

The "hidden"

In no other country in the world are more people being killed, and more refugees created, than Afghanistan. Of the world's 10 million refugees, fully one-half are from Afghanistan. This represents one-third of the entire country's population - a phenomenally high percentage that goes far beyond the usual refugee problems created by war.

"As many as half a million people have been killed since 1979. Human rights groups (including Amnesty International) have alleged the Soviets use poison gas, torture, and commit other atrocities on their opponenets. Countless villages and

accounts given by Soviet army defectors, Afghan refugees, and the occasional journalist who has been smuggled across the border.

Prelude to the Invasion

When Soviet troops entered Afghanistan on Christmas eve, 1979, the reason was not because they sought to seize control of the government, but rather to prevent the already Soviet-controlled government from losing power to the Afghan rebels. Upon completion of this objective, their subsequent goal was to consolidate their power inside the country.

position. When the regime replaced English with Russian as the required foreign language and adopted a national flag modeled after those of several Soviet republics, most Afghans recognized its communist intentions.

Some of the positive reforms instigated by the Marxist regime included the cancellation of agricultural debts, land redistribution, abolition of the bride price and purdah (the traditional veil for women).

Nevertheless, the replacement of the local elite with the regime's own party bureaucracy and other radical changes adopted were

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towns have been destroyed." (Canada & The World, May, 1983).

Many refugees have reported the use of napalm and "Yellow Rain", a lethal chemical which causes an agonizing death through blistering, vomiting, and internal bleeding. It is conduct such as this which has precipitated by far the world's largest refugee problem.

Despite these horrid statistics, the events inside Afghanistan have been seldom publicized because of a Soviet ban on journalists entering the country. News about Afghanistan has had to rely upon the

Significant Soviet influence inside Afghanistan spread after the leftist coup in 1973. A sudden crackdown by the government against the communists in 1978 sparked a Soviet-led coup that placed the Soviets in firm control of the government.

As a result, within six months 30 agreements were concluded between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. Afghan newspapers began reprinting articles from Tass and Pravada. Afghan representatives at the U.N. and at nonaligned meetings faithfully echoed the Soviet

viewed by most Afghans as efforts to break the traditional social and religious structure of Afghan society.

As noted in Tahir Amin's research published in *Asian Survey* of April, 1984: "The Marxist regime was unacceptable to nearly all strata of Afghan society...widespread arrests, massacres and executions of opponents provoked country-wide resistance. According to one estimate, the resistance controlled 23 of 28 provinces by December 1979, on the eve of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan."

Soviet Strengths, Tactics, and Weaknesses

One of the greatest advantages the Russians possess is their technologically-advanced weaponry. Unlike the rebels, the Soviets have unlimited use of weapons such as tanks, helicopter gunships, and MIG fighter-bombers which are used to flatten villages and attack rebel outposts. Because of this military advantage, Soviet losses in the war - estimated to be 20,000 - are but a fraction of the number of losses the guerrillas have suffered.

Although the Soviets and the

"...the women and small killed with grenades."

rebel forces each number about 100,000, the Soviets also have 40,000 Afghan conscripts fighting for them. However, the number of Afghan conscripts has fallen dramatically since the Soviet invasion because "civilians have done their best to escape forced conscription drives" and large-scale desertions from the Afghan army to Afghan guerrillas occur almost daily. (*Time*, Jan. 9/84).

Even financially the Russians are not suffering, because the cost of maintaining the Soviet presence, estimated at \$8 million a day, is financed from Afghan exports (e.g. oil) to the U.S.S.R.

In most wars, it is the military which are the prime targets. In Afghanistan it is the civilians.

Because of the country-wide civ-



The Afghan rebels, called "Mujahideen", have defied many predictions of a Soviet Victory

Rebel Strengths, Tactics and Weaknesses

"The Islamic faith is the force behind our jihad (holy war)" explained Rebel Unit Commander Mohammad Anwar. Morale is high because to die while fighting "godless communism" for Allah is to ensure a place in heaven.

Other advantages the rebels have over the Soviets are that most of the Afghans have been fighters since childhood and it is part of their culture to own and use weapons. Furthermore, they have a superior knowledge of the terrain and have nearly complete support of the population.

In addition to ambushing Soviet military convoys and depots, the guerrillas plant mines, set up road blocks, blow up bridges, destroy powerhouses, cut telephone lines, and assassinate government party members. They have also been very successful in penetrating the intelligence networks within the government. The fact that the reb-

els today control some 80% of the country underlines their military power.

However, the Afghan rebels lack the "Mujahideen", without their weaknesses their greatest weakness is of political unity. Their religious differences have divided their forces but occasionally resulted in fighting themselves. Furthermore, thousands of Afghans themselves for KHAD, the Afghan KC has enabled the Soviets to isolate and weaken the Mujahideen resistance.

Other problems plaguing the rebels include poor nutrition, a lack of both medical and medical assistance wounded, and a shortage of ammunition. In fact, some estimates have indicated that as 80 per cent of the Mujahideen's weapons are those made captured from the Russians themselves.

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