

The Platypus Affiliated Society presents:

Iran and the Failure of the Left

30 Years after the Iranian Revolution

6:00pm Sunday, September 13, 2009 at **The Brecht Forum** 451 West St New York, NY



A *Mujahadin-i-khalq* demonstration in Tehran during the Revolution. To the left, the figure of Dr. Ali Shariati; to the right, Khomeini

A panel discussion with:

Ervand Abrahamian

Professor of History at Baruch College, CUNY
and author of *Iran: Between Two Revolutions*, 1982

Hamid Dabashi

Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature
at Columbia University

Hadi Ghaemi

Director of International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran

By tailing after events, the Left betrays its revolutionary history. And the Iranian election protests of the last three months have been no exception. Leftists have hailed the amorphous social upheaval in the streets of Tehran as a step towards the transformation and progressive “evolution” of Iranian society. Yet, however optimistic this position may sound, celebration without understanding only obfuscates our political situation.

Undoubtedly the Left today should demand the overthrow of theocratic regimes. But here is the impor-

tance of ideology: how the regime is overthrown—who participates in this act and how they understand their political practice—has real effects. In 1977-79, the International Left overlooked this problem by uncritically supporting those seeking to overthrow the Shah. In so doing, the Left helped a right-wing popular movement establish the very theocratic dictatorial government the protesters fight against today. How are we as leftists to make sense of this political failure, so as to help rebuild an emancipatory Left today? In the spirit of renewal, Platypus asserts that *if the Left is to change the world, it must first transform itself!*

The Platypus Affiliated Society, established in 2006, organizes reading groups, public fora, research and journalism focused on problems and tasks inherited from the “Old” (1920s-30s), “New” (1960s-70s) and postpolitical (1980s-90s) Left for the possibilities of emancipatory politics today.

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