

EXCURSUS I

ROBERTA COHEN on
HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN

Extensive abuse of human rights has been a hallmark of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) since it came to power in a violent coup on April 27, 1978. From the beginning the new regime has used its power to imprison, torture, and execute its actual and potential enemies. The victims of this policy have included large numbers of military personnel, religious leaders, important figures in previous governments, large landowners, and in general those political opponents, including the regime's previous co-conspirators and associates, the Parchamists, who are now considered hostile. As the total numbers of those imprisoned (perhaps as many as 20,000) and executed (over 3,000) mounts, it appears that the regime is effectively eliminating the educated middle and upper classes and the former military officer corps.

Recent reports indicate that, as the mounting opposition and escalating insurgency become more threatening, the government is becoming even more brutal in its treatment of its opponents. It is estimated that there are currently approximately 15,000 political prisoners in the Pol-I-Charki prison outside Kabul, which was originally designed to hold no more than 6,000. Because of the extreme overcrowding, prisoners reportedly sleep in shifts while the others remain on their feet. Nightly round-ups during curfew hours in Kabul and other cities produce replacements for those executed during the night. New arrivals are routinely beaten to extract confessions. Recently, 20 to 50 people have been executed each night.

The executions at Pol-I-Charki prison are clearly a deliberate element of DRA policy. The officer in charge of executions, Major Wazir, periodically checks the execution list with Prime Minister Amin. Many prominent Afghans were reportedly executed shortly after the April 27 coup. In October, 1978, after uprisings

in Kandahar province, 393 business and religious leaders from that area were brought to Pol-I-Charki in special planes. Upon arrival they were blindfolded, their watches and money removed, they were beaten by special troops assigned to the firing squad and then were executed ten at a time. The bodies were thrown into a mass grave and bulldozed over.

An escaped refugee military officer described a more recent incident at the prison during late May, 1979, when two bus loads of condemned military officer prisoners were being taken to the execution area. These officers began appealing to their guards, saying they were Muslims and should not be executed. The guards were momentarily confused and the officers overwhelmed them, seizing their Kalashnikov weapons. Between 80 and 120 were killed or wounded; some of the prisoners escaped. The riot spread inside the prison and the authorities used hand grenades and armored personnel carriers to suppress it.

Because of their potential threat to the regime, military officers who are suspected of disloyalty or are identified as staunch Muslims have been a prime target of the government. A significant proportion of Pol-I-Charki's inmates and of those executed are military officers. Recently, 150 officers from the Kandahar II Corps were executed.

To offset the current severe manpower shortage in the armed forces, which has resulted from the political purges as well as from defections and battle casualties, the regime has resorted to forced conscription of villagers and of university students. A student refugee who escaped from his school when he heard he was being sent to a military camp stated that students are simply arrested and no one ever sees them again. They are told they are going to fight "Pakistanis" who are "trying to conquer the Fatherland."

PROMINENT CIVILIANS outside the government, particularly those who command widespread loyalties, such as religious or ethnic leaders, have also been victims of the regime. In early May leaders of the predominantly Shiite Hazara com-

munity were arrested in Kabul. Following the arrests, women and children demonstrated outside Pol-I-Charki prison. Four women were shot and many women and children were beaten by the prison guards.

As a result of the DRA's ruthless attempts to suppress dissent in rural areas of the country, large numbers of innocent peasants have been killed, wounded, or captured and their homes and crops have been destroyed. Afghan armed forces have attacked and repeatedly bombed defenseless villages throughout the country.

The brutality of the regime is illustrated by the slaying of villagers on May 9 northwest of Kabul. When the villagers raised the green flag of Islam and marched through the streets demanding an end to the tyranny, thirty tanks and two MI-24 helicopters piloted by Soviets were sent to suppress them. Many people were

killed and the villages are now deserted.

Refugees who recently arrived in Peshawar, Pakistan, told of a late April massacre of an entire village near Chigha Sarai in Konar province. The DRA armed forces massacred all the male inhabitants, forcing the women and children to watch.

Another indication of the harshness of the DRA's repression is the approximately 100,000 Afghans who have fled to Pakistan. The government tried to lure them back with an "Amnesty Program" announced in May and has claimed that "thousands" have responded. In fact, however, according to authorities in Pakistan, the refugee population actually rose from 40,000 to 80,000 during the period of the original amnesty offer (which was subsequently extended) and has now reached 100,000.

The DRA has tried repeatedly to refute reports of its inhumanity. In March,

CHRONOLOGY

April 27, 1978--*Military coup overthrows government of Mohammed Daoud. People's Democratic party of Afghanistan organizes new government.*

April-May--*Noor Mohammed Taraki declared president and prime minister. Formation of first cabinet with Babrak Karmal and Hafizullah Amin as deputy prime ministers.*

June--*Several leaders of Parcham faction of People's Democratic party appointed ambassadors, including Karmal to Prague.*

August 17--*Defense Minister Abdul Qader (an April coup leader) and Chief of General Staff Shapoor arrested and charged with plotting a coup against the new regime.*

September--*Parcham leaders (ambassadors) recalled and linked with Qader/Shapoor plot. None return to Afghanistan.*

Insurgency begins in earnest in eastern provinces; opposition gradually becomes more active, continues to resist regime to present.

Late 1978--*By this time a series of decrees relating to social and economic rights are promulgated, including reform of credit system (abolition of usury), land reform, and liberalization of marriage customs.*

December 5--*Taraki signs Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighborliness with the Soviet Union in Moscow.*

February 14, 1979--*Terrorist kidnapping of U.S. Ambassador Adolph Dubs results in Dubs's death in a shootout between Afghan secret police and still unidentified terrorists.*

February 22--*U.S. reduces bilateral assistance program to ongoing projects in FY-79 and 80, terminates military training program.*

Mid-March--*Rebellion in Western city of Herat. Government restores control after several days of fighting.*

March--*New cabinet announced: Amin becomes prime minister (remaining as foreign minister); formation of High Council for the Defense of the Homeland, with Taraki as chairman, Amin as vice chairman.*

July 23--*U.S. announces evacuation of official dependents and nonessential personnel for security reasons.*

July 28--*New cabinet announced: Taraki assumes control of Defense; Amin remains prime minister; Shah Wali named foreign minister, remains deputy prime minister.*
September--*Taraki resigns presidency and party leadership to Amin, reportedly strengthening "hard-line" factions in the government. He is later reported to have been executed.*

The government renews its amnesty offer to those who fled to Pakistan.

President Taraki denied foreign radio reports of 14-20,000 political prisoners and stated there were actually 1,356. He challenged a "neutral international team" to come to Afghanistan to confirm his figures.

The June 2 edition of the official *Kabul Times* published a more recent Taraki speech on the subject, Addressing a gathering of tribal elders brought in from the provinces (probably under duress), he denied "enemy" reports that the regime had eliminated "100,000 people," asserting that the Khalqis are "brothers of 98 per cent of the population." While acknowledging that the government would punish those proved guilty of "hatching conspiracies or carrying out propaganda or other provocative acts," he insisted that it did not act without proof. Taraki attempted to reassure his audience by maintaining that his government has "not killed and not imprisoned anyone without any reason."

On May 14 the government announced the establishment of two courts--the "Khalqi Specialized Primary Court" and the "Khalqi Specialized Final Court." According to an article in the May 15 *Kabul Times*, they will "handle crimes committed...against the great Saur Revolution, against the interest of Khalq and national interests, and against the internal and external security" of the country. These courts may have been established in an attempt to placate world criticism of summary executions and human rights violations by the regime. On the other hand they may well serve as stages for "show trials" of those convicted of treason, with no regard for human rights. The regime has for months promised a trial for the "Qader clique"--former Defense Minister Qader and his associates who were arrested last summer. During a May 12 press conference, Prime Minister Amin reiterated the regime's intention to hold such a trial.

On April 27, anniversary of the 1978 Khalqi coup, TASS complimented the Afghans for how much had been accomplished toward "building a new society" in the short space of a year. The Soviets withheld comment on how much had been done in the same time to deny the Afghan people their basic human rights.

Roberta Cohen works at the State Department in the area of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs.

EXCURSUS II

GERALD F. HYMAN on
MALAYSIA TAKES THE FLAK

"Vietnam may speak of good relations and friendship but they continue to dump their garbage in our yard." This statement attributed to Tan Sri Muhammad Ghazali bin Shafie, Malaysia's minister of home affairs, coupled with the deputy prime minister's announcement of June 15 that Malaysia would shoot on sight any new refugees--the "garbage" to which Ghazali Shafie alluded--and gradually send those already in its refugee camps back out to sea, sent spasms of justifiable shock through the international community. Those announcements were considerably less shocking in the "garbage pits" of Southeast Asia. The difference in response reveals two basic themes. The first is internal to the Southeast Asian nations, where communal tensions and balances create chronic instability, especially for the ethnic Chinese. The second, which flows from the first, is international and creates situations in which, once again, the messenger is held responsible for the message. Unless both are understood, the helpless refugees will continue to pay with their lives.

Malaysia is itself perhaps the best case in point. Like the other Southeast Asian nations, Malaysia is riven by ethnic antagonisms. At least as much an uneasy modus vivendi of mutually hostile communities as a coherent nation of equal citizens, Malaysia's ethnic balance is particularly delicate. The population is divided among Malays (50 per cent), Chinese (35 per cent), Indians (10 per cent), and "other" (5 per cent), but the real division is a 50/50 Malay/non-Malay split. That cleavage infuses and animates politics (putatively controlled by the Malays) and economics (putatively controlled by the Chinese). The population, now something over 12 million, grows between 2 and 3 per cent per annum, in part because each side is afraid the fragile equivalence will be disturbed by the growth of the other. Any advance by one--