

Communists at center of Central Asia wars

by Adam East

The bloody war in Tajikistan, which could easily spread into neighboring Central Asian republics in the not so distant future, continues to go on unnoticed by the rest of the world. So far, over 70,000 people have fallen victim to the atrocities of the former communists, and over 10% of the country's 5.1 million people have been turned into refugees.

Tanks displaying the communist hammer-and-sickle flag are patrolling the streets of Dushanbe, the capital. Acting President Imamil Rakhmanov, a former communist who seized power in December 1992, recently told reporters that he is prepared to "use whatever measures necessary" to wipe out the opposition, the backbone of which is formed by the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP).

According to the latest reports from the region, the soon-to-be-reinforced Russian 201st motorized division, which helped Rakhmanov and company come to power, is now actively helping the government. Russian tanks and bombers are now engaged in the fighting against the Islamic forces.

A terror campaign

Rakhmanov, who is backed by the old-guard communists who have been ruling the country for the past six decades, has recently started a terror campaign against prominent intellectuals and the educated class who had earlier sided with the opposition. The groups that make up the opposition are Orthodox Muslims, liberal intellectuals, and leaders and representatives from the regions that were long excluded from power since the days of Stalin, mainly Garm in the northeast and the mountainous Badakhshan region in the east. Armed vigilante groups are patrolling the streets of Dushanbe, and anyone that appears suspicious to them is arrested and taken in for questioning, which obviously includes torture. Most of the notable political and intellectual figures in the country who have disappeared mysteriously over the past two months, have not been seen since. It would be safe to assume that most of them are dead by now.

As a result of the "ethnic cleansing" that is being carried out against the Muslim civilian population, over 100,000 Tajik refugees have fled to the bleak deserts of northern Afghanistan. Without adequate food or shelter, they are in

danger of starvation or freezing to death.

The Islamic forces, who to the pleasure of the West are conveniently branded as "Muslim fundamentalists" by Moscow and its puppet regime in Tajikistan, are gradually losing ground to the communists. Faced with Russian helicopter gunships, bombers, and fighter jets, the ill-equipped Islamic guerrillas are suffering heavily from lack of an effective air-defense. Chinese- and Soviet-made assault rifles and some rocket-propelled grenades are all that the poorly trained Muslim guerrillas have to rely on against the well-armed Russian troops and pro-government militias. Driven out of the capital and southwestern Tajikistan late last year, the opposition forces have now been forced into the mountains, and the Garm Valley has now become the new front-line.

The die-hard puppet President Rakhmanov has been recently reported as saying: "We want the 201st to stay in Tajikistan for the next five to six years." The initial excuse given for the deployment of the Russian troops to Tajikistan was for "peacekeeping" purposes and "safeguarding" the Russian minority, which makes up only about 10% of Tajikistan's population of a little over 5 million people.

Uzbekistan police state

Neighboring Uzbekistan, led by another former communist, Islam Karimov, also played an instrumental role in helping fellow communists come to power in Tajikistan. Karimov, who saw the opposition in Tajikistan as an ideological threat to himself, more than willingly provided the Tajik communists with arms and troops. Karimov, who was dismayed with the breakup of the former Soviet Union, rules with an iron fist and has turned the country into a virtual police state. Here, repression is the order of the day. Arbitrary arrests, phone taps, press censorship, and beatings are all too common in Uzbekistan.

While it is no secret that Iran and Turkey are competing for influence in this area because of obvious linguistic, cultural, and ethnic ties, it is actually the Russian bear who dearly wants to keep the republics under its claws for economic and geopolitical reasons. Not too long ago this area of the world served as the chess board for the "Great Game" which was being played by Britain and Russia.

If we look at the map from the Balkans to Central Asia, we see that there are conflicts which have been strategically instigated. There are wars in former Yugoslavia, the Caucasus, Tajikistan, and the ongoing war in Afghanistan. These conflicts effectively prevent this entire region from undertaking any sort of meaningful economic development. The area from Turkey and Iran through Central Asia and Afghanistan all the way to northern India, which was the center of a great civilization about eight centuries ago, has been turned into a battleground. Fearing the end of its world supremacy and the collapse of its rotten economies, the West is promoting policies of war, famine, and depopulation in this area, thereby ensuring the region remains in perpetual backwardness.