

An
Iranian Revolution
by
William Shepherd



Sixteen Days of Turmoil in the Islamic Republic of Iran from 15-30 June 2009

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Monday 15th June 2009

The Iranian election reported in the *Guardian* this morning is looking more like a *coup d'état* by the president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad than a democratic election. Within two hours of the polling booths closing, Iran's *Electoral Commission* claimed that Mir Hossein Mousavi, the leading opposition politician and long-standing enemy of Iran's supreme leader Ali Hussein Khamenei, had polled 34% of the vote against Ahmadinejad's 63%.

Ahmadinejad's support is in the provinces outside of the North Tehran liberal elite but the arithmetic doesn't add up¹. Since Friday's election there has been a wave of arrests of opposition politicians, which is not what you do if you are confident of your position so perhaps this is the beginning of the end for Khamenei and his political ally Ahmadinejad.

Meanwhile in the West US Vice-President Joe Biden struck the right tone, echoing Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, by indicating that the United States was monitoring the situation and waiting to see how events unfold.

**Tuesday 16th June 2009**

Even Ahmadinejad's supporters are questioning the size and scope of his victory. Not only has the Iranian president been credited with winning more votes than anyone in Iran's history but Iranian voters are also being asked to believe he was victorious in all thirty provinces. The three rival candidates for the presidency even lost in their home towns. In past elections the regime has rigged elections by registering the birth certificates of dead Iranians...In *Dead Souls* Nicolai Gogol's tells of a similar trick in widespread use in Tsarist Russia.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei has conceded that he was a little overzealous in declaring the election for the incumbent president Ahmadinejad and instructed the 12-member *Council of Guardians*, a powerful committee of clerics, to investigate any specific claims of voting irregularities in last Friday's election.

Mousavi's people claim that their man was the clear victor finishing an easy first with 19 million votes compared with 13 million for Mehdi Karoufi, 6 million for Ahmadinejad and 4 million for Mohsen Rezai, although there is no way to corroborate these claims. But these numbers are very different to the official results, which seems to have given all Karoufi's and Rezai's votes to Ahmadinejad to push him over the 50% needed to avoid a run-off with Mousavi.

Wednesday 17th June 2009

In a statement on his website, Ayatollah Hassan Ali Montazeri...once heir apparent to Ayatollah Khomeini...has criticised the election results saying that: 'The results as announced are not acceptable to any wise person and according to reliable evidence, there have been extraordinary shifts made in votes, followed by protests of people who have been confronted violently,' adding ominously, with echoes of Tiananmen Square twenty years on, that 'the government is out to settle scores with activists, intellectuals and open-minded people.'

And this is no small shift. Official results gave 63% of the vote to Ahmadinejad and 34% to Mousavi, with tiny votes to the other contenders. But the Mousavi camp say the true result...allegedly leaked by the *Interior Ministry*...had its

¹ Iran has a population of 74 million. 70% are under 30 and 71% between the ages of 15 and 64. There are five million Kurds who in a sane world would form a Kurdistan state with Iraqi and Turkish Kurds. Two thirds of Iranians live in towns and cities, a third in the six largest cities: Tehran (12.1 million), Mashhad (2.9m), Esfahan (1.6m), Shiraz (1.3m), Tabriz (1.2m) and Karaj (1.1m).

candidate winning more than 60% of the vote. The quarrel is therefore not over a handful of stuffed ballot boxes, a few dimpled and pregnant chads, or a contentious province or two, but over 10 million votes...a quarter of the votes cast.

Montazeri's fears are borne out by reports coming in from Tehran and Shiraz of government thugs entering student dormitories and beating up anyone they found...tactics familiar to anti-globalisation activists on the receiving end of Italian police brutality at the G8 in Genoa in 2001. University lecturers all over the country are resigning in protest.



Of course the Iranian Government is not stupid. They know the fear has gone. And they have noticed that the police are no longer acting as henchmen for the ruling elite but are protecting both sides. Publicly the *Iranian Government* is portraying the opposition as a 'small bunch of hooligans'. And the pro-Ahmadinejad *Keyhan* newspaper denounced plots by 'politically bankrupt dictators' to thwart the popular will...throwing in for good measure that 'the hopes of the imperialist triangle (America, UK and the Zionist regime) for a crawling *coup d'état* in the Middle East and revival of the dead Middle East plan have been dashed.'

But behind the scenes the Government have been moving swiftly. Muhammad Ali Abtahi and Saeed Hajarian, two top advisers to the former reformist president, Muhammad Khatami, have been detained...just two among many detentions reported on *Twitter*.² On the other hand there are rumours...always there are rumours...coming from inside the government that the Supreme Leader is under house arrest and taking orders from Ahmadinejad. One thing is certain. There are feverish debates going on and far-reaching calculations being made.

Meanwhile across the globe in Washington, cheerleaders for the previous US administration...yes really...are backing Ahmadinejad. Flynt and Hillary Mann Leverett from the former Bush White House, in an article entitled *Ahmadinejad Won. Get Over It*, claim that the official results are correct; while weighing in to the *Disinformation Wars*, coordinating the spin, are Patrick Doherty's *New America Foundation* and Ken Ballon at *Terror Free Tomorrow: The Center for Public Opinion*. Strange days indeed.

Thursday 18th June 2009

Four thousand Iranians put their names forward for the Iranian presidency. Candidates were chosen by the *Council of Guardians*. Behind tightly closed doors, four suitable candidates were permitted to stand for election. The message this send out, or ought to send out, is that these are our four men, pick one and if you don't pick the one we want, no matter, we have the final say, anyway. In other words, whoever you vote for, the government always gets in. The advantages for the government is that apathy from the electorate is guaranteed and victory for President Ahmadinejad is assured.

This mattered because the week after the election the newly re-elected Iranian President was scheduled to meet up with Chinese President Hu Jintao, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and other leaders of the six-nation *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation* in Yekaterinburg before travelling on to St Petersburg to meet Russian Premier Vladimir Putin, chairing a meeting of the *BRIC Group* of emerging economies (Brazil, Russia, India and China). On Monday 15th June 2009 an American economist Michael Hudson³, in an article in the *Financial Times*, quoted from a speech by Medvedev earlier this month, in which he referred to 'the artificially maintained unipolar system' based on 'one big

² Esther Addley in today's *Guardian* reported postings to the *Twitter* page of an Iranian student: "Basij [the government paramilitary force] is after us. Slept in the streets last night. Internet is down in most of the city." Moments later he added: "5 killed in the girl's dorm," and then, "Asad is dead and I don't know where is Mohsen, lost him in the crowd yesterday."

³ Michael Hudson is *Professor of Economics at the University of Missouri*.

centre of consumption, financed by a growing deficit, and thus growing debts, one formerly strong reserve currency, and one dominant system of assessing assets and risks.’



The Americans weren't invited. Nor were the Europeans. Their diplomats are being assured that dismantling the West's financial and military hegemony is not the aim of the meetings, but this was nonsense and everyone knows it. Washington's *neocons* are not the only ones with utopian dreams of a *New World Totalitarian Order*. Pity they don't get out more. China and Russia have had enough of subsidising the West's military encirclement of the planet's heartland ...and their homeland. They have also lost patience with the appropriation of their exports, companies and real estate in exchange for dodgy digital dollars. China, Russia and India intend to build a multipolar world...and Iran has no intention of being sidelined. Hence the consternation in Tehran last week when it all started to fall apart.

Doing the rounds this week was a leaked photocopy of a confidential letter from *Minister of the Interior*, Sadeq Mahsuli to Iran's Supreme Leader. Dated Saturday 13th June, the letter notes Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's "concerns for the 10th presidential elections" and his "orders for Mr Ahmadinejad to be elected president, in this sensitive time". It then recommends that "all planning should be put in force to prevent any possible action from the opposition"...mentioning casually that "all party leaders and election candidates are under intense surveillance". The letter ends, "for your information only", with the actual votes cast in the presidential election the previous day.

Mirhossein Mousavi	19,075,623
Mehdi Karoubi	13,387,104
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad	5,698,417
Mohsen Reza	38,716

Oops! How had it gone so horribly wrong? Could this letter be a fake? Shock! Horror! Who could be guilty of so dastardly a deed? Karoubi's vote⁴ comes as no surprise. He only lost by half a million votes in the 2005 run-offs. The amazement is how a dry bureaucratic insider, the most unlikely hero of reformist protesters, could come from nowhere in the space of just a few weeks and top the poll. How could Mousavi get so many votes with so little charisma?

The clue may lie in a single heartbreaking detail of the campaign unobserved by the western media. No amount of *State Department* planning and *Central Intelligence Agency* plotting could achieve so much...and besides we can only begin to guess at policy contortions during the Bush-Obama transition. Despite the limits imposed by the regime, Iran has some of the feistiest and most intelligent women you could ever hope to meet.⁵ For Iranian women Zahra Rahnava, Mousavi's wife, has become a strong and inspirational figure.

While on the hustings Zahra and her husband have been doing one truly eloquent thing. They have been holding hands in public. For millions of Iranians, men and women alike, this was the sign they had longed for. The *neocoms* are wrong

⁴ In the 2005 election, the cleric Karoubi posted commanding numbers in the western portion of the country, winning 11 of the 30 provinces, including his home province of Lorestan, beating Ahmadinejad in these provinces by an average margin of over 20 percent, with Ahmadinejad averaging just 13 percent. In 2009, however, according to the official figures, Ahmadinejad pulverised Karoubi's totals in these same 11 provinces earning between 53 and 71 percent of the vote...and winning Lorestan by a margin of 65 points and a swing of 110 points. Nobody believes this to be credible. Choose which forgery to believe.

⁵ And it seems that their menfolk like it this way. A *Gallup Poll* two years ago claimed that 85% of Iranians believed women and men should have equal rights and 60% agreed that women should have the right to initiate a divorce.

about many things. But they are right about one thing. Iranians want our western freedoms. Liberty is not British or American. It is human...and Iranian. Barack Obama quietly made this point in Cairo a few weeks ago.

Friday 19th June 2009

Iran's Council of Guardians is looking into 646 complaints and has promised to listen to the views of the candidates. We are also told by 'those close to him' that 'President' Ahmadinejad, back from his Russian travels, was 'deeply troubled - even traumatised - by the massive demonstrations against him across the country'. Yesterday he told a meeting of his cabinet that the *Intelligence Ministry* had uncovered a US-backed bomb plot. Meanwhile Iranian television has shown former president Hashemi Rafsanjani's⁶ daughter, Faezah Hashemi, rallying protesters while, beyond the public gaze, the *Islamic Republic's* first foreign minister, Ibrahim Yazdi (78), has been dragged from his hospital bed and unceremoniously dumped in a prison cell.



Closer to home, *Exeter University's Centre for Persian and Iran Studies* was reporting rumours of splits within the *Revolutionary Guard*⁷ and of some *Basij militia* refusing to act against the demonstrators. Robert Fisk meanwhile, reporting from Tehran for the *Independent*, cited a conversation with a chemical engineer on yesterday's silent march through the centre of Tehran. "If we stop now," he explained, "they will eat us." His wife, a commercial lawyer, added with no trace of a smile: 'If we let go now, we'll face someone like Pinochet - and our dictators here are not even up-to-date dictators.'" If you missed the Pinochet reign of terror, Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine* will bring you up to speed.



*Tweeter*⁸: (1) There is a long list of rebel students given to all universities & security is to arrest them on sight; (2) Govt is now running a mass media propaganda about US & Israel joint force working in some internet sites against Iran; (3)

⁶ Hashemi Rafsanjani is the head of the influential *Assembly of Experts* that has the right to dismiss the Supreme Leader. Faezeh's public display, in defiance of the ban on unauthorized marches was widely interpreted as another sign of high-level rifts.

⁷ The *Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)*, the *Sepah Pasdaran*, was founded by Ayatollah Khomeini after the 1979 overthrow of the Shah of Iran. Its commander, Major General Mohammad Ali Jaafari, reports directly to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Officers will be reluctant to take on internal security duties because of the influence of its wartime commander, Mohsen Rezaei - one of the presidential candidates. The *Basij* is the ideologically motivated voluntary arm of the *IRGC* - notorious for its zealots and thugs.

⁸ *Source: Times of London*. By last year there were 24 million landlines in Iran...up from under one million when my VW bus (with its contents) was put into quarantine in Tehran for three weeks in 1974 arriving from Kabul. 60% of the population have cellphones which send 8 million text messages a day and help sustain a nation of bloggers...100,000 at the last count in 2006, and rising fast.

Any hope we had for parliament to stand against Ahmadi is now ruined: they openly support government today; (4) Expect clashes at Friday's prayer in Tehran. Khamenei supporters to come from all corners of Iran.

Saturday 20th June 2009

Mousavi and Karoubi refused to attend the Supreme Leader's speech at Friday Prayers, seeing it as a blatant attempt to engineer a display of unity that did not exist. The two-hour speech laid bare the struggle for Iran's future direction between those who would maintain Islamic purity and sever links with the outside world and the pragmatists who are keen to answer popular aspirations for prosperity by forging closer ties to foreigners.



Mehdi Karoubi signalled his continued defiance by calling for a fresh election. The 2003 Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Shirin Ebadi, added her voice to calls for a new vote. Meanwhile Mousavi called for another demonstration for Saturday. The Khamenei-Ahmadinejad faction could condone a massacre by ordering the *Revolutionary Guard* to open fire on the demonstrators with live ammunition or they could take a lesser step with mass arrests of ringleaders and the selected murder of demonstrators. Any other option would result in new elections, the downfall of Ahmadinejad and a humiliating climb-down by the *Council of Guardians*. *Agents Provocateurs*⁹ will be out in force seeking to foment violence or erode support for Mousavi. Forces are finely balanced and the outcome unknown.

Here is a summary of the day's events, filed from Tehran at 10.30 pm local time - 7 pm in the English West Country - on Saturday 20th June 2009 by a correspondent of *Little Satan's* propaganda arm, the *British Broadcasting Corporation*. Methuselah rest his tortured soul.

'The Islamic republic of Iran continues to move into unknown territory. Today small groups of demonstrators held running battles with police. Security forces were everywhere in central Tehran in the late afternoon and early evening. Stop. As I spent a couple of hours driving around in heavy traffic I could see thousands of men, some uniformed members of the military riot squads, some units of revolutionary guard, and everywhere *basijis* - militiamen who look like street toughs. Stop. The security men were deployed on every street corner, in long lines down the sides of the roads, and in all the main squares. The *basijis* wore riot helmets and carried big clubs. It was designed to intimidate, and while I was there, it was working. Stop. There were hundreds in Enghelab Square, close to Tehran University. Traffic was being allowed to use it, with the drivers being eyeballed by the men with clubs who lounged in thick groups wherever you looked. Stop. All this was happening against the background of a city open for business, where commercial life was going on. Shops this evening were not shuttered. Stop. The streets were jammed with cars, with mopeds and motorbikes buzzing around them. The pavements were full too. Some of the people looked as if they were waiting for some leadership, for a demonstration that they could join. Stop. From time to time small groups would come together and try to move down the street together chanting and clapping. I saw one group of demonstrators, perhaps 400-500 people, walking briskly down one side of a major road in the city centre. Stop. Bystanders were waving and making gestures of support. Then, very quickly, tear gas canisters were fired into the crowd, and they broke and ran. It was a hot, windless evening, and the gas hung over the streets, prickling noses and eyes long after the demonstrators were dispersed. Stop.'

More detail on my *Midsummer in Tehran* blog,¹⁰ which includes the report from Jon Leyne of the *BBC* that the opposition leader Mir Hussein Mousavi has not made the direct statement himself, but his wife, Zahra Rahnavard had said on her *Facebook* site that the rally was going ahead. Back in London, the *Financial Times* carried an article by the exotically named Scheherazade Daneshkhu that Mousavi had asked his friend Mohsen Makhmalbaf, the celebrated

⁹ The *Pentagon* used post-9/11 mania to construct a new strategic communication apparatus, directed at America's enemies in the field, which enhanced its role in information operations, defined as: interfering with the other side's computer activity, including sabotaging or falsifying websites (*Computer Network Operations*), while protecting their own (*Opsec*); jamming or interfering with the other side's communications (*Electronic Warfare*); misleading the enemy as to their own battlefield intentions (*Military Deception*); and spreading information to influence the 'emotions, motives, objective reasoning and, ultimately, the behavior of their target audience (*Psyop*). The Americans are not alone. In January 2005, for instance, *Haaretz* reported that the Israelis were reviving their *Psychological Warfare Unit* as part of 'the battle for consciousness'. Key questions are the Who? Whom? on friends and enemies; and whether those involved have the ability and the will to prevent their products spilling out beyond their enemies.

¹⁰ William Shepherd's *Midsummer in Tehran* is at <http://blogonblog.blog.co.uk/2009/06/21/midsummer-in-tehran-6353181/>

Iranian filmmaker who lives in Paris, to speak on Mousavi's behalf because of surveillance and restrictions on Mousavi. The article had this to say about the new Mousavi brand; by way of an explanation of the 'silent campaign' tactics.

'In the past 20 years, Mousavi withdrew from politics, returning to architecture and painting. He spent all his time with artists, which is why they all support him...Mousavi's political philosophy has evolved as he changed from a regime stalwart to a leader of reform...his way of thinking changed. If, previously, he had thought somewhat in the manner of a Che Guevara, he is now more of a Gandhi or Nelson Mandela, rather than a revolutionary.'

Sunday 21st June 2009

The Shah of Iran was deposed on 16th January 1979, although the demonstrations had been going on for a year. The rapid revolutions in Eastern Europe were the exception and not the rule. Behind the Islamic Revolution that brought the ayatollahs to power in Iran was *Shi'ism*, a revolutionary form of Islam created in the seminaries of Najaf and Qom.



It was quiet on the streets of Tehran after yesterday's demonstration in the south of the city. The police were out in force to seal off successfully the city centre. *Amnesty International's* chief Iran researcher, Drewery Dyke, remarked that 'in the 10 years I've been following this country, I've never felt more at sea than I do now. It's just cut off.' The UK and international media give the impression of extensive coverage but today both the *Guardian* and the *Independent* were carrying the same picture sourced from *Reuter*...see above...and there is virtually no reporting from outside Tehran.

This morning the *BBC* was reporting on its radio news spot every half-hour that Mirhossein Mousavi had declared himself 'ready for martyrdom'. Mousavi's website meanwhile had a statement denying this while David Osborne writing in *The Independent* quoted an ally of Mousavi, Qorban Behzadian Nejad, as saying, 'Mousavi never said this'.¹¹

Monday 22nd June 2009



In New York, the *International Campaign for Human Rights* is carrying reports of scores of people, injured in Saturday's clashes, being arrested by security forces the moment they were brought to hospital. Iranian State Radio put Saturday's death toll at ten. Hospital reports indicated that at least a hundred were badly hurt. One of the dead was Neda¹² Agha Soltani who was killed by a sniper's bullet. Her death was filmed on a cellphone and sent to an Iranian asylum seeker in Holland who posted it on *YouTube* and *Facebook*. Within hours it had been published around the world.¹³

Neda is being mythologized as a martyr to the opposition's cause, a rallying cry for a protest movement in need of a hero. Her image has been printed on placards brandished during clashes in Tehran. Neda and her music teacher were caught in a traffic jam and left their car to escape the heat. Neda just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. One rumour is that the fatal bullet was fired by a Basij volunteer on a

¹¹ Information becomes increasingly unreliable after the first couple of days once the spin flips in. Afterwards opinions are guesses guided by prejudice and facts, anecdotal evidence and statistics are best taken with a pinch of scepticism. My approach is to follow a good journalist, make judgements on what seems trustworthy and apply common sense to most of the rest.

¹² Neda is an Arabic word used more commonly in literary than in spoken Farsi. It conveys the spiritual meaning of 'call' or 'voice'.

¹³ 11-minute video at '<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuP1EcW3PBo&feature=related>' and a 4-minute annotated version at: '<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yk8clAaRf10>'.

motorcycle; another that it came from a marksman on the roof of a nearby house.¹⁴ The authorities only released the body of the 26-year old philosophy student to the Soltani family on condition that they gave her a quick burial the following day. A public Islamic funeral later in the week was the last thing the Government wanted.

Tuesday 23rd June 2009

No sooner do I find a reliable journalist than he is banished. The *BBC*'s correspondent in Tehran, Jon Leyne,¹⁵ got off lightly. It could have been worse. Several dozen Iranian journalists are languishing in gaol, according to the *BBC Persian Service*, and another two hundred have issued a statement complaining about reporting restrictions. Several bloggers, a cartoonist, the head of the *Association of Iranian Journalists*, and the chief editor of the main reformist newspaper *Etamad e-Melli*, Mohammad Ghoochani, are also under arrest.



Dissent doesn't sit easily alongside governments. Remember the furore in the USA over the *Black Panther* salutes at the 'apolitical' *Olympic Games* of 1968? The Iranian soccer team did their own variation last week in a televised *World Cup* match from South Korea. Today the life bans were handed out to four of the players who dared to flaunt green armbands on the field during the match. Life, of course, means for the duration of the *Islamic Republic*. But back to the rumour mill.

There are mutterings about the dynastic ambitions of the supreme leader. It seems that Ruhollah Khamenei has a son, Mojtaba Khamenei, who has emerged as one of the driving forces behind the government's crackdown. Mojtaba is an ally of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, credited with winning his father's endorsement for the former *Mayor of Tehran* in the 2005 election, which led to Ahmadinejad's shock second round victory. Mojtaba is an austere figure, by reputation even more hard-line than his father. He is also the gatekeeper for access to the *beit-e-rahbari*, the supreme leader's home, and to the supreme leader himself. Some Iran analysts believe that Khamenei is manoeuvring to position his son as his successor. The position of supreme leader is awarded by the *Assembly of Experts*, led by Khamenei's rival Hashemi Rafsanjani; his daughter is now under arrest for encouraging protesters at Saturday's demonstration live on nationwide television.

Wednesday 24th June 2009

All quiet on the Middle Eastern front: tit-for-tat expulsions; change of tack from Obama;¹⁶ media coverage down to one page. But behind the veil of the *Phoney War*, stuff is happening. The investigative journalist, Nick Davies¹⁷ in *Flat Earth News* provides a few pointers into its nature. But here is an academic report from the benign fringe of the action.



¹⁴ "It is a regime whose real nature has been unmasked," commented Israel's Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who has long argued that Iran's hardliners are beyond the pale...and Obama's diplomatic openings misguided.

¹⁵ Jon Leyne's final dispatches from Tehran prior to his expulsion are at <http://tinyurl.com/kq6zn9>.

¹⁶ URL for Obama's statement on Iran on 23 June 2009 is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryOIDxicqV0&feature=related>

¹⁷ Nick Davies writes investigative stories for the *Guardian* and has been named journalist, reporter and feature writer of the year in the British press awards. *The Propaganda Puzzle* is chapter 6 (pages 205-256) in *Flat Earth News* (2009; Vintage; London; 420 pages; ISBN 9780099512684; £8.99) and goes into detail, with specifics, like the creation of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, about the government lie factories and their sophisticated duping and disinformation programmes for journalists, politicians and the public. *The Propaganda Puzzle* is suitable written evidence to Sir John Chilcot's inquiry into the *Iraq War*. The true story of the present Iranian revolution is unlikely to see the light of day before 2020...from whistleblowers or *Pentagon Paper*-style leaks. Officially we will have to wait longer...until 2059.

Chatham House managed to get hold of the provincial breakdown of the election results from Iran's Ministry of the Interior and gave them to Professor Ali Ansari at St Andrews University for comment. His analysis indicates that in 10 out of Iran's 30 provinces, Ahmadinejad would have had to win the votes of all those who did not vote in 2005, all those who voted for Rafsanjani and up to 44% of those who voted for reformist candidates. His conclusion, not surprisingly, is that for anyone who has experienced the polarisation of Iranian politics in the past decade, this is just not credible. There are rumours that the clerics at the seminary in Qom are mulling over the idea of a fatwa to declare the election unlawful.

Thursday 25th June 2009

BBC reports from Iranian opposition supporters around the country



Shiraz - Police are almost everywhere, especially in the places where chaos broke out on Saturday like Mollasadra and Eram streets. There's been no sign of demonstrations since Saturday. Either people are waiting for something, or maybe just too scared. I joined the protests on Saturday. The police were being really violent, hitting people with batons and using tear gas. There are no clear figures, but I believe at last 10 people were killed in Shiraz that night. I saw a big group of mainly young people get arrested. The police response was unbelievable, completely different to the demonstrations I was at last week. They showed no mercy. It seems as though the regime has managed to quell the protests in Shiraz, but I think this is the calm before the storm. They cannot take people for granted and go on controlling everything. Especially now that they've shown their ugly face to the world, killing their own people in the streets, yet calling them rioters and terrorists.

Esfahan - I haven't been out today but yesterday there were policemen standing by every petrol station and bank. It seems the city is back the way it was - there weren't any protests today or yesterday that I know of. I think people are waiting for the final announcement of the Guardian Council and the reaction from Mousavi and Karoubi. At nights you can still hear people shouting 'Allah-o-Akbar'. I don't join in because I think it's a symbol of Islam and the Islamic hardliners are the source of all this misery we are going through. Most of the websites, including the BBC ones are still blocked. You can only access them through anti-filters. I'm using the Chinese software *Freegate* which is working really well. Of the TV channels, only CNN is still getting through. I think young people are more fearless now because they hadn't seen any street fights or resistance against the government before. Now they know what it's like, they are getting used to it.

Kish Island¹⁸ - The government normally has full control of the international branch of my university on the island but, despite this, on Monday evening a memorial event was held on campus for all the innocent people who have been killed by the Iranian regime in recent days. There were more than 150 people - a big number for such a tiny place. The guards did not enter the campus because we were so many. They warned us not to continue demonstrating when we left. Students from other international universities tried to join but guards did not let them.

Tehran - Security forces are placed strategically around Tehran to prevent people gathering. There have been no organised demonstrations since Saturday. My father was in Haftom-e-Tir Square yesterday and told us they weren't letting people stand still for a second, and they were arresting anyone who argued. I always believed in democratic reform rather than revolutionary action, which is why I took part in the election. But now they are killing democracy, so I have no choice but to demonstrate. I join the rooftop protests every evening with my father and brother. We see and hear our neighbours taking part too, and the numbers have grown since Friday. Some people are afraid of being seen, so they wait until others have started shouting until they come onto their roofs. We shout 'Allah-o-Akbar' and then 'Ya Hossein, Mir Hossein' - which is us asking Imam Hossein to help us have Mousavi as our president. Some also end with 'Marg bar dictator' - 'Death to the dictator'.

News In Brief - courtesy of Private Eye Number 1239

ELECTION RECOUNT I

THE Iranian Guardian Council has promised a full and fair recount in the number of protestors killed after the disputed Iranian election result.

"The widely derided initial figure of ten dead has been recounted, and the revised figure is now zero, since all the fatalities were responsible for their own deaths" said a heavily moustached man beating (Cont. p. 94)

Iran election results in full

Tehran North	
Mahdman Ahmgeddon (Ruling Party)	3,937,403
Mir Hussein Moussavarecount (Losing Party)	2

ELECTION RECOUNT II

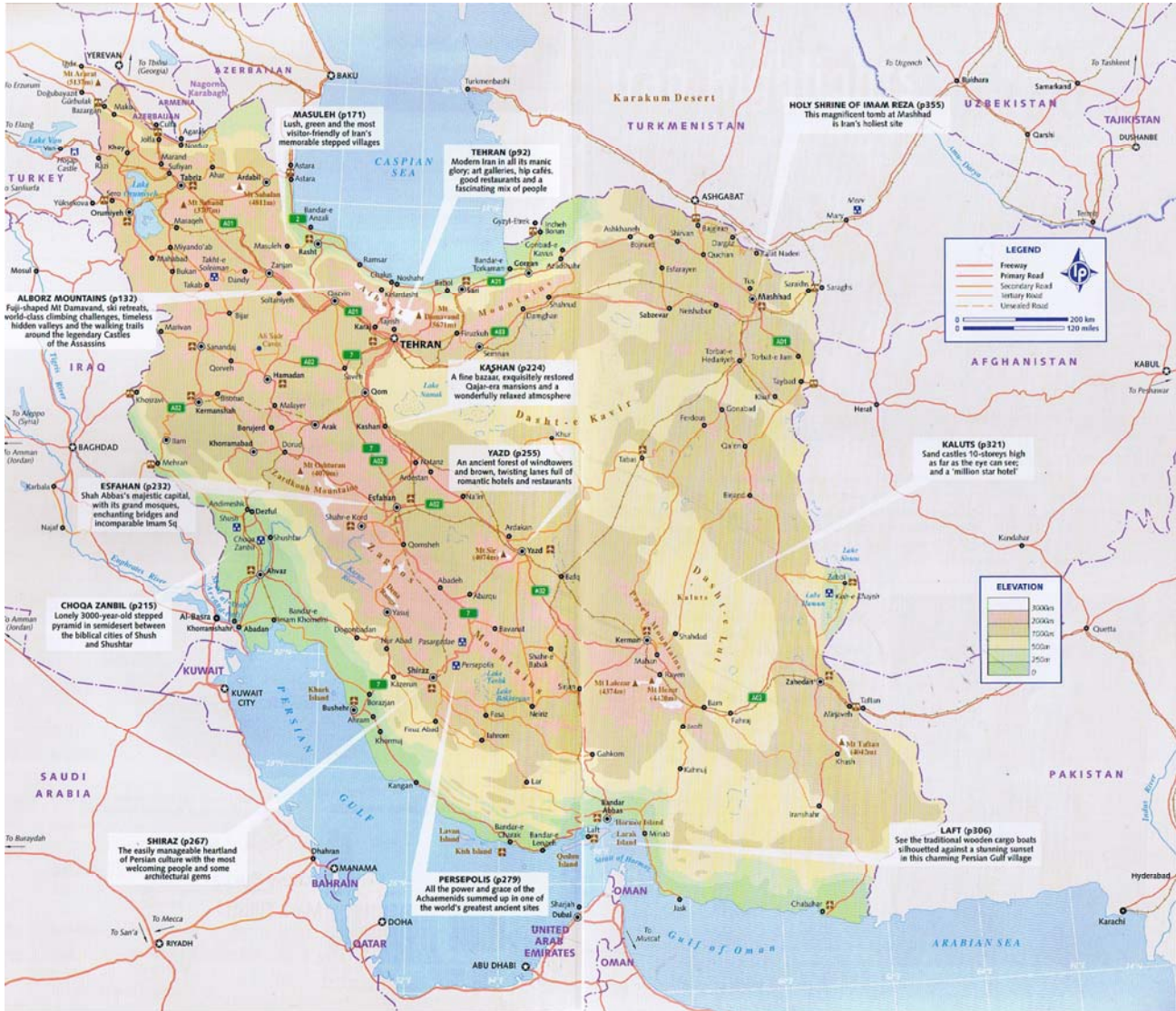
A MASSIVE recount is under way after allegations of irregularities surrounding Gordon Brown's election to office.

A political analyst said: "Following a series of exhaustive election recounts, we reached the conclusion that we never actually had one, and that Gordon Brown is in fact only there because he believes it's his turn to be Prime Minister."

¹⁸ About 20,000 people live on Kish Island off the southern coast of Iran - a free trade zone attracting five million tourists a year.

Friday 26th June 2009¹⁹

No one has been closer to the president than Mojtaba Samareh-Hashemi, a senior adviser who in 2006-07 served as deputy interior minister for political affairs, a post with overall responsibility for managing elections and appointing the representatives of the ministry for poll supervision. Samareh-Hashemi has known Ahmadinejad since 1976. With his close relationship to both the *Revolutionary Guards* and the intelligence services, Samareh-Hashemi had no difficulty finding recruits. Following his orders at the ministry is Sadeq Mahsuli, whose own total impartiality is conveniently guaranteed by his own close friendship with the president. They were at university together 30 years ago.



When the presidential election began, Samareh-Hashemi resigned as a special adviser to run Ahmadinejad's re-election campaign. The three candidates challenging Ahmadinejad have complained that their representatives were not allowed into polling stations to observe the count and that in places where Mousavi was expected to do well ballot papers ran short. These are the nature of the complaints under investigation by the *Guardian Council*.²⁰

Counting was carried out with such exemplary efficiency that it took just 12 hours for the 40 million votes to be counted and the result declared. It was helped by the fact that Ahmadinejad's 63% share of the vote barely varied throughout a country which is larger than Turkey, Iraq and Syria combined and is made up of a patchwork of ethnic groups. Indeed such is Ahmadinejad's popularity that the Azeri-speaking Mousavi was trounced in the Turkic regions of north-west Iran

¹⁹ Source: *Letter from Tehran* from *Our Own Correspondent* in *Private Eye* (No. 1239 26 June - 9 July 2009).

²⁰ Stuffing ballot boxes with Ahmadinejad votes is the clever way to destabilize Iran. Civil unrest guaranteed with the help of gullible journalists and paid-up agents inside and outside the country... while pointing the finger of suspicion in the wrong direction. This is hardly rocket science. *Our Man in Havana* by Graham Greene and *The Tailor of Panama* by John Le Carré show how it is done.

and Karoubi, the former parliamentary speaker who had taken 55% of the vote in Luristan in 2005, managed to poll less than 5% this time around, as the president scooped up almost three quarters of the vote.

Saturday 27th June 2009

The main rival of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the Iranian elections, Mir Hossain Mousavi, has adopted green as his campaign colour. The flags of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the Palestinian group *Hamas* include the colour. The colour's prevalence in the Muslim world goes back to Mohammed.²¹ The Islamic prophet wore a green cloak and turban, and his writings are full of references to the colour. A passage from the *Quran* describes paradise as a place where people wear green garments of fine silk. One *hadith* says that when *Allah's Apostle* died, he was covered with a *Hibra Burd*, which is a green square garment. Green is used to bind Qurans and for the domes of mosques.



To Islam green is also a symbol of nature and life. Mohammed invoked this connection when he wrote about a folkloric figure called *al-Khidr*, the *Green One*²², who symbolizes immortality. Green comes up a lot in Islamic history. It was the colour of the flag of the *Fatimid Caliphate*, the last of the four Arab caliphates. During the crusades, Islamic soldiers wore green to identify themselves. Likewise, crusaders avoided green in their coats of arms, just to be safe from friendly fire. Some say the banner²³ under which Mohammed fought in the war on Mecca was green with golden trimming. For centuries in Persia, only descendants of Mohammed, known as the *Sayyids*, were allowed to wear green turbans. Green was also favoured by the *Ottoman Empire*, which after the *Tanzimat Reforms* of the mid-19th century dyed its secular flags red and its religious flags green.

Tonight, just as every night this week, Iranians will walk up to the rooftops of their apartment buildings in Tehran and join the collective shouts of *Allahu Akbar...God is Great*. The 10 pm chorus, consciously borrowed from the protesters who prepared the way for the 1979 Islamist revolution, has become the rallying call of the protests seen in Iran over the past two weeks. It has the benefit of being anonymous, and allows people to express their anger without directly facing the threat of physical violence from the security forces. Meanwhile, the Russians, who were quick to congratulate Ahmadinejad on his election landslide, joined with the rest of the G8 yesterday in a statement of concern triggered by rumours that the Iranian regime were looking seriously at the possibility of hanging protesters as a way to intimidate Mousavi and Rafsanjani into signing up to the ruling party line.

On the face of it, Khamenei's abandonment of his traditional role as the neutral arbiter of factional disputes appears to have been a grave miscalculation based on underestimating the mood of the country and the fury of the reformist opposition. His emphatic backing for Ahmadinejad as winner of the election, and hints that the Mousavi campaign was akin to a 'velvet revolution' instigated from abroad have torn society apart and plunged the regime into a severe power struggle. How he reached this point is the mystery many Iranians are trying to unravel. No doubt it is tied to his perception that the Mousavi campaign, backed by Rafsanjani, his main rival in the regime, was a menace to his own position as supreme leader. It seems that, as the pro-Government newspaper *Kayhan* wrote in a recent editorial, Mousavi crossed 'red lines' when he described the leader-approved foreign policy of Ahmadinejad as a disaster.

Sunday 28th June 2009

Writing in the *Financial Times*, Roula Khalaf²⁴ speculated that Khamenei's decision to stick with the president was born of his obsession with reformists and his belief in Ahmadinejad's strong nuclear stance that has made Iran into a powerful regional player. Khalaf explained that the election crisis must be seen in the context of the anxiety over a changing international environment in which the America he has despised for so long is suddenly offering a friendly hand.

²¹ Source: *Islamic Greenwashing* by Christopher Beam posted on *Slate* on Tuesday, June 9, 2009.

²² *Al-Khidr* was the inspiration for the Mohammed worshipping *Green Knight* in Arthurian mythology.

²³ The flag is currently locked away in the *Topkapi Palace* in Istanbul.

²⁴ Three months ago (*Financial Times*, 12 March 2009) Roula Khalaf reported that Mousavi's decision to stand could undermine reformists' attempts to unseat Ahmadinejad. Three days later she argued that the withdrawal of Khatami in Mousavi's favour could help Ahmadinejad in his bid for a second term.

On behalf of the *Financial Times* Khalaf then went on to endorse last year's study of the Iranian leader by the *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, which concluded that he has 'a remarkably consistent and coherent, though highly cynical and conspiratorial view of the world', that rests on opposition to US hegemony and disdain for Israel. However Khalaf omitted to point out that Khamenei's view is evidence-based. To quote Woody Allen, 'Just because you're paranoid, it doesn't mean they're not out to get you.'

Meddling in everybody's internal affairs is what Whitehall and Washington do. It is where our taxes go. Two 1976 congressional inquiries, chaired by Senator Frank Church and Congressman Otis Pike, revealed the extent of tax-funded programmes of false flag, black ops, disinformation, fake evidence etc.²⁵ Nick Davies, writing in *Flat Earth News* (page 224) last year, remarked that as the US increases the pressure on Iran over its nuclear programme there will be a parade of fake stories placed in the western media. And he goes on to list just a few...so far.²⁶

Much of the dirty work is outsourced nowadays. Plausible deniability is essential. But the spectacle of Obama denying US involvement in Iran was the *Administration's* first slippery slope moment. Even Richard Nixon started his first term with the best of intentions. Perhaps Obama was hiding behind an executive order to be produced at the right moment.²⁷



Optimists are putting a positive spin on Tehran's vilification of *Little Satan*, arguing that it keeps alive hopes of an agreement with the *Great Satan* on Iran's nuclear ambitions. But Tehran is also mining a deep vein of resentment by attacking the *Little Satan*. The roots of Iran's displeasure go back to *Imperial Times*. In Cairo Obama apologized for the 1953 coup which ousted Mohammed Mossadeq, the popular and elected prime minister, but made no mention of Britain's role. The trigger was Mossadeq's decision to take over *Anglo-Iranian Oil...aka British Petroleum*.²⁸ *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. The British also supported Iraq in the 1980s war that killed a million young men. Current grievances are the new *BBC Persian TV* channel and the safe sanctuary Britain is giving to the Iranian opposition group *MKO*, which they arranged to have removed from the *EU* list of terrorist groups earlier this year.

Monday 29th June 2009

Yesterday was the anniversary of the death of Seyyed Beheshti, an Iranian cleric assassinated in 1981 and celebrated each year by the *Islamic Republic* and hence a licensed gathering. A few days ago emails began circulating urging protesters to attend the Qoba Mosque in north Tehran. Here is the eye-witness report carried by the *Independent*.

'The mosque was crowded and hot; a restless buzz filled the air. Girls in green headscarves and chador-clad women with green wristbands murmured Mirhossein Mousavi's name. I perched on a ledge on the balcony, next to a window overlooking the podium in the men's section. Then it came - a roar of cheering from outside. Standing on tiptoe, I looked through the grates beside me: what an overpowering sight! People, hands raised in the 'V' sign, as far as the eye could see in both directions down the street. Not unsurprisingly, the peace was

²⁵ Two works of investigative reporting in late 1977 came from Carl Bernstein, of Watergate fame, in *Rolling Stone* magazine and from John Crewdson and Joseph Treaster in the *New York Times*.

²⁶ Here are the fabrications Nick Davies listed: texts were banned which made jokes about the president (Iranian exile website with a track record of fabrication); Iranian Jews and Christians had been forced to wear badges declaring their religions (Iranian exiles); a tanker-load of forged ballot papers had been driven from Iran into Iraq for the election (*Iraqi Interior Ministry* to Dexter Filkins of the *New York Times*); Iranian ayatollahs had encouraged sex with animals and young girls (Iranian exiles); Iran's UN ambassador was one of the students who made hostages of US embassy staff in Tehran in 1979 (Iranian exiles); terrorists in Iraq used equipment from the *Iranian Revolutionary Guard* to kill British soldiers in Iraq (*British Foreign Office* briefing, later retracted); the Iranian government ran terrorist training camps in Iraq (British military briefing, later retracted) [Source: *Flat Earth News*, 2009]

²⁷ The scary scenario is where Obama really believes that the *Pentagon* and the *CIA* are following the spirit of such presidential directives. Nowadays the jobs are outsourced to private contractors or rogue operatives inside or outside the intelligence communities of friendly governments. Were I an American I would prefer the lie. But why the outright lie when lying by omission would do the trick. This is still lying, but shifts the sin into the lesser of two evils category, which requires fewer Hail Mary's.

²⁸ *The Seven Sisters: The Great Oil Companies and the World They Shaped* by Anthony Sampson (New York: Viking Press, 1975, ISBN 0-553-20449-1) tracks the manner in which *Anglo-Iranian Oil* transmuted over the years into *British Petroleum*.

short-lived. We heard shots, then screams. The crowd tried to stand its ground - linking arms and chanting, 'No fear, we're all together'. More gunshots, and in the space of a few seconds, the crowd began running the other way. Pushed on all sides, I fell under the panicked mass of people. Someone pulled me up and we ducked into an open gate. Some kind soul had opened her home as sanctuary. The sequence is one I'm getting used to: Gather, disperse, march, run, chant, get hurt, hide, tremble with others and share your common rage.'

Tuesday 30th June 2009

Private Eye tells a tale about *Times* correspondent Martin Fletcher. Desperate to return to his hotel to file his story but stuck in traffic in Central Tehran as 120,000 people thronged the streets for an Ahmadinejad rally, he commanded his Iranian fixer Kayvon Biouki to get him a motorbike. When Biouki protested that he couldn't desert his car and hijack a passing motorcycle, Fletcher was so incensed that he roared imperiously "I am paying you!" Biouki has now sent a long email to the *Times*' foreign editor explaining why he has had enough of the overbearing Mr Fletcher. "He thinks it's the colonial ages and he is a British general," he writes. "He is here for ten days, but I live here." Here is a story that did not get stuck in the crowd.

Social repression? This is just a taste of things to come

Analysis Martin Fletcher

That's that then. The massive street demonstrations have been crushed. Iran's security and intelligence services have locked up thousands of opponents. Opposition newspapers, websites and bloggers are being closed down. President Ahmadinejad's victory has been confirmed, the regime's Orwellian mouthpieces have declared the election to be an epic milestone in the 30-year history of the Islamic Republic, and the US and European Union want to resume talks about Iran's nuclear ambitions.

For the millions of Iranians who campaigned with such exuberance before the election, and

who are convinced that Mir Hossein Mousavi was robbed of the presidency by electoral fraud, the only way left to vent their anger is to go up to their roofs at night and shout "Allahu akbar" ("God is greatest") in a collective wail of despair. Even that is becoming dangerous, with reports that Basiji — Islamic militiamen — are storming the homes of those who dare to sing God's praises.

Those millions do not face a return to the status quo ante. Their lives will now be far worse than they were before the June 12 ballot. An extreme, fundamentalist faction has staged a coup against a relatively moderate and pragmatic revolutionary old guard. The social repression of

Mr Ahmadinejad's first term will look mild compared with what is coming, for that is the only way this severely weakened regime can maintain power.

The authority of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader, has been destroyed. Once the infallible linchpin of the entire system, he is now seen as just another ruthless political conspirator. The regime has lost its last shred of legitimacy. The Islamic and revolutionary values it claims to champion turn out to be lying, cheating and the wholesale beating, butchering and incarceration of its own people for daring to protest.

Above all, it has incurred the visceral hatred of the disenfranchised millions, and radicalised a generation of Iranian youth. Their fury will not dissipate. It will fester and grow until one day it erupts.

That was from today's *Times* after the *Council of Guardians* had confirmed the election results. It was fairly typical of the British press. But there are other narratives. Yesterday Ahmadinejad announced an investigation into the death of Neda Soltani. 'Given the many fabricated reports around the heartbreaking incident and the widespread propaganda by the foreign media,' he said, 'it seems there is clear interference by the enemies of Iran...' He might be right. The turmoil could be the final thrash of the *neocom* tail before Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton get a grip on US foreign policy. At the centre of the mystery is Arash Hejazi, a postgraduate student at *Oxford Brookes University*, who was filmed trying to save Soltani's life. Hejazi, it seems²⁹, was on a business trip to Tehran but managed 'to escape back to Britain' where, according to his celebrity spokesman, the Brazilian author Paulo Coelho, he has been receiving 'many threats' and 'may face death if he is forced to return to Iran'. Threats for trying to save a young girl's life? Strange days indeed.

From 1972 to 1979 Amir Taheri was executive editor-in-chief of *Kayhan*, Iran's largest newspaper, and is the author of *The Persian Night: Iran under the Khomeinist Revolution*. In March 2008 he wrote an article³⁰ for the *London Times* about the election to the *Majlis*... the 'make-believe parliament set up by the mullahs'. The *Times* has published four of his articles in the past three weeks.³¹ Taheri reckons the mullahs are setting up an *Imamate*³², modeled on Yemen before the 1960 military coup and the *Taliban* in Afghanistan in the 1990s.

'There are two Irans,' Taheri wrote in his article of 21 June 2009, 'One is prepared to support Khamenei's bid to transform the republic into an emirate in the service of the Islamic cause. The second Iran is one that wishes to cease being a cause and yearns to be an ordinary nation.' Ten days ago Taheri wrote that 'the fight is only beginning'. Yesterday he wrote that 'the fight for Iran's future is far from over.'

²⁹ Source: Tim Walker's *Mandrake* column in the *Telegraph* entitled *Author goes to battle to save student from Tehran turmoil*.

³⁰ *Iran's Choice: a man in a military cap or a man in a military cap* by Amir Taheri (*Times*, 14 March 2008).

³¹ *The West fooled itself Iran would allow reform* (*Times*, 14 June 2009); *Oppressive and complex election rules made Ahmadinejad's win certain* (15 June 2009); *Iran's dictator gives up pretence of democracy* (*Times*, 15 June 2009); and *The West fooled itself Iran would allow reform* (*Times*, 30 June 2009).

³² An imamate's constitution is the Koran.

And now, on Tehran TV, the latest news from London*first published on Tuesday 16th June 2009**There's been blanket coverage in the UK of the unrest following Iran's disputed election. By way of comparison here is how Tehran Television might report recent events in Britain...*

Allahu Akbar! Welcome to a special edition of *Eye on the Infidel*, live from London, capital of the hated *New Labour* tyranny. The Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Brown, is clinging to power despite receiving only 15 per cent of the vote in last week's elections. In some conservative tribal regions, the ruling junta's share fell to just 8 per cent, with government candidates beaten into fourth place by fascists and separatists. Even in lowland Scotland, formerly a Brownite stronghold, Labour was humiliated by nationalist forces. It represented a new nadir in the fortunes of Labour under the dictator Brown, an ultra-orthodox Presbyterian theocrat, who replaced the despised Bushite running dog Tony Blair in a coup two years ago. But Brown is refusing to accept the result of the election and has declared himself the winner. A clumsy attempt to remove the Supreme Leader by dissidents rallying under the banner of the breakaway *Guardianista* faction was ruthlessly crushed. Brown then embarked on a shambolic reshuffle of his Cabinet, in an attempt to purge reformists from key posts. But at least two of the leading dissidents remain in office, a stark illustration of the Supreme Leader's underlying political weakness.

Such is the parlous level of his support at home, he has been forced to draft in from Europe exiled party elders like the twice-disgraced mortgage fraudster Ayatollah Mandelson and expenses baroness Harridan Kinnock to shore up his crumbling regime. Civil unrest has been mounting since the collapse of the infidel capitalist banking system. In London, a newspaper vendor was clubbed to death by masked police during violent clashes between security forces and anti-globalisation protesters. Similar hardline tactics, involving riot shields and baton charges, have also been used to suppress peaceful protests by demonstrators opposed to Labour's totalitarian efforts to eradicate traditional English countryside pursuits. In the Islamic province of Luton, troops clashed with brave members of local jihadist groups campaigning peacefully for the introduction of Sharia law in Britain and an end to the religious wars of aggression against Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hundreds of thousands of women have taken to wearing hijabs to express their support for Sharia. The burqa is now a common sight in British towns and cities.

Meanwhile in London millions of commuters took to the streets after the underground system was brought to a standstill because of a strike by revolutionary transport workers loyal to the deposed spiritual leader, Ayatollah Redken. At the heart of this crisis is the fact that under the Supreme Leader's profligate stewardship, the country is effectively bankrupt. Britain's vast oil and gas reserves have been squandered and taxes are soaring. As well as a run on the banks, there has been widespread looting of department stores, particularly the *John Lewis* chain, led by members of the ruling elite making off with sofas, plasma televisions and kitchen sinks. Politicians from all parties have stolen millions of pounds submitting false expenses claims and using public money to build private property empires and watch pornographic films. This corruption goes right to the heart of the political establishment, with even the Treasury Minister implicated in tax evasion. Scandalously he remains in office even though *Speaker* Ayatollah Gorbals has been forced to resign.

Once the home of parliamentary democracy, Westminster is little more than a talking shop, poorly attended and utterly discredited. Most of Britain's laws are now imposed by foreign bureaucrats and judges without any debate. Freedom of speech has been brutally repressed. Police arrested an Opposition spokesman simply for doing his job. There is also the question of the democratic legitimacy of the Brown junta. He seized power without an election and has repeatedly demonstrated his contempt for accountability and the will of the people. Yet rather than acknowledge their anger, he persists in changing the subject and is now considering tinkering with the voting system in a cynical last-ditch attempt to remain in power. The Supreme Leader has withdrawn into his bunker and is reduced to issuing deranged statements on YouTube. It is frightening to think that this madman has access to nuclear weapons and has never accepted Middle England's right to exist. He appears to be hell-bent on wiping the United Kingdom off the map and submerging it into an imperialist European superstate. And yet the British still have the nerve to lecture us on democracy.

My fellow Iranians, we should give thanks that we are in the safe hands of our Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Peace be upon him. Allahu Akbar!

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