Iranians charge media coverup

By Elaine Douglas

The American media have failed to report the full dimensions of the current repression in Iran as well as the extent of the repression in this country, declared several speakers at a meeting held at MIT on Oct. 19.

As an example of the kind of reporting that has not appeared in the US mass media, speakers cited a story in a London-based newspaper. The Oct. 1 issue of the Guardian reported that grief-stricken students in Iran have been mass-murdered. The story, which ran in an ad hoc box, was written by Parvin Najafi, editor of the MIT student newspaper.

In a report that quickly yielded 1689 pints of blood, the Northeast Regional Red Cross in the St. Paul area reported that grief-stricken students in Iran have been mass-murdered. The story, which ran in an ad hoc box, was written by a representative of the Iranian Students Association.

Parvin Najafi told the MIT audience that the US press has "distorted the facts" and belittled the human experience of Iranians. The Shah of Iran has been murdered by popular fury. "The Shah's 'program' consists of giving US corporations a free hand to plunder the natural resources of Iran," Najafi said. "Despite vast oil revenues, the majority of Iranians are desperately poor. She declared. "Most of the oil money has gone back to the US and Europe for arms purchases."

The meeting, attended by about 300 people, was addressed by MIT professors Noam Chomsky and Joseph Nye, Jr., Harvard professor George Wald, and Professor Parvin Najafi of the Iranian university.

The Iranian media have reflected the official US government and establishment interpretation, which pictures the Shah as a visionary leader of an apathetic nation, the speakers said.

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We will always be belabored with the news that the Shah is misguided. The Shah's domestic program, "distribution land, not to peasants but to Iranian agribusiness, which produces for export," Najafi said.

"I think we have had enough," she declared, and since January they have been waging a "general strike" against the regime involving strikes and mass demonstrations of unprecedented size. The government has responded with "savage repression," she said. "The police are shooting indiscriminately at unarmed demonstrators and thousands have been massacred."

On Sept. 7, the government imposed martial law.

"Hundreds of thousands of industrial workers, the two major daily newspapers, all students and teachers are on strike," she said.

On Sept. 4, "the biggest demonstration in the history of Iran took place," she said. "It involved three to four million in various cities."

Then, on Sept. 7, "even larger demonstrations in Tehran, a city of 4 million, one million persons appeared on the sidewalks."

On Sept. 8, crowds again assembled in the heart of Tehran. The French paper La Figaro, Sept. 8, called the massaging "an ocean, a tidal wave of humanity" consisting of 300,000 or 500,000, maybe more.

As in past years, the Interfraternity Conference (IFC) and the Dormitory Council will be sponsoring blood donation contests. Kegs of beer will be given to the first, second and third place fraternity and dormitory groups, based on the percentage of participation within each group. A keg of beer will also be awarded to the dormitory group and fraternity showing the most improvement from their 1977 turnout.

According to Blood Drive Chairman Tom Crowley, "We'd like to give appointments scheduled so early, we can let the Red Cross know how many nurses and lab technicians plan to be there for Scheduled appointments will also make it easier on the donors by reducing the waiting time."

He added that donors with appointments would have priority over walk-ins if the drive was oversubscribed, and that appointment times would be given on a first come, first served basis.

Due to the usual reliability of the MIT drive, it is providing a steady flow of fresh blood, a large amount of elective surgery has been scheduled at area hospitals, and during and shortly after the blood drive. Should the MIT drive unexpectedly fall short of its goal, the Northeast Regional Red Cross will be forced to set up a last-minute drive elsewhere.

Excerpts

And then one must turn to the issue of objective news reporting. There is essentially no such thing as "objectivity."

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Time Magazine, Sept. 18, called the demonstrators "a colorful, sometimes incongruous cross-section of Iranian society" numbering 100,000.

On Sept. 8, the Shah's troops opened fire, as they had on several occasions, in recent months. The British Guardian reported a figure of 3,000 dead in Tehran on Sept. 8. Time Magazine quoted the Iranian government figure of 86 killed, mostly women and children.

ABC News "took propaganda to the point of absurdity" in the network's Sept. 15 news broadcast, Najafi declared. "First they showed demonstrators being tear-gassed, then they switched to a shot of an Iranian woman putting on makeup at her dressing table, and said that what the demonstration was against.

In his talk Chomsky recalled the first demonstrations against the war in Vietnam in 1963, "These demonstrators were against the war in Vietnam in 1963."

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