
Interview: Prof. Marek Sliwinski

Geneva researcher documents Soviet genocide in Afghanistan

Marek Sliwinski, a lecturer in political science at the University of Geneva, has completed a new study documenting, with numerical data, the extent of devastation and killing caused by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and by Soviet military actions since then. The study, soon to be released by the International Afghan Bureau in Paris, was done on behalf of the bureau and three other groups: Médecins sans frontières (Doctors Without Borders), the Swedish Committee on Afghanistan, and the International Catholic Child Bureau. The research was also supported by the office of Claude Malhuret, French Secretary of State for Human Rights. On March 1, Professor Sliwinski gave a telephone interview on the report's findings to EIR correspondent Mark Burdman.

EIR: From early published accounts of your data, for example a short note in *Le Figaro* today, on what has been happening in Afghanistan since the Soviets invaded, you would seem to be documenting one of the great massacres of the 20th century.

Sliwinski: Yes. The first figure we have is that after 10 years of war, it was 9% of the population that was killed. If we compare this with the available data of the Second World War, the rate is higher than what the Soviets suffered in the war; 8.6% of the Soviet population was killed in the war. We are not counting the actions of the concentration camps or the gulags, only victims of hostilities.

Also, we have data that about 80% of the killed population in Afghanistan are civilian victims. For example, the women and the boys under 15, and men over 55, constitute 52% of the victims. Also, it is absolutely clear, that all between over-15 and 55 are not necessarily guerrillas. So, our calculations are that the civilian populations are 80% of the victims. Now, there are other facts that are very important. For example, we have to answer the question, who was really responsible for the deaths, the Soviets or the resistance? Well, 46% of those killed were by bombings, and the Afghan resistance have no aircraft. So, that alone shows that 46% of the victims were killed by Communist forces. Other figures, for artillery and bullets, lead to similar conclusions, when we know what both sides have and don't have. What is the incidence of [those] killed by bombings, among all killings? Among the men, aged 21-30 years, only 27% have been

killed by bombings. When we speak about women, in the 30-40 year age group, 92% are killed by bombings.

We have shown, finally, that the efficiency of aerial bombing against guerrillas was limited, but with the civilian population without defense, it is really horrible.

EIR: What other data have you compiled?

Sliwinski: We can distinguish five different phases. First, there was the civil war, before Soviet intervention, when deaths from fighting were between 3 and 6 per 1,000 per year, although then, the exodus of Afghans was very strong. Second, is after the Soviet intervention, during the late Brezhnev era, the losses of the civilian population were 7 per 1,000 per year.

Third, the situation changed very radically after Andropov came in, and the total reached 11 per 1,000 per year. The fourth phase, the maximum, is under Chernenko, when it reached 16 per 1,000 per year.

The fifth phase is under Gorbachov, where the total decreases slightly, to 12-13 per 1,000 per year, which is also very high. But, under Gorbachov, we don't observe any decrease of injured. In fact, the *intensity* of the war increases all the time. What kept deaths down for the Afghan resistance, was the acquisition of Stingers, killed then decreases to 9 per 1,000 per year. But other data, from the Institute for Strategic Studies, shows that if you take 1984 as the base year for intensity of military engagements, and give that base year the value 100, the number is 118 in 1985, 228 in 1986, and 260 in 1987. This measures the *number* of military engagements, not necessarily the magnitude.

EIR: Why such a rise from 1984 to 1987?

Sliwinski: Two reasons. One, unfortunately, is the Geneva peace talks on Afghanistan. The Soviets are seeking to force the issue. The other reason is the equipment of the Afghan resistance.

EIR: What is your estimation of the total population of Afghanistan before the Soviets invaded?

Sliwinski: That is the big question. There are two estimates, both reasonable. One is 12 million. The other, based on a national census in 1979, was estimated at 15.5 million. There

were problems with that census, however, and I think it was less. I take the average figure, slightly less than 14 million. So, it is out of that, that we see 1.2 million killed, and 5 million living in exodus, 3 million in Pakistan, 2 million in Iran.

EIR: What has happened to the village populations?

Sliwinski: The villages have been depopulated. Around 1979, 85% of the population lived in villages, now it's about 23%.

EIR: In view of everything you're documenting, do you think any settlement of Afghanistan, should it be reached, should include insistence on reparations paid by the Russians? There is all this talk these days of "war crimes," shouldn't there be consideration of *Soviet* war crimes?

Sliwinski: That depends not on the Soviets, but on the attitude of Western countries. With the interest of Western countries in relations with the Soviet Union, I am afraid this question will not be discussed. Certainly not in the United Nations. When we present such figures, these things are censored by the U.N. So, it is difficult to hold the Soviets responsible for what has happened in Afghanistan.

EIR: What other data would you want to draw attention to?

Sliwinski: What happened in the villages. Before the war, 15% of the Afghan population was urban, 85% village, rural. Since 1979, 33% of the population has left for the outside. 11% are refugees inland; 9% are dead. The urban population has increased from 15 to 24%. Rural has gone from 85 to 23%. The problem is one of vast social disintegration, a problem greater in magnitude even than the civilian losses. This will be the overwhelming problem if there is a Soviet withdrawal, a postwar Afghanistan. But there is another complication, an ethnic complication. *Before* the war, among the Afghans, 40% of the population were Pathans, 26% were Tadzhiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks were each about 10%, and there were others. But, among the refugees, 85% are Pathans. So, the population in Afghanistan is now about 20% Pathans, and Tadzhiks have become the predominant ethnic group, followed by the Hazaras and Uzbeks. This is absolutely conscious Soviet policy, to make the population of Afghanistan as similar as possible to that of the Soviet Central Asian republics. As people in Europe would see, this becomes an argument for territorial annexation, as happened after World War II. Then, there is the Wakhan corridor, at the extreme east of Afghanistan, on the way from Afghanistan to China. It was annexed by the Soviets, because it is so strategically crucial. Annexed *de facto*. The Kirghiz population was expelled, and now live in Turkey. The Wakhan corridor is now occupied absolutely by KGB forces.

This restructuring of the country, ethnically, by the Soviets, is the most important problem that we face *if* the war stops.

East bloc nations near to explosion

by Konstantin George

National unrest and unbearable economic conditions in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, especially Poland, pose the question: Will Gorbachov be out before Reagan? The growing internal crisis in the Soviet Union is destroying the image of glasnost and perestroika. However, welcome these developments are, there can be no illusions of a "Crumbling Empire." The Russian Empire will move to suppress the Captive Nations within the Empire proper, and, should revolts erupt in Eastern Europe, militarily intervene.

Russia's leaders are obsessed with plans for an early seizure of Western Europe—whether by military or other means—as the "solution" to the economic-political crisis afflicting the Empire. In this regard, aggressive power projections outward can be expected, and an escalation of the stick-and-carrot offensive against West Germany.

Internally, Russian chauvinism will be promoted more than ever. The signal was given at the Feb. 17 Central Committee Plenum by Politburo member Yegor Ligachov, who called for a crackdown against non-Russian nationalist manifestations.

The near-revolt in the East bloc provides a tool to shatter prevailing illusions in the West concerning the Russian Empire. Even as corrupt, liberal elites in the West are in the advanced phase of negotiating a "New Yalta" with the Russian Empire, the victims of the old Yalta and Potsdam agreements are delivering an indelible message to the West, as to what it means to live under Russian hegemony. The East bloc unrest will soon force the Russians to show their true colors. Europeans and Americans will no longer have the psychological buffer of distance to block out Russian atrocities, as has been the case concerning faraway Afghanistan.

The crackdown will not be possible in a short, condensed period. The events in Armenia and Azerbaijan (see page 48) are paralleling eruptions in the Baltic and Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland, Romania, and Hungary. Soviet-dictated looting and austerity policy have produced a collapse of living standards unimaginable to most in the industrial West.