this and are having some difficulty becoming anything more than just slightly indignant.

International solidarity is difficult due to Iran's isolation, to the West's humming and hawing attitude to the country and to the

ambiguities in the Arab world towards Iran. And yet, if we allow ourselves to become trapped by the subtle distinctions between "reformists" à la Mousavi and clerical "moderates", by the wisdom of the Qom mullahs compared to Khamenei's coarseness, or by Ahmadinejad's anti-West and anti-Semitic propaganda, then we run the risk of losing sight of that movement which is challenging the power of the State and paying in lives for having dared to ask for more freedom, more justice, more future and more life.

Iran, too, has its ruling capitalist, exploitative bourgeoisie. Iran, too, has its regressive, freedom-killing clergy. Iran, too, has its crushed and oppressed people. So then, "intifada" against the Teheran theocracy. Popular resistance against the oppressors and murderers. The Iranian revolt is a revolt for the hope of freedom and social justice. It needs all the secular, anti-State, anti-authoritarian, international solidarity it can get!