

A Time for Peace

On September 29 I attended Iranian Federated Women's Club & Payvan's 6th Annual Arts and Culture Event at Cupertino Quinlan Center. There were more than one thousand attendants. Since Santa Clara county has the most Iranian population in the U.S., so this is the largest Iranian event in the U.S. Santa Clara county is not only the capital of high-tech, but also a center for many largely diversified Asian cultures: Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, the Philippines, Persian/Iranian, the Sikh and the Bahai faith. That is also the reason the county board of supervisors became the only American county assembly to pass a resolution requesting the U.S. government to remove sanctions and stop the war against Iraq.

Upon arriving, I noticed I was the only East Asian face and the other non-Central Asian faces were the police guards at the door. This is a politically sensitive season in the U.S. for a specific people whose native country has been labeled "axis of evil" by the U.S. President.

I arrived late so I could only enjoy the last program: dance. The dancer has a background of Iranian Islam and Mexican Catholicism. Her performance reminded me of my Turkey visit a decade ago. It is also like Uygur style to which some Chinese are familiar. There was also book signing and I purchased "A Time of Peace – Between Muslims and the West" with the author Judith Shadzi's signature. I noticed a thick book with tape, "The Iranian Revolution". I talked with the woman and told her that I could not buy it but I wanted to borrow that kind of books if their community could open a library for public access in this area. She agreed to forward my suggestion to her community but told me how dangerous if the U.S. government judges that they are conducting political activity instead of cultural exchange.

Iran has a long civilization history as the West, tracing back to the Greek times. Unfortunately the world outside usually only knows the fantastic Persian stories, instead of its rich true history. This makes culture exchange not only practical but more significant. For example, instead of King Daruis I, "the Great" who was described as a great threat to the Greek world, what is the importance of the Persian poet Ferdosi? Mr. Saeed Ghaem-maghamsi explained this by asking an Egyptian scholar: "Your culture was so rich and strong, but why did you lose your language?" The Egyptian scholar replied, "Because we didn't have Ferdosi!" We can also see from the very fact that Iran installed Shiism as their state religion against Sunni to keep Iran politically independent from the Arabic control. There is no theological difference in Islam, even though today the largest Islamic countries are not Arabic. When the PRC government stopped nuclear technology exchange with Iran under the U.S. pressure, the Iranians were disappointed: Isn't China also a great nation?

This kind of culture or historical perspective teaches us much more than the Western political as well as commercial propaganda. While Sadat of Egypt fled to Israel and came to Camp David to beg peace (the lost land) under the Western term, the Iranians selected their "own dictator" rather than a puppet regime. In 1964 when the puppet Iranian Parliament passed a law that American military and their dependents were immune to Iran law, Ayatollah Khomeini established himself as a new savior of the Iranian nationalism by denouncing it as enslavement: "Our dignity has been trampled on; the dignity of Iran has been destroyed. A law ... states that all American military advisors, together with their families, technical and administrative officials, and servants – in brief, anyone in any way connected with them – are to possess legal immunity concerning any crime they may commit in Iran.... The previous government approved this measure without telling anyone.... They have reduced the Iranian people to a level lower than that of an American dog." [1] Even the nearly non-existence overseas Iranian opposition have to first denounce the imperialists before they could talk about democracy. There is no space for Iranian "regime change" from outside.

In fact, the U.S. has installed similar SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement) with Japan [2], German, South Korea [3], "Republic of China", South Vietnam, the Philippines, and almost every "ally" under its control. Recently the Bush Administration is pressing the UN to exempt U.S. troops abroad from possible international tribunals. The American public was never educated that if the American marines, who raped a Peking University girl, were put under the Chinese law after Japan's surrender, America would not "lose" China. The fact is: the deeper history the "host" country has, the more dangerous the occupying U.S. troops are. If the U.S. government learns lessons from their policy failures, they would not install soldiers for the Afghanistan "President", who will be overthrown over night without his American guards; they would withdraw their five thousand troops from Saudi Arabia where Muhammad was born, buried and is worshipped.

As any other Islamic people, the Iranians understand Iraq's resentment without almost any access to the Persian Gulf under the British-drawn borders in the Meddle East. They also know that without the U.S. support to contain the Iranian Revolution, Saddam Hossein probably could not engage a war with Iran. What is Iranians' attitude of the potential U.S. invasion at Iraq? "It will put Muslim-Christian relations back one thousand years."

NOTES

[1] Cited from Judith Shadzi, "A Time of Peace – Between Muslims and the West." Saratoga: R & E Publisher, p.113.

[2] See Chii Kyotei Kenkyukai. Nichibei Chii Kyotei Chikujo Hihan (A Thorough Critique of the SOFA). The SOFA Study Group. Tokyo: New Japan Press, 1997. It is reviewed in English by Jing Zhao and published by H-USA, April 1998. <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=16197892747787>.

[3] See SOFA in South Korea, October Review, Hong Kong, 2000, No.4, <http://cpri.tripod.com/cpr2001/sk-sofa.html> (in Chinese).

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