

# **Conflict in the Soviet Union**

## **Tadzhikistan**

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Tadzhikistan**

**August 1991**

**A Helsinki Watch Report**

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## **Introduction**

**Tadzhikistan, a poor and remote republic in Soviet Central Asia, is bounded by Afghanistan to the south, China to the east, the Soviet republic of Uzbekistan to the west and the Soviet Republic of Kyrgystan to the north. High in the Pamir mountains, Tadzhikistan has been the site of Buddhist monasteries, the medieval Silk Route, Zoroastrian shrines, and now is home to a rapidly growing number of mosques.**

**Tadzhikistan, with a total population of 5,100,000, has the highest percentage of rural residents of any Soviet republic. Tadzhiks make up 58 percent and Uzbeks 23 percent of its population. Russians and Ukrainians make up another 11 percent, while the remaining 7 percent is made up of small Jewish, German, Armenian, Gypsy and other minorities. The Tadzhiks are an Iranian people, distinct from the Turkic Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen with whom they share Soviet Central Asia. As a result, many Tadzhiks "look south" to their ethnic kin in Iran, Afghanistan and India, feeling isolated in "Turkic" Soviet Central Asia.**

**Recently, as religious observance has increased in the USSR, Sunni Islam has been on the rise in Tadzhikistan. While possible Islamic fundamentalism cannot be discounted, devout Muslim Tadzhiks interviewed by Helsinki Watch, including a village *mullah*, denied it plays a key role in the republic. No one would deny, however, that Sunni Islam now plays an increasingly important role in Tadzhik society.**

**Since most Tadzhiks are rural workers, Tadzhik society is conservative. Standards of rural education are poor -- as is the case with health care -- and so most Tadzhiks eke out a hard living, mainly from the cotton fields. Massive and chronic misuse of agricultural chemicals has debilitated public health, particularly among rural workers. This "cotton monoculture" syndrome of almost total economic dependency on a cotton crop hazardous to health is also widespread in Turkmenia and Uzbekistan.**

**Although Soviet statistics are far from reliable, it is generally recognized that Tadzhikistan holds last place in the USSR on many major socio-economic indices. For example, Tadzhikistan has the highest rate of infant mortality in the Soviet Union, making it, some say, the eleventh highest in the world. Tadzhikistan may well be the poorest Soviet republic.**

**As in other Soviet Central Asian republics, Tadzhikistan has been ruled by a local Communist Party elite, blended with traditional clan elements. The northern Tadzhik clan centered in Leninabad has been the dominant political group for most of the Soviet period.**

**Urbanization -- mainly migration from *kishlaks* (Tadzhik villages) to the capital city of Dushanbe -- has long been seen as the best way to improve one's standard of living. Such relocations, plus chronic shortfalls in housing construction, have led to severe housing shortages. According to official Tadzhikistan sources, the republic has the worst housing shortage in the Soviet Union.**

\* \* \* \* \*

**In early February 1990, rumors began circulating that Armenians fleeing pogroms in Baku had been given apartments in Dushanbe; the city was soon abuzz. After all, many local families had waited decades for apartments. Angry meetings were held on February 10 and 11 to protest what seemed to be preferential treatment for Armenians. On February 11, some government officials tried to reassure the 2,500 protestors in the Central Committee square that Armenian refugees had gone to live with relatives and had**

**not been allotted any housing.**

**Seeking further reassurances, protestors gained a promise from Tadzhikistan First Party Secretary Makhkamov to speak with them in the Central Committee square at 3 p.m. on February 12. Makhkamov turned up late, offered vague assurances, and the crowd grew angry. A few demonstrators threw stones at the Central Committee and troops.**

**The official report of the Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Presidium which investigated the February events (henceforth referred to as the Supreme Soviet report) noted that lethal force had been used even before the declaration of a state of emergency, resulting in nine deaths of demonstrators:**

**On February 12, before the declaration of a state of emergency and the curfew, between 3:30 p.m. and 8 p.m., 46 people sustained bullet wounds and nine of them died.**

**This unjustified use of lethal force by armed forces against initially peaceful demonstrators set in motion a tragic chain of events. The Supreme Soviet report also concluded that:**

**...(T)hese casualties could have been avoided if the republic leadership had met with the protesters -- after having prepared properly ... Despite the complicated situation, the size and anger of the crowd, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) forces, the KGB border troops and a USSR Ministry of Defense detachment mobilized to guard the Central Committee building had all the necessary means to refrain from the use of firearms and, thereby, to avoid bloodshed.**

**Early on, Dushanbe residents were told by the top party official, First Party Secretary Makhkamov, that they could not look to their government for protection. He went on TV and radio to announce that citizens should protect and arm themselves. The same day, on February 12, Makhkamov imposed a state of emergency and a curfew.**

**On February 13, a large crowd gathered again in Central Committee square and gained the release of 60 protestors who had been arrested the previous day. Increasingly, popular anger at the brutal killings of the demonstrators was expressed in a demand that the three top republic leaders resign. The armed forces again fired at demonstrators. Looting began, first near the Central Committee square, and then gradually in other parts of the city.**

**February 13 saw the formation of the Committee of 17, comprising demonstrators' and government representatives, and chaired by Buri Karimov, head of the republic Gosplan. The Committee of 17 began to serve as a focus for the increasingly radical political demands of the crowd on the square.**

**Public pressure for Makhkamov's resignation became so great that he did, in fact, resign on February 13 along with two other republic leaders. The resignation of the top republic party leadership was announced on local television and a provisional government was declared. The victory of the anti-Makhkamov forces was short-lived. An emergency session of the republic party plenum on February 13 gave Makhkamov a vote of confidence, thereby reinstating him.**

**The citizens of Dushanbe, abandoned by their government, protected themselves as best they could. Many Dushanbe residents said it was only the self-defense units, which sprang up all over the city, which protected ordinary citizens from the excesses of the mob. In fact, from February 15 to 18, a mob**

**"ruled" the city.**

**Despite their brutal methods, or perhaps because of them, Soviet armed forces had difficulty restoring order to the city. The Supreme Soviet report blamed an obsession with protecting the Central Committee site for the military's lack of success in protecting the public:**

**Top MVD officials moved their units away from the rest of the city to the area of the Central Committee building. The troops thereby neglected to protect important economic and trade sites, offices and, most important, residences. This major strategic error was never rectified, even after gangs of hooligans began to loot stores and commit arson against means of transportation as well as to attack city residents.**

**It is likely, of course, that the MVD officials had not committed a "major strategic error," but rather they were following orders.**

**In Soviet strategic planning for "mass disorders" -- as such situations are called in the USSR -- it is the Central Committee, the Council of Ministers and the Supreme Soviet buildings and their occupants that are almost the sole focus of official concern. This is reflected in the existence of a special MVD 200,000-man unit, known as the "*Okhrana*" (Guard), of which 80,000 men are assigned to guard Party and governmental premises nationwide. (Glasnost in Jeopardy, Helsinki Watch, 1991, p. 118)**

**February 18 marked a break with the previous dark week. Despite the restrictions on public assembly stipulated under the state of emergency laws, some 15,000 people gathered at the city's main movie theater. There, the mostly Tadzhik crowd listened to Muslim religious leaders and others discuss how they could end the murder and mayhem on the Dushanbe streets. After this meeting, the violence ebbed.**

**\* \* \* \* \***

**The crucial questions of how the troops were summoned from outside the republic, and by whom, is addressed in the Supreme Soviet report:**

**After an oral request from republic leaders, G.P. Pallaev and K.M. Makhkamov -- and on the advice of Mikhail Gorbachev, Chairman, USSR Supreme Soviet and Dimitri Yazov, USSR Minister of Defense -- orders were given to deploy military detachments of the Turkestan Military District into the city of Dushanbe. First, 1068 military personnel were brought in. On February 14, 790 more paratroopers were redeployed from Armenia.**

**Tadzhikistan First Party Secretary Makhkamov bears primary responsibility for summoning additional troops. It is also clear, however, that President Gorbachev was informed. It is not so clear, however, exactly *when* Makhkamov summoned additional troops from outside the republic. Most likely, it was either late on February 12 or sometime during February 13.**

**The question of timing is particularly important because it sheds light on Makhkamov's motivation. The later the additional troops were summoned, the more likely it is that Makhkamov was primarily motivated by a desire to preserve his own political position. Certainly, Makhkamov had already shown in his public pronouncements that he was barely concerned with the public protection and welfare.**



**Although the Supreme Soviet report does not address the ticklish issue of Makhkamov's motivation in summoning extra troops, it does shed some light on USSR Defense Minister Yazov's official reasons for sending the extra troops:**

**An official letter from Comrade Dimitri Yazov (letter No. 312/1/159) shows that he had approved deployment of troops in the city because some of its residents had allegedly attacked military installations as well as military personnel and their families.**

**Apparently, in making his case to Yazov and Gorbachev, Makhkamov must have painted a scene of murder and mayhem. Yet no eyewitnesses even mentioned attacks on military installations, and attacks on military personnel most likely were limited to stone-throwing. Of course, it is also possible that Yazov and Gorbachev were well aware that Makhkamov was actually fighting for his political life. Keeping Makhkamov in power may have been the real, if unstated, reason for the deployment of troops from outside the republic. (In January 1990, Defense Minister Yazov had stated that maintaining communist control in Azerbaidzhan was the reason for the armed forces' bloody intervention in Baku.)**

**The Supreme Soviet report also noted that:**

**From February 12 through 14, 117 people sustained bullet wounds, and 21 of them fatal. The total death count reached 25, including four people killed with knives and other weapons.**

**Indeed, the Supreme Soviet report condemned the use of lethal force:**

**The use of firearms and combat technology by military personnel deployed in order to defend the sites constituted violations of the law outside their legal authority. This led to increased casualties and heightened anger among the population.**

**Senior republic officials, however, denied that the troops had fired at demonstrators -- but they also confirmed that the protestors had not used guns:**

**In an interview, republic KGB Chairman V.V. Petkel and Internal Affairs Minister M. Navzhuvanov and the commanders of military detachments No. 5453 and 6593, stated that their personnel had not shot at protesters and had not carried firearms. They also confirmed that there are no documented instances of use of firearms by the demonstrators.  
(Supreme Soviet report)**

**\* \* \* \* \***

**How were the February events in Dushanbe interpreted, both inside the republic and in the Soviet Union at large? By now, bloody clashes between demonstrators and police, or communal violence, have become frequent in the Soviet Union. A series of official clichés has emerged on this sad subject.**

**For example, the protestors are presented as drunk or drugged. Many residents, particularly the Russian-speaking population of Dushanbe, endorsed that official view. Numerous eyewitnesses (and the author of this report who saw a documentary film on these events), however, concurred that the demonstrators were neither drugged or drunk.**

**Another simplifying myth is that the majority nationality (in this case Tadzhiks) lashed out against minorities (in this case Russians, Jews, Germans, etc.) Here again, the Russian-speaking population of Dushanbe tended to support this view. Tadzhiks and eyewitnesses, regardless of nationality, disputed this view.**

**Though it is impossible to discount ethnic enmity as a factor, an examination of official statistics (in the Supreme Soviet report) of those wounded and killed disproves the standard Soviet view of such events. A look at the names of those killed in the Central Committee square shows that with two exceptions, (one man had a Russian last name, but a Tadzhik patronymic; the other was a Russian film maker from Lenfilm) they were all Tadzhiks. Lists of the wounded reveal that they were almost equally divided between Russian-speakers (56.5 percent) and Tadzhiks (43.5 percent.)**

**The conspiratorial view that such violent events were "planned," "coordinated" or "orchestrated" by a secret group or groups, is the hardest aspect of the cliché with which to grapple. Many Soviet citizens are prone to see conspiracies, particularly in events as sinister as these. Some of the most popular candidates as the "powers behind" the February events are: criminal elements; Azerbaidzhani radicals; the party "Mafia"; fundamentalist Muslim clergy; Makhkamov and his allies; Karimov and the others who attempted a party coup; and a new unofficial political group, *Rastokhez***

**Many Tadzhiks thought the Makhkamov clique had organized the February events, as it stood to gain the most. In this connection, some political activists pointed to the fact that republic-level parliamentary elections were due to be held two weeks after the February events. Those Supreme Soviet elections, scheduled for February 24, 1990, would have been a key test for the local power elite headed by First Party Secretary Makhkamov. Given the conservative nature of republic politics, however, it is unlikely that the Party would have lost control over the Tadzhikistan parliament. Nevertheless, some view those elections as having been a possible motivation for the Party to "scare the people" into greater conservatism at the polls by stimulating the February events. Tadzhik officials saw Karimov and his fellow conspirators as the orchestrators of the events, assisted by *Rastokhez*, a frequent *bete noir* among the Russian-speaking population of Dushanbe. Lastly, many thought the events were a consequence of the accumulated socio-economic grievances of the young people of the republic.**

**The Supreme Soviet Commission also tried to reach some conclusions on the issue of who, if anyone, had organized the February events:**

**Materials and facts available to the commission indicate that Comrades Karimov, Tabarov, Khuvaydullayev, Khabibov, Mukhabashtoyev and Usmanov (i.e., -- those who led the coup effort) played no part in organizing the unsanctioned meetings that occurred on February 12 through 18.**

**Investigation materials and official letters from the republic KGB and procuracy indicate that the registered clergy and the informal organization *Rastokhez* were not shown to have organized the unsanctioned meetings of February 11 through 18, attempting to form an Islamic republic and employing unconstitutional tactics to draft a Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Presidium *ukaz* which relieved I. Kh. Khayoyev of his post as Council of Ministers Chairman replacing him with B. B. Karimov.**

\* \* \* \* \*

Political life in Tadzhikistan was inevitably changed by the tragic days in February 1990. Although the republic government remained in the hands of the hidebound Makhkamov and his cronies, even they were eventually compelled to allow an official investigation.

Apparently, the fact that an investigation was ordered is due to Shodmon Yusupov, a Tadzhik intellectual, who went on a prolonged fast to protest the lack of any inquiry into the February events. He demanded to know: Why were children and young people killed? Why was a curfew declared -- and by whom? Who summoned the army? Who was to blame? Yusupov's fast was reported both in the local and Moscow press. Finally, the intelligentsia convinced Yusupov to end his fast by promising an official investigation, both by the procuracy and by the Supreme Soviet.

The 17 members of the Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Presidium Commission to Investigate the Events of 12 - 14 February, 1990 in Dushanbe produced a 55-page report. The report described the total lack of cooperation it encountered from the republic KGB, MVD, and procuracy. Access to crucial medical records was denied to the commission. Nevertheless, despite bureaucratic stonewalling, and despite their own political blinders as loyal communists, the commission members did a creditable job.

Unfortunately, however, few in Tadzhikistan have had the opportunity to read the entire Supreme Soviet report. Only the five-page conclusions -- which appears as an appendix to this report -- were published in the local press. Tadzhik political activists have asserted that the Supreme Soviet Commission was forced to change its findings to make them more palatable to the local powers-that-be. As far as is known, the commission's strong call for the republic KGB, MVD and procuracy to investigate the use of lethal force during the February events -- including, of course, the 25 fatalities -- has fallen on deaf ears.

In the longer term, the February events led to the founding of a new political party in the republic. Shodmon Yusupov is now the chairman of the Democratic Party of Tadzhikistan. The leaders of *Rastokhez* say they also want to build a truly democratic civil society in their republic. Thus, ironically, the tragic February events have contributed to the modest beginnings of a civil society in Tadzhikistan.

On a less optimistic note, however, Tadzhikistan is unlikely to overcome its unenviable status as the poorest republic in the USSR. Such poverty, combined with greater social and ethnic tension in the wake of the February events, has led to increased emigration by the often well-trained Russian-speakers.

\* \* \* \* \*

Helsinki Watch sent two missions to Tadzhikistan to try to achieve a greater understanding of the human rights situation in that remote society and, more particularly, the events of February 1990. In May 1990, Helsinki Watch Executive Director Jeri Laber and Washington Director Catherine Cosman briefly visited Dushanbe. Later that year, in November, Catherine Cosman returned to Tadzhikistan with Helsinki Watch Consultant Ludmilla Alexeeva.

During these visits, Helsinki Watch spoke with a wide variety of people in and around Dushanbe, including leaders of *Rastokhez*, the "Migration" group, and the Democratic Party; Russian, Tadzhik, and mixed-ancestry witnesses to, and participants in, the February events; a *mullah*, a Russian geologist; a

**German leader of a self-defense unit; the Tadzhik director of a documentary film on the February events; a Russian business man; a Tadzhik Orientalist; a Russian labor activist; and several Tadzhik film makers and writers.**

**In addition, Helsinki Watch had the opportunity to view a documentary film-in-the-making about the February events, including considerable footage of the Central Committee square protests. A Tadzhik political activist also presented Helsinki Watch with a rare copy of the Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Presidium Commission official report on the February events.**

**Helsinki Watch thanks all those in Dushanbe who took so much time and trouble to share their observations of the tragic events of February 1990. In the present political atmosphere in the republic, it is, unfortunately, still not without risk for people to speak so frankly about this important topic.**

## **Background to the February Events**

### **Socio-Economic Problems**

Many agree that poverty was at the root of popular unrest in Tadjikistan. As the Supreme Soviet report states: "The republic in all basic socio-economic indices falls far behind the national level." The report cites statistics: "In 1987, every person produced 2,130 rubles of wealth, while in Tadjikistan every person produced only 957 rubles." The report attributes this low level of productivity to Tadjikistan's primary role as a producer of raw materials.

In education, the Supreme Soviet report notes, the national spending average was 159 roubles per 10,000 students for specialized education in 1986-1987, while Tadjikistan spent 86. For the same year, statistics showed a national average of 118 students in higher education per 10,000 people, with 200 for the RSFSR and 115 for Tadjikistan. The republic spends 13 times less than developed countries on the education of each student.

Residents of Tadjikistan interviewed by Helsinki Watch fleshed out the statistical accounts. Describing why more Tadjiks leave their republic than any other nationality, a leader of *Rastokhez* pointed out:

By some accounts, we have 750,000 unemployed out of a total population of 5,300,000. In some areas, half or more are unemployed. Housing construction plans are not met, people must wait very long. It may take 15 to 20 years to get an apartment.

If one goes to live in the country, there is no industry, the most common work is picking cotton, under 50-plus degrees (centigrade) of heat, one must work like a dog and one is paid kopecks. The European population does not want to work or live like that.

A Tadjik film maker added:

Most of the Tadjikistan population is agricultural workers. They are paid 25 kopecks for a ton of cotton. The land is poisoned by chemicals. Peasants do not feel they are the masters of their land.

A *Rastokhez* leader described governmental policy on rural labor:

All one has to do is to go to any village. One sees how poorly off they are, yet the government does not allow them to earn money on their own. It claims that people on their own will never earn enough to survive. People are so busy on the land, they never have time to study, nor do their children. The children work alongside their parents in their fields as soon as they come back from school.

### **Environmental Issues**

Another concern, prevalent throughout the Soviet Union, is the environment. The Supreme Soviet report touches lightly on this issue. A Tadjik film maker, however, said:

**Tadzhikistan has the worst [environmental] problems in the USSR. There is an aluminum plant, radioactive waste, three Dushanbe chemical plants. We appeal to the government to deal with these issues, but it refuses to respond. In Faisabad, for example, the cancer rate has quintupled in the last three years.**

**A Tadzhik journalist told Helsinki Watch that a hydroelectric power plant is planned for a beautiful area that lies on a seismic fault.**

## **Health Issues**

**The Supreme Soviet report notes that in Tadzhikistan only 49 roubles per year per person is spent for medical care, while 80 roubles per person per year is the national average. Dushanbe has an annual shortage of 5,000 hospital beds. Tadzhikistan spends 5,000 to 6,000 roubles per hospitalized patient in Dushanbe; the national average is 23,000 to 25,000.**

**These official statistics indicate the dimensions of the public health crisis in Tadzhikistan. Discussing the cotton fields, a Tadzhik writer told Helsinki Watch:**

**From May to October, many children in Tadzhikistan die of dysentery. Doctors take no responsibility. In the cotton fields, DDT and Teodan are used -- although they have been outlawed everywhere else.**

**Cotton is the main element in the life cycle. All women cotton workers have throats so swollen they can hardly breathe. Every year, 685 children are orphaned. Peasants use dried cotton stems for firewood. Cotton oil is full of chemicals, yet it is a basic food staple for the people of Central Asia.**

**A Tadzhik film maker added:**

**Tadzhikistan has one of the highest rates of infant mortality in the world. It is a huge cotton plantation, with women working 16 hours a day in the fields. The land is poisoned by pesticides.**

**The rural population, mostly Tadzhik, is in poor health. Ninety percent of the women suffer from anemia due to pesticides. In 1988, 6,432 children died in six months, more recent figures are not available.**

**Medicine is in such short supply that hospitals often close; it is sold on the black market. Families are so poor that they eat almost nothing but bread and tea. The recent price rises for bread will really affect the poor, since they live mainly on bread.**

## **Womens' Issues**

**In the last few years, several Tadzhik women film makers have begun to make documentary films about social issues which particularly affect women. One film, "Shout," is about women working in the**

cotton fields and was viewed by the author of this report. It shows the working women being sprayed by an airplane which is releasing pesticides on the fields. Their children, who work with them, are dragging heavy sacks. The film also shows ill women going to country hospitals, but they are closed. Only the local *mullah* shows any sympathy and concern for their plight.

## **Language and Cultural Issues**

**A local Russian-speaking artist described a meeting at the Tadjikistan Ministry of Culture in 1989 that illustrated the developing nationality tensions:**

**In the fall of 1989, I was called to the Central Committee to attend a meeting for "Creative Youth" [artists, film people, writers] which had been organized by Tabarov, the Minister of Culture. I was three minutes late. Tabarov spoke in Tadjik without translation, although 30% of the audience did not speak Tadjik. I left the meeting, slamming the door; 20 others later followed me. One Uzbek artist pointed out that it is impolite to speak a language which 30% did not understand.**

**Some Tadjiks, particularly those who are very religious, campaigned for the teaching of the Arabic script in schools. According to official Tadjik media sources, this script was included in some curricula as early as 1989.**

**A language law passed in 1989 that makes Tadjik the official language of the republic is mentioned by the Supreme Soviet report as a source of tension. One Russian-speaking resident of Dushanbe told Helsinki Watch:**

**Everything dates back to this, because no one paid any attention to the opinion of the Russian-speakers. The new law only gives this group formal rights. They are given five years to learn Tadjik.**

**A Russian geologist told us that only 20 or 30 percent of the local Russian-speaking population knows Tadjik well.**

**The need for a new language law, from the Tadjik perspective, was described to us by a Tadjik intellectual:**

**It is clear that if I go to France I have to learn their language and customs and should not expect them to learn Tadjik. Well, the same principle should apply here too. People talk about discrimination against the Russian-speakers, yet no one is concerned about discrimination against the Tadjiks.**

**A Tadjik perspective on the language law was presented to Helsinki Watch by a leader of *Rastokhez***

**The language law opened people's eyes ... A lot of fuss was made ... many people simply did not understand [the law]. Many people say they are leaving because of this law, but cannot describe its provisions.**

**The law is very democratic. The law does not restore 50 to 70% of the legal rights of the Tadjiks.**

**One cannot even talk about a full restoration of their rights. One needs to say that this law mostly exists only on paper ...**

**This *Rastokhez* leader went on to describe some practical effects of the new language law:**

**The language law does not state that the government is obliged to observe its letter and spirit. It exists only on paper. How does discrimination against Tadjiks occur? If he wanted to apply for a job, he could only do so in Russian. Now he can apply in Tadjik.**

**As in many other republics, the new language law in Tadjikistan, whatever its merits, caused sharp anxiety among the local Russian-speaking population. It created a climate in which many non-Tadjiks felt they had to leave the republic so that their children would receive a good education in their native language.**

### **Recent Tadjik History**

**Summarizing the role of clans in recent Tadjik history, an orientalist told Helsinki Watch:**

**Originally, three Tadjik languages were spoken by the three main clans. The three main clans are the northern clan or Khodzhen, centered in Leninabad; the southern or Kulyab; and the Khorog clan from the Pamir mountains.**

**She also described how clan loyalties were used by the Soviets to build political allegiances:**

**The clan which most supported the Soviets was rewarded with political dominance. Usually, however, the other clans got fed up with the situation and overthrew the most powerful clan.**

**A leading Tadjik artistic figure told us of his tragic view of the Tadjik history under Soviet rule:**

**Over 70 years all spiritual culture was prohibited, religion was banned. You know what happened in the 30's, the 40's, and 50's. Tadjikistan suffered particularly. Almost every intellectual, if he wore a *chalma* on his head, was arrested. If he had studied in Germany, Turkey, Bukhara or in a *medresse*, it meant he was against Soviet power. The intelligentsia was exterminated, as happened in Russia, in Georgia and everywhere in the USSR.**

### **Nationality Issues**

#### **Turks and Tadjiks**

**Important to the Tadjiks' national identity is a sense that they are the only major non-Turkic group in Soviet Central Asia. As Ali, the village *mullah*, put it: "Tadjikistan is part of the USSR; we are surrounded by Turks."**

**A *Rastokhez* leader elaborated:**



**People accuse us of pan-Turkism. They do not know we are the only nation here which is not Turkic. Events in Kazakhstan and other places -- Novy Uzen and Fergana in 1989 incidents of violent unrest-- had one basic goal: to drive other nationalities from their territories.**

**Even if the Tadzhiks do not want to drive anyone out of their republic, there is evidence that they want to reclaim territory from a neighboring Turkic republic, Uzbekistan. There is a long-simmering dispute between Tadzhiks and Uzbeks for control of the ancient cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, now in Uzbekistan. (It is important to note that 23 percent of the Tadzhikistan population is Uzbek. Only four percent of the Uzbekistan population is Tadzhik. Many Tadzhiks claim this figure is artificially low due to "Uzbekization.")**

**A *Rastokhez* leader gave us his view of Tadzhik historic claims to Bukhara and Samarkand:**

**All the world knows that we Tadzhiks have been artificially cut off from the roots of our heritage: Samarkand and Bukhara are our culture, our centers. How does discrimination express itself now? Tadzhiks are forced to adopt Uzbek as their official nationality. Do people shut their eyes to this reality? We must demand observance of the most basic human rights.**

**A non-nationalist Russian-Tadzhik artist, an eyewitness to the February events, noted the violent potential of this Uzbek-Tadzhik issue. He claimed that a demand for a return of Bukhara and Samarkand was widespread among the demonstrators from the *kishlaks*.**

**There were shouts for the return of Bukhara and Samarkand. The potential struggle with Uzbekistan over the return of these traditionally Tadzhik areas will be worse than what is now going on in the Caucasus.**

### **Russians and Tadzhiks**

**Ali, the village *mullah*, told Helsinki Watch: "Russians are friends of the Tadzhiks; they have protected us from the Turks." In this view, there is a special bond between Russians and Tadzhiks.**

**Another Tadzhik intellectual told us that Russians "have had the worst of Soviet rule. The Tadzhiks and the Russians are interconnected. All peoples of the USSR have a related fate."**

**Within the government, however, certain key assignments have traditionally been the exclusive preserve of Russian-speaking officials. For example, a Tadzhik film maker noted, "Everywhere, Russians control the personnel section (*otdel kadrov*) which controls personnel decisions and access to housing." The result, according to this view, is that few Tadzhiks live in the center of Dushanbe; this housing is reserved for party officials and Russians.**

### **Armenians and Tadzhiks**

**Apparently there have been friendly relations between Armenians and Tadzhiks, perhaps based on the sense that they are both ancient peoples surrounded by unfriendly Turks. A Tadzhik film maker told us:**

**Tadzhik informal groups are in close contact with Armenian informal groups. The leaders of *Rastokhez* are close to [Armenian President] Ter Petrosian.**

### **Romany: Luli and Dzhami**

**Finally, it should be noted that the Romany (gypsies) have long lived in Tadzhikistan. There are two Romany groups in Tadzhikistan, the Luli and the Dzhami. At least some Romany are settled in villages near Dushanbe.**

### **Religious Issues**

**A Tadzhik orientalist told us that Nasir Khusraf, a Pamir poet, introduced Islam into Tadzhikistan in the twelfth century. Before then, the Tadzhiks had been Zoroastrians.**

**A Tadzhik intellectual talked to us about the interrelationship of Islam, national identity and her republic:**

**Tadzhiks are Sunni, and there are Ismaili in the Pamir mountains. Tadzhiks oppose nation-wide Islam because they would be dominated by Turks. There is tension between Islam and the Persians' traditional religion, Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrians are scattered in Iran, Turkmenia, Azerbaidzhan, India and Afghanistan. Tadzhiks are torn between desire for their own land and sovereignty, versus fear of domination by Turks and threats of fundamentalist Islam.**

**Recently, the influence of Islam has grown considerably in Tadzhikistan. One Tadzhik intellectual estimated that 80 percent of the population is secretly religious, a figure that is consistent with official surveys. Religious belief is particularly strong in the countryside where most Tadzhiks live.**

**Islam is, of course, more than a religion; it is also a way of life. One Tadzhik journalist notes the conservative, consolidating role played by Islam in Tadzhik society: "The population shares and obeys Muslim rules of life. Such obedience and respect holds society together."**

**Even conservative Communist party leaders have felt constrained to allow Islamic religious leaders some television exposure. The Tadzhikistan *kozi kolon* (the *imam* or highest Muslim figure) now appears on republic television ten minutes per month. He had asked for 20 minutes every Friday.**

**Ali, a village *mullah*, told Helsinki Watch that he thinks the situation of religion in the republic has improved:**

**We now have many mosques. We still need many more Korans, particularly in Tadzhik,**

since few of us can read Arabic.

Official Soviet sources concede that Islamic religious figures enjoy great authority in the republic. Interest among youth in religious education – always a particular concern of the Soviet government – has grown apace.

These same official Soviet sources, as early as 1987, reported on the flourishing of unofficial mosques in Tadzhikistan. Though there were then only 30 official mosques in the republic, there were said to be at least 1,000 unofficial ones.

More frightening to the Soviet authorities, as Professor Yaacov Ro'i points out in *Problems of Communism* (July-August 1990), is the resurgence of a traditional Sufi order known as the Wahhabi. This Sunni fundamentalist group, particularly widespread in central and southern Tadzhikistan, seeks a return to Islamic purity. Adherents accuse the Soviet regime of being hostile to Islam – while the Wahhabis themselves denounce official Islam in the USSR – and criticized the Soviet war in Afghanistan on the grounds that the USSR wanted to turn Afghans into infidels.

One Wahhabi *mullah*, Abdullo Saidov, reportedly urged his followers to petition a party congress to establish an Islamic state in Tadzhikistan. According to an official Tadzhikistan press source, he allegedly asked his followers in April 1986 to "virtually take up arms" to achieve this goal. Worried about Saidov's popularity, particularly among the young, the Tadzhikistan authorities arrested him in 1987. *Kommunist Tadzhikistana* (KT) (February 12, 1987) reports that Saidov's followers staged a small demonstration to protest his arrest.

KGB chief V.V. Petkel, probably eager to prove his ideological vigilance, claimed that 1986-1987 saw dozens of trials of "ringleaders, Muslim clerics who not only fanned religious sentiment but also called for a *jihad* against the existing system." (KT, December 30, 1987) He added that these *mullahs* tried to "infiltrate party, soviet, and law enforcement organs to assist in carrying out hostile plans." Petkel rounded out his bouquet of Soviet clichés by linking these Islamic leaders to foreign ideological centers.

By also raising the issue of Soviet draft dodgers in this context, Petkel may have pointed to the key reason for their arrests. In 1987, Soviet troops were still bogged down in Afghanistan. If Muslim clerics were dissuading young Tadzhiks from fighting, their activity would have threatened the war effort – and Tadzhikistan's loyalty to the Soviet army.

One prominent Tadzhik journalist has speculated that popular disillusionment with public protest after the tragic February events may enhance the attraction of fundamentalist Islam:

People have lost faith in demonstrations. If things continue the way they are going, Islamic fundamentalism may become a factor. If that happens, *Rastokhez* members will seek asylum since they fear this.

Reflecting another recent trend in Islam, one Tadzhik told Helsinki Watch of a mid-1990 conference of the National Islamic Party held in Leninabad (northern Tadzhikistan). According to this source, the 300 participants (allegedly accompanied by 3000 body guards) declared their desire to gain political power.

**Some non-Soviet analysts, such as Professor Ro'i, claim that Tadjikistan is more likely than any other Central Asian republic to be receptive to Islamic fundamentalism. One reason he cites is the Tadjiks' Iranian heritage. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the Tadjiks seem to be the most devout Muslim believers, reflecting their remote, conservative, rural society. Tadjikistan, after all, has managed to escape Sovietization more than most Soviet republics.**

## **New Political Groups**

### **First Efforts**

The first recent move to initiate independent political activity was on October 28, 1988 when a meeting was held to organize a popular movement to support *perestroika*. According to a Tadjik couple with whom Helsinki Watch spoke, however, nothing came of this.

A second attempt was made on February 17, 1989 in the Tadjikistan Writers' Union. A group was formed to draw up rules and a program for a new organization. By September, however, the group had done nothing of note.

In a rather remarkable sign of the times, in 1989 the Tadjikistan Central Committee apparently called for the organization of a "Popular Front." There was a general popular boycott of this official venture.

### **"Face-to-Face"**

A leading Tadjik cultural figure told Helsinki Watch of an interesting civic initiative known as "*Rub a ru!*" ("Face to Face"). It began one year before the February events and ended thereafter. Participants included 60 to 70 liberal intellectuals, among them young people active in informal groups, along with the heads of various artistic unions. On the official side, the chairmen of various committees, including MVD, KGB, and youth leaders, were active.

"Face to Face" organized discussions on topics of social and political interest, meeting once a month for three or four hours. During 1989, for example, the group had discussions with all the members of the Tadjikistan Politburo. The topics were agreed upon a month in advance, and participants prepared for the sessions. Summaries were published in the local press.

The discussions were frank and wide-ranging. Topics included medicine in Tadjikistan, culture, and agriculture. Among the officials who took part were the Minister of Health, and the Agroprom [the State Committee for Agricultural Production] chairman; and a report was delivered by the Ministry of Culture.

Previously, the public had never met with high government officials. The *Rub a Ru* meetings made some officials aware that they were isolated. By the fourth or fifth meeting, the participants knew each other and met on a friendly basis in the offices of the Central Committee, of the Council of Ministers, and of the Supreme Soviet. After the imposition of martial law, the Tadjikistan government refused to participate in further discussions with this group.

### *Rastokhez*

*Rastokhez* was formed on September 14, 1989. Many of its members belong to the Writers' Union or to the cultural and technical intelligentsia. Its program consists in trying to revive moribund national cultural traditions, and in attaining freedom of religion. In addition, *Rastokhez* believes that Tadjikistan should normalize relations with neighboring countries, particularly to the south. After all, why should travellers from Tadjikistan to Afghanistan have to go via Moscow?

Several *Rastokhez* leaders held a lengthy meeting with Helsinki Watch in November and explained

**its general program:**

**In Tadjik, *Rastokhez* means "renaissance." The aim of our group is a cultural renaissance, economic and social development, which are serious issues in our society. Our organization is part of a general democratic movement. Although *perestroika* has been proclaimed in our country, it has hardly reached our republic. In order to attain the goals of *perestroika*, one needs to have a mass organization. That is why we organized our group along the lines of a Popular Front so as to mobilize mass efforts for a democratic society.**

**Another *Rastokhez* leader said that his group is based on human rights principles:**

**We are oriented to basic human values. We have put forward proposals, over the last 18 months, and legal and economic draft laws. We propose that our laws should be in accord with international legal norms... [O]ver a year ago we proposed presidential rule.**

***Rastokhez* activists took pains to reject charges of Tadjik nationalism often levelled by the local authorities against their organization:**

**Our group is based on universal democratic principles, we are not even close to nationalism. We want to achieve the rights of all peoples, all nations. We want to attain genuine sovereignty for our republic, both on the economic and the political plane. I think that this goal corresponds to democratic principles ... We think that our republic should have those rights which are promised in the Constitution.**

**In none of our official statements have we ever made nationalist comments. We have never spoken against Russians or members of other nationalities. There is no pan-Turkic question for us. We simply want to resolve our issues justly, as is usual in the civilized world, whether the issues are national or territorial or others.**

**When it comes to the potentially divisive issue of sovereignty, *Rastokhez* seems to adopt a rather moderate position:**

**We want everyone who lives on the territory of Tadjikistan to recognize it as the Tadjik state. Now, most Russians living here view it merely as part of the Russian federation. This is so, although Tadjikistan has its own flag, constitution, etc. But we consider ourselves to be a state such as France or Germany. We think that even if we unite with other republics, we should not lose our sovereignty.**

**On the key issue of economic development, *Rastokhez* declares it wants to move Tadjikistan away from its primary role as supplier of raw-materials:**

**We want new jobs to be created in our republic ... We no longer want to be suppliers of raw materials to other republics. We want to work the raw materials ourselves. We can do it.**

## **Causes of the February Events**

### **Were the February Events Planned?**

One Russian eyewitness to the February events interviewed by Helsinki Watch rejected the popular theory that these events had been organized. He said:

The course of events was too chaotic to have been organized. Many groups later tried to take advantage of these events. Rumors that the events were organized are only to the advantage of those in power or those who do not have enough power to act openly.

Most Dushanbe residents, however, are convinced that the February events were planned. Different ethnic groups tend to blame different villains. Tadjiks we spoke to tended to see either outside agitators from Azerbaidzhan or the Makhkamov ruling group as the culprits. One *Rastokhez* activist speculated that mid-level officials organized the February events since they are fearful of reform. Russian-speakers, on the other hand, tended to blame *Rastokhez*, seeing it as an extremist Tadjik nationalist group.

In support of the contention that the February events were planned, an eyewitness told us:

I had a birthday party in my apartment (overlooking the Central Committee square) on February 10. One 15-year-old girl said that one teacher had told her students to go [that day] to the Central Committee square [where the disorders started].

A very different source, a village *mullah*, also indicated possible foreknowledge of these events. He told Helsinki Watch, "I did not let my people go to the city [Dushanbe] before the events."

A number of those we interviewed blamed Azerbaidzhani radicals as the villains-behind-the-scenes of the February events. A Russian-speaking artist told of a mysterious visitor to his Dushanbe studio:

[A] half-Azeri guy suddenly appeared in my studio, asking to use it. This guy said we are Muslim brothers and started speaking out against Armenians. I told him to leave. Others heard similar stories about such outside agitators.

A leader of *Rastokhez* was also inclined to see Azerbaidzhani radicals, in combination with the local party leadership, as the culprits:

Emissaries came from Azerbaidzhan, a couple dozen. They arrived here in December 1989 to prepare anti-Armenian actions in Tadjikistan and Dushanbe. They got the green light everywhere – at bazaars, hotels and other places where they need money or mafia contacts.

If the anti-Armenian tack had not worked, I am sure there would have been an anti-Semitic one. Or something else. And Russian-speakers, due to their lack of information, became an ace in the hands of the republic leaders. Makhkamov bet on this.

The republic KGB chief, Vladimir Petkel, recently fingered other "outside agitators" who purportedly had played a key role in the February events: Afghan resistance fighters. In an interview with TASS (April 11, 1991) Petkel said:

Dushanbe thugs had been supplied with hemp and other drugs, a large consignment had been smuggled shortly before across the neighboring republic to the Soviet bank of the Pyandzh river. Soviet and mass media reported that during those [February] days, armed Afghan opposition units came close to the Soviet border, waiting for a call for help from the "Tadzhik Muslim brothers."

A Russian-speaking artist, on the other hand, put the blame for the February events squarely at the door of *Rastokhez*

It directed the February events. They may have had the best intentions to get rid of Makhkamov, but if *Rastokhez* led the crowds, it had responsibility for what happened later. It should have understood that the disorders would only benefit the Old Regime. As a result, Russian-speakers only see *Rastokhez* in light of the riots.

Another Russian eyewitness to the first two days of the Central Committee square protests, however, denied that *Rastokhez* was involved in organizing them. He told Helsinki Watch that *Rastokhez* was involved "only after people had been shot."

Reflecting what is probably a more widespread view among the local Russian-speaking population, a recent Russian arrival in Dushanbe told us that *Rastokhez* was behind the February events. He said, "Their instigators organized young people in institutes and trade schools. These young people were given vodka and hashish and were sent on the streets on February 12. They then began a pogrom."

*Rastokhez* activists interviewed by Helsinki Watch vehemently denied that they organized the February events, however.

### **Supreme Soviet Report**

Materials and facts at the disposal of the commission indicate that Comrades Karimov, Tabarov, Khuvaydullayev, Khabibov, Mukhabashtoyev and Usmanov [the leading anti-Makhkamov conspirators] played no part in organizing the unsanctioned meetings that took place on February 12 through 18.

Investigation materials and an official letter from the republic KGB and procuracy indicate that the registered clergy and the informal organization *Rastokhez* were not shown to have organized the unsanctioned meetings of February 11 through 18, trying to set up an Islamic republic and using unconstitutional tactics to draft a Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Presidium *ukaz* which relieved I. Kh. Khayoyev of his responsibilities as Council of Ministers Chairman replacing him with B. B. Karimov.

### **Nationality Issues**

A *Rastokhez* leader maintained that interethnic conflict had never been an element in the February events:



**Rather, it was introduced by the government so as to maintain its grip on power. The government said that it was the protector of the Russian-speaking population and that a new government would be hostile to it. The government posed the Russian-speakers against the Tadzhiks.**

**Another *Rastokhez* leader interviewed by Helsinki Watch put a slightly different spin on the government role in the February events:**

**If these events had not happened, it would have been necessary for the government to provoke them. The government totally controlled the events. It made one error -- it wanted a small event, but it got out of hand. It was all supposed to end on February 11.**

**Taking a totally contrary position, a leader of the Russian-speakers' "Migration" Group maintained that those involved in the February 1990 disorders were motivated by hatred of the "European way of life":**

**We now understand that these events were literally genocide in regard to the European population. This and the acts of vandalism forced and still forces us to leave this republic. Extremist youth not only beat up Russians, they beat up anyone in European clothing, young Tadzhik women. These acts were aimed directly at the entire European way of life. This was an uprising of thousands of people against the European way of life.**

**A Tadzhik journalist claimed that the republic government has officially proclaimed the February events to have been due to interethnic tensions. "The regional party committee *raykom* has said that the riots were ethnically based. It also told people to ignore those who say something different."**

## **Chronology of Events**

### **The Protestors**

A Tadjik eyewitness to the events told Helsinki Watch, "The basic group [of demonstrators] did not change. It was comprised of Tadjik teenagers, mostly from *kishlaks*. They were not from universities, but rather from polytechnical institutes." Another eyewitness agreed that many demonstrators were from *kishlaks* and that they had been among the "worst." A Tadjik participant said that most protestors were men in their twenties. These witnesses' accounts lend credence to the view that unemployed village youths and young people with minimal higher education were key participants.

A Tadjik writer, who tried to quell violence, summed up the motivations of the demonstrators in the Central Committee square: "The first day, people came who have difficulties in their daily lives. The second day, there were people armed with stones. The third day, people came to protest the deaths of other protestors."

On this key issue of the composition of the crowd in Central Committee square, the Supreme Soviet report states:

It must be noted that none of those who were killed with firearms was under influence of alcohol or drugs. They did not join the protests deliberately. All of them had jobs and were given good references.

A few Tadjik sources claimed that a national meeting of criminals on February 10 preceded the February events. It should be noted that other recent disorders in the USSR were also supposedly preceded by such national meetings of criminals. No hard evidence to support any of these claims has been discovered by Helsinki Watch.

A Russian geologist, who has lived in Dushanbe all his life, told Helsinki Watch:

The entire Tadjik population was affected by nationalist propaganda, but it was mainly teenagers from the suburbs who acted. They gathered armed groups from other republics, they drank vodka.

Their goal was to raise the level of the local economy, to get rid of other nationalities, to be in control of their own land. They wanted their own religion, their own language, their own schools, and their own people in the Central Committee. Although the protestors were angry at the government, they turned their anger against Russian-speakers as the embodiment of the government.

### **February 11, "Protests Begin"**

For most people, February 11 marks the first day of what have come to be called the February events. A Tadjik writer gave us a first-hand account of that day:

On February 11, about 200 young people gathered on Lenin Square with four slogans, repeated on

**clearly-written posters. These slogans were written in grammatically correct Russian -- very unusual for Tadzhiks. The posters said: "Armenians, Get Out!" "Consult the People," "We have no place for Traitors."**

**I tried to explain to the demonstrators that these slogans were wrong. The Armenians are long-suffering like the Tadzhiks. They told me how badly they lived, that Armenians were taking their apartments. I told them only Russians are in the city Executive Committee which decides who gets what. What kind of *perestroika* is that?**

**The demonstrators demanded that local leaders come out to talk to them on the street. They asked for microphones, but were denied. The crowd then moved on towards the Central Committee building at about 1 p.m.**

**I left. I later heard that the demonstrators had waited a long time. Makhkamov finally appeared at about 3:30 pm. He agreed with the crowd that it should send representatives to the Central Committee the next day to talk to him. He promised to answer all their questions.**

**Another eyewitness, a Russian labor activist, described what he saw in the Central Committee square on February 11:**

**There were 100 people, mostly Tadzhik students, protesting that Armenians had gotten apartments without waiting their turn. Makhkamov appeared and said that tomorrow at 3 p.m. there would be an official answer to the protestors' demands.**

**This same witness is one of the few who mentioned to us another demonstration, calling for an end to the party monopoly on political power, which took place at the same time in Central Committee square:**

**There was another small demonstration opposite the Council of Ministers building which asked for the removal of Article 6 from the USSR Constitution.**

**A Tadzhik-Russian artist, an eyewitness, reported:**

**The atmosphere in the city had been tense for several days. On the first day, people stood near the Central Committee. They were dissatisfied with the pace of transfer to Tadzhik control. They wanted the Russians to get out. There are a few places where half the population is not native. They held up posters, and raised the Islamic flag.**

**Only 400 to 600 soldiers remained in the city, the others had been sent to Baku [where similar events had occurred in January]. People "learned" that 10,000 Armenian refugees had arrived and were taking people's houses. Only 15 families had actually arrived. One lawyer told me that agitation had been intense on the edges of the city.**

**From this and other evidence, it is clear that the first day of the protests began and ended peacefully. Republic First Party Secretary Makhkamov promised to respond to the demonstrators' demands.**

The testimony of a *Rastokhez* activist makes it clear that at least the Dushanbe executive committee (*Isполkоm*) attempted to do something to dampen public anger over the Armenian housing issue:

On Sunday, there was a meeting on the Armenian issue. We do not really know, maybe someone organized it. But the meeting was held on the Central Committee square on February 11. That night I was called up by Armenian comrades and by a comrade from "*Rub a ru*" and they explained the situation to me. (Our chairman was away, campaigning for the post of Supreme Soviet Deputy.)

I went to the *isполkоm*, to the deputy director's office. There were militia reps, the *gorkom* second secretary, and the *isполkоm* director, Ponosovi. That is how I found out about the anti-Armenian meeting.

I told them my plan on how to avoid anti-Armenian acts. Tomorrow morning, on Monday, to summon all informal organizations and the government and party organs and the academics -- all those who have some influence with the people. This group should go around the city, to different neighborhoods, to the *mechets* (mosques). The group should appear on TV and talk about the problem frankly and recommend the formation of a commission, so as to decide the problem in a peaceful way.

Ponosovi liked the idea. He said, "Good, tomorrow let's all get together at the Central Committee and act." We called up the Central Committee which rejected the idea. I think they wanted to scare people against holding any more meetings and demonstrations. This is what had worked in the past and that is what they have done constantly.

If we had adopted this plan, everything would have been alright. There would not have been deaths. But the government did not like this plan.

Apparently, it was the Tadzhikistan Central Committee which rejected the plan to work with various informal and official groups to explain the Armenian issue to the Dushanbe residents.

## **February 12, "State of Emergency Declared"**

The Tadzhik writer described to Helsinki Watch what he saw in the Central Committee square:

On February 12 at about 3 p.m., 350 to 400 people gathered, carrying bags with stones, demanding the removal of the First Party Secretary, Makhkamov. They threw stones and pieces of sidewalk. Makhkamov was there. I left. I later heard that soldiers had appeared. I returned. I saw three types of weapons: night sticks, tear gas and blank cartridges. People ran away when they noticed the blanks. They returned with new demands. I left.

The Russian labor activist told Helsinki Watch:

A crowd of 100 came at 3 p.m. to hear Makhkamov's promised response. He did not show up. The crowd got angry, but was not drunk or drugged. The authorities got scared. Perhaps 50 militia appeared wearing helmets and carrying shields. I drove by as they

came out of the MVD building.

**A Tadzhik-Russian artist, an eyewitness to these events, told us:**

**Young people of 16 and 17 were given marijuana and alcohol. They went to the Central Committee. People who did not go along were beaten. The crowd besieged the Central Committee and gave an ultimatum to rename the street. The organizers were unstable and greater forces were behind them. Only one chain was across the main road, Kutuzovsky.**

**A *Rastokhez* leader, who had been out of town until then, described what he saw on February 12:**

**I stood opposite the Union of Writers Building near the Union of Artists Building in order to observe what was going on. First of all, on February 12 at 2:40 p.m. I noticed armed men standing near the second and third-floor windows of the Central Committee building.**

**Further, did you wonder where the video cameras came from and all the tapes of the events? There were dozens of cameras. These cameras filmed events at the textile factory and in the direction of the airport. I was amazed when I later saw this footage. Where did the snipers come from?**

**A documentary film on the February events includes footage of the crowd in Central Committee square on February 12. The crowd stands peacefully under umbrellas. Gunshots ring out on the right, off screen. The crowd runs. More shots are fired. The crowd panics. The crowd looks neither drugged nor drunk. More and more shots are heard. The republic *spets-naz* [special-purpose MVD units] troops fire.**

**An eyewitness told us that the unjustified use of lethal force by the Soviet armed forces began on February 12, even before the state of emergency was declared later that day:**

**Even before the official declaration of a state of emergency, (10 p.m. on February 12) eight people had been killed and 70 wounded without warning. Now they [the authorities] claim these people had been armed.**

**A Russian eyewitness said that the militia began to shoot at the unarmed crowd on February 12 -- before the arrival of the troops from outside the republic:**

**The militia surrounded the crowd and began to press on it. The crowd got angry and took away the cops' night sticks. Cops hit people with their sticks in the face and head. The crowd stopped and "took over" trolleys. The militia began shooting. The crowd was unarmed. No militiamen were wounded from gunfire.**

**A Russian witness said that the army and the all-Union MVD units were sent from outside the republic to Dushanbe during the night of February 12. A Tadzhik witness agreed, contending that the reason troops were sent from outside the republic late on February 12 is that there were reports that Russians were being killed in the city:**

**General Yazov first began to get calls that Russians were being killed in Dushanbe. Republic *spets-naz* [MVD anti-riot units] were already in place. Before the regular troops came in to Dushanbe, three people were killed in such a way that it was clear that the**

***spets-nazh* had done it. The crowd...used stones, bricks and shoes.**

**The witness went on, that "crowds of criminals in other parts of the city were violent. Rape and robbery occurred." Indeed, it is important to remember that while the protestors in Central Committee square were non-violent, violence was rife in other parts of the city. The timing and extent of such criminal activity is not clear -- but was widely feared throughout the city.**

### **February 13, "The Committee of 17"**

**A Tadjik public figure, told Helsinki Watch of his role in the events in Central Committee square on February 13:**

**I spoke out against bloodshed on the Central Committee square on February 13. Since ... I am well-known, people seemed to listen to me.**

**A Tadjik writer described what he saw in Central Committee square on February 13 from his office window:**

**I went to work at 9 a.m. in the Writers' Union building which overlooks the Central Committee square. I saw everything from the third-floor window. Another writer and I went to the square to try to calm people down. We got a car with a loudspeaker. Other writers also called for an end to bloodshed.**

**There were about 300 people on Lenin Square. On Lenin Prospect, there were about 500 people, with another 200 to 300 people on the other side.**

**People were afraid. They had seen people die. They broke windows. First they broke into a coop store where the prices were very high. Four stores were burned. Tanks moved around the city on the 13th.**

**One Tadjik eyewitness told us he saw protestors "lying under tanks to prevent them from coming to the Central Committee square from Lenin Prospekt."**

**A Tadjik-Russian woman, who lives near the Central Committee square, told us of her escape from the crowd:**

**When I left my place to go across the courtyard to my parents' apartment, the crowd ran after me all the way there. The crowd was armed with sticks and stones. In turn, the army was chasing the crowd. As I ran, I hurt my foot. I was scared I would be torn to pieces by the crowd.**

**The author of this report saw documentary film footage of the scene in Central Committee square on February 13. The commentary accompanying the film reports that during the night, an APC arrived, and that there had been more firing.**

**On the morning of February 13, parachutists arrived between 10 - 11 a.m. People saw the results of**

**the shooting in the center of the city. Before this, they had not realized the extent of the damage. Soviet army troops also arrived on February 13.**

**In the square, local troops fired at the unarmed crowd of Tadzhiks. In the documentary film, a close-up view of the entrance to the Central Committee building shows shoes, bricks and stones piled up – apparently all that the demonstrators had.**

**For the Tadzhik-Russian artist, February 13 was the worst day of this tragic sequence of events:**

**Many people went to work. The events of the previous day were repeated. Day Two was the worst. Some were killed and many were wounded. Everything was burned and broken. There were conflicts in various parts of town. I saw people wounded, beaten; police and passersby were attacked. People were insulted. These things happened both days.**

**Things got very bad when people went home from work. Crowds sympathetic to both sides gathered. Drivers tried to get home, but rioters broke windows and cars were burned. A friend of mine only managed to escape the crowd by running away. My sister was thrown in a ditch (*larik*) and she was beaten. Everyone was armed in some way, with metal rods or axes. Everyone was angry. There were attacks on both sides.**

**It was also on February 13 that the demonstrators began to organize politically. A Tadzhik intellectual, an eyewitness to much of what occurred, told Helsinki Watch:**

**On the [Central Committee] square, a crowd called for the resignation of party leaders. On February 13, the crowd chose 17 representatives to conduct negotiations between the crowd and the government [The Committee of 17]. In reaction to the army killings of civilians, the crowd held posters asking for the resignation of party leaders by name.**

**The Committee of 17 included eight from the government, including Moscow representative Boris Pugo [Pugo is now the USSR Interior Minister], and eight from the crowd. Suddenly, the crowd demanded that the Committee be headed by a young 32-year-old poet Tadzhik Deputy, Bozor Sabir. The Committee then invited Tabarov, the Minister of Culture, to go to the Central Committee to form a provisional government.**

**A *Rastokhez* activist claimed that it was his group which urged the Central Committee square demonstrators to organize a negotiating team:**

**That is why we were sent there to appeal directly to the demonstrators. We said, "Let us decide our problems peacefully. Let us choose a council of representatives ... [to] present demands to the government."**

**People agreed; they elected a committee of representatives. This committee was later charged [by the government] with trying to seize power. A council was selected, we met outside the Central Committee building, and 50 to 60 people spoke.**

***Rastokhez* leader Abdurakhim Khalif-Zade told us that his group's involvement with the protest meetings was limited to his membership in the Committee of 17 which negotiated with the government on**

**behalf of the demonstrators:**

**I became part of the Committee of 17 on February 13 at 7 p.m. This is when our work began. The committee worked within the legal framework.**

**On February 13, the Committee of 17 managed to gain the release from prison of 60 demonstrators who had been arrested the previous day. This release was achieved through negotiations with the government officials who were also on the Committee. The protestors' demands were conveyed to First Secretary Makhkamov by Buri Karimov, Provisional Chairman of the Committee of 17.**

**Khalif-Zade described the hostile attitude Boris Pugo displayed towards the non-governmental members of the Committee of 17. Pugo was on the government side:**

**There were also provocations by Boris Karlovich Pugo, USSR Central Committee member, who called our committee illegal. And he wanted to arrest all the committee members. Then our lawyer said when there is a state of emergency, other laws apply.**

**A Russian-speaking artist told Helsinki Watch what happened on February 13 from the point of view of a resident not directly involved in the turbulent events:**

**I left my studio at 10 p.m. I waited for a car near the hospital. Crowds were agitated. There was no transport. Three trolleys had their lines down and couldn't move. I saw five militia cars with helmeted armed police drive by. I heard shots from near the train station. I guess soldiers had fired in the air to frighten demonstrators.**

**This witness also described how local government representatives, including the police, disappeared on that day:**

**There was no one to turn to. Even duty police were not at their posts. Mobile police units disappeared for several days. They later told us they had been summoned to protect the Central Committee.**

**Another witness, the Russian labor activist, confirmed this view of the "government in hiding":**

**Everyone was in hiding in the government. The local militia also disappeared. There was no government. There were rumors that an opposition group wanted to make a speech.**

## **February 14, "Anarchy Reigns"**

**A Tadzhik writer described a brutal incident on February 14 involving a husband and wife:**

**Shooting and violence continued on the 14th. A husband and wife were fired upon by an Armored Personnel Carrier (APC); he died and she was hospitalized.**

**The Tadzhik-Russian artist told Helsinki Watch of the arrival of troops from outside the republic:**

**After dinner, the parachutists arrived. Every five minutes, the radio announced their**



**arrival. Everyone was told to go home. They encircled the city. Parachutists went out on the street and did not shoot except in self-defense. They used night sticks**

**One car drove around town firing from windows. It was finally caught by an APC. The militia, mostly Tadzhiks, tried to maintain order, but they were not particularly active.**

**The Russian-speaking head of a self-defense unit told us about the general atmosphere in the city on February 14:**

**Telephone service was intermittent. People talked in doorways in our *mikroraion*. Only a few people went to work. There was little transport. Everyone understood that things were just starting. All of Tuesday was like this. One guy was dragged from his car and beaten.**

**A political drama was unfolding at the same time as the city was torn by violence and confusion. The Committee of 17 convinced First Party Secretary Kakhar Makhkamov, Prime Minister Izatullo Khaeev, and Supreme Soviet Presidium Chairman Gaibnazar Pallaev to resign.**

**The anti-Makhkamov faction lost no time in announcing the formation of a provisional government and Karimov was elected its head. Their victory was short-lived. One well-connected Tadzhik source described the further political maneuvers:**

**The party people then decided to organize a party plenum. Party members voted that they still had faith in Makhkamov. Then Karimov and Tabarov were accused of having led a putsch. All these party proceedings were broadcast live on Tadzhik radio.**

**A scene from the documentary film on the February events shows a member of the Committee of 17 on republic TV announcing the resignation of the top three government officials. A Tadzhik watching the film with the author of this report, told Helsinki Watch:**

**On the way to the TV station, however, the party leaders had attended a *Gorkom* (city committee) meeting which refused to accept their resignations. So when the leaders appeared on TV with the Committee of 17, Makhkamov and the others were tough and said they had been forced to resign.**

### **February 15, "A Day of Mourning"**

**The documentary film on the February events shows a dramatic meeting between local political leaders and Muslim clergy. There was a Council of Ministers meeting with members of the Muslim clergy. The clergy asked that the party leaders resign due to the bloodshed. Makhkamov and Pugo were present at this meeting.**

**A brief TV excerpt shown in the documentary includes the following exchange: Makhkamov states that only blanks had been used by the armed forces. Someone asked how does one explain the dead and wounded? Makhkamov says that casualties must have been caused by a civilian sniper.**

**The documentary film also shows TV clips of a youth meeting on February 15, including an angry**

talk with a TV journalist. Many residents accused TV of distorting events. The film also shows an official mourning procession organized for February 15. Elders lead the procession. One elder says, "We have only lived through our own labor. How did it happen that we were forced into this situation?"

### **February 16 and 17, "Mob Rule"**

For most of this time, the city was ruled by roving mobs. Citizens organized into self-defense units. The government, and some say the armed forces as well, were only concerned with preserving party and property.

Previously planned political events proceeded, however, despite the disturbances. *Rastokhez* held a small meeting on the 17th. Due to the upcoming parliamentary republic elections, a Tadzhikistan Central Committee plenum had been organized for February 17 and 18. The documents of these plenums were destroyed. Only Central Committee members had the right to speak.

### **February 18, "The Peace Rally"**

A *Rastokhez* leader described the huge public meeting held on February 18:

But the next day, the 18th, 30,000 gathered. The authorities announced on TV on February 17 that under a state of emergency no more than five people can gather. Officials feared massive bloodshed.

He told Helsinki Watch of the peace-keeping role which he said *Rastokhez* played during that mass rally:

*Rastokhez* prevented massive bloodshed. Its members stood between the soldiers and the people. Some others and I were afraid soldiers would shoot without warning. We told the crowd that Tadzhiks must live. Soldiers were just waiting for someone to throw a stone. We talked to both sides. Soldiers pushed us aside to chase people away. Tanks moved in on the people. An officer announced that if the crowd did not disperse, he had orders to kill everyone.

From the activist's description, Muslim religious leaders apparently played a key role in this mass meeting. Nonviolent sentiments were the unofficial order of the day:

The *Khozikolon* (mufti) spoke to the crowd and asked everyone to pray and to move towards the movie theater. The crowd moved there. Many posters were held up by crowd: "People are all Friends." They were written with grammatical errors. Many speeches were made. The meeting lasted five hours. At first, the soldiers wanted to go there. Some helicopters flew overhead. The crowd finally dispersed.

One of the few Russians at this Tadzhik mass meeting told us:

There was a huge public rally at the new Kino complex, out past the Hotel Tadzhikistan. A crowd of some 25,000 to 30,000 gathered. In effect, it was the entire local population. As

far as I know, there were only three Russians at that rally: Pugmin, the head of SovMin, the Trud reporter, and me. The people at the rally had a good attitude towards us.

### **The Supreme Soviet Report Chronology**

**On February 11, at about 1 p.m., 2,500 people participated in a meeting outside the Supreme Soviet Presidium building. They then moved to the Central Committee building, with many more students and young people joining the crowd. The purpose of the meeting was to get the Armenian refugees to leave the republic. Rumors of the numbers of Armenian refugees were inflated to 5,000 and that they had all been given apartments. When the demonstrators were promised that the matter would be taken care of, the crowd dispersed.**

**On February 12, at about 3 p.m., a big crowd of people gathered again at the Central Committee building. Until 9 p.m., they shouted and demanded that the Armenians should be forced to leave immediately. There were also demands for better housing, on ecological issues, and for the resignation of the republic leaders. First Party Secretary Makhkamov came out to talk to the crowd, explaining that these defects would be corrected. But the disorders continued and on Kutuzovsky street there were beatings, killings and arson. At about 8 p.m., with the assistance of troops, Central Committee square was cleared of demonstrators. That night, a state of emergency and curfew was declared.**

**On February 13, despite the state of emergency and the curfew, people again gathered at the Central Committee building. Disorders continued, as a result of which several people were killed, many stores and enterprises were looted and burned. In the city, there were pogroms, theft and violence. That evening, selected from among the demonstrators and members of the informal group *Rastokheza* Committee of 17 was formed. B.B. Karimov, Gosplan Chairman, was selected as the committee head. People left the Central Committee square at about 8 p.m., but pogroms and fist fights continued in various parts of the city.**

**February 14 would be accurate to characterize as a day of arguments and negotiations among the Committee of 17 with party and government leaders. While discussions were going on in the highest circles of power, in the apartments and city blocks threats of violence hung in the air. People, in order to save their property and their lives, organized self-defense units.**

**February 15, 16, 17 are black days in the history of our republic. The Supreme Soviet Presidium passed a resolution calling them official days of mourning.**

**In the afternoon of February 18, despite the state of emergency, an unsanctioned meeting attended by 15,000 was held at the Borbad film/concert hall. Despite noise, threats and danger of violence, the meeting ended peacefully and people went home.**

## **Government Reaction**

### **Contacts with Demonstrators**

**An initial demand of the Central Committee square protestors on February 11 was to exchange views with First Party Secretary Makhkamov. One *Rastokhez* leader and eyewitness claims:**

**Makhkamov finally appeared at about 3:30. He agreed with the crowd that it should send representatives to the Central Committee the next day to talk to him. He promised to answer all their questions.**

**Other witnesses reported that Makhkamov was supposed to appear again in the square the next day, February 12, but never appeared. Another *Rastokhez* activist, Mirbobo Mirrakhimov, told Helsinki Watch:**

**I would like to see the faces of those who did not appear to talk to the crowd. If Makhkamov or someone else had appeared on February 12 to talk to the crowd, nothing more would have happened. The leaders did not address the crowd on purpose.**

**A third *Rastokhez* leader added:**

**First Secretary Makhkamov promised the Central Committee square crowd on February 11 that he would look into their demands. But the next day at 3 o'clock, when people had gathered and were waiting for a long time to hear him, he never showed up.**

**People were told [Makhkamov] was in Moscow. Then they said he is in Isfaria. But actually he was sitting inside the Central Committee building. And he did not go out to talk to the people. There were people there ready to frighten or disperse the crowds.**

**The Supreme Soviet report is also critical of the republic authorities for failing to take the demonstrators' requests for information seriously:**

**As late as 3 or 4 p.m., the authorities did not comply with demands, failing to give convincing explanations of the Armenian deportation. Further, internal security forces used billy clubs to drive protesters away from the Central Committee building. This led to greater anger among the demonstrators; several began to throw rocks and other objects at the internal security forces.**

### **Detention of Demonstrators**

**A major achievement of the Committee of 17 on February 13 was obtaining the release of 60 demonstrators who had been detained on February 12. The Supreme Soviet report devotes considerable attention to this issue. The body of the report finds the republic authorities violated the law in detaining 58 of the 60:**

**Only Toshmakhmad Kholov and Abduvakhob Odinayev were in fact criminals. That meant 58 of those arrested were not legally under arrest but under detention. In violation of the law, these individuals were held for 24 hours instead of the three hours allowed by law.**

**Yet in its conclusions, the Supreme Soviet report focusses only on their release -- rather than the legitimacy of their arrest, or their conditions of detention, possibly as a result of pressure:**

**The 60 individuals apprehended and delivered to the MVD departments were released in accordance with the law. Therefore, the demand of Comrades K.M Makhkamov and I. Kh. Khayoyev and the actions of M. Nazhuvanov and G. C. Mikhaylin [the top-level republic officials] as well as B.B. Karimov, O. Latifi and other officials, were based in law. No unlawful actions were noted on their part.**

### **State of Emergency**

**The Supreme Soviet Commission report is very critical of the declaration of the state of emergency. Although this commission was composed of Supreme Soviet members, they were only dimly aware of many key legal issues. In fact, the Commission states that it had to study the Supreme Soviet procedures on the issuance of a state of emergency. (It even states that only after studying these rules did it learn that there were 15 members in the Supreme Soviet presidium!)**

**Having studied the relevant rules, the Supreme Soviet Commission pointed out:**

**(T)hree rules of the Supreme Soviet Commission were grossly violated: a full session of the Supreme Soviet Presidium was never held; all Presidium members were never summoned in person; and a record of the required Presidium session has never been published.**

**While admitting that the state of public disorder in the republic on February 12 required a state of emergency and a curfew, the report states that it was illegally promulgated:**

**The February 12, 1990, Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Presidium *ukaz* introducing a state of emergency and curfew is in its form, content, jurisdiction and intent in direct contradiction with the law.**

**Yet, in assigning blame for this infringement of the law, the report points an accusing finger only at minor and/or retired republic officials:**

**The principal culprits in the promulgation of the said *ukaz* are officials of the republic Council of Ministers legal department and the Supreme Soviet as well as the former Secretary of the Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Presidium, Comrade A.T. Kasymova.**

### **Government Calls to Arm**

**Several witnesses -- whose testimony on other issues does not coincide -- agree on one key point:**

**they accuse First Party Secretary Makhkamov of calling on citizens to protect and arm themselves.**

***Rastokhez* leader Mirrakhimov asserts he heard Makhkamov make this appeal to arms several times, on both radio and TV:**

**On February 13 at 5 p.m., I heard Makhkamov say, "Arm and defend yourselves as best you can." This statement was repeated three times on radio and TV. The third time, "arm yourselves" was omitted. This is a summons to civil war. And now they deny this.**

**A Russian-speaking artist also reports that he heard Makhkamov give a public summons to self-defense, although he says he heard this summons two days later:**

**On February 15, First Party Secretary Makhkamov said on TV: "Arm yourselves and defend yourselves as best you can, there are no troops or militia in the city."**

### **Government Calls for Armed Forces**

**For the most part, witnesses could not recall precisely when the troops had been summoned -- but thought the army had arrived late. A Tadzhik filmmaker told Helsinki Watch:**

**Makhkamov telephoned General Yazov on February 12 (?) and he said that Russian officers and their wives were being killed. Actually, only one militia man had been killed, Sr. Lieutenant Zhomaev from Leninabad.**

**A Russian geologist said: "Soviet troops arrived two days after things had already calmed down. They were in Azerbaidzhan and it took time for them to get from Baku."**

**The Supreme Soviet report states:**

**In accordance with an oral request from the republic leaders, G.P. Pallaev and K.M. Makhkamov, and on advice of Mikhail Gorbachev, Chairman, USSR Supreme Soviet, Dimitri Yazov, USSR Minister of Defense, orders were given to deploy military detachments of the Turkestan Military District into the city of Dushanbe. At first, 1068 military personnel were brought in. On February 14, 790 more paratroopers were redeployed from Armenia.**

**The Supreme Soviet report adds that USSR Defense Minister Yazov agreed to send troops because he had been informed by Tadzhikistan First Party Secretary Makhkamov that Soviet army facilities and personnel had been attacked:**

**An official letter from Comrade Dmitri Yazov (letter No. 312/1/159) shows that he had approved deployment of troops in the city since some of its residents had allegedly attacked military installations as well as military personnel and members of their families.**

### **Government Bows Out**

**There was a widespread perception that the republic government abdicated its responsibilities to**

protect the public during the February events. A Tadzhik witness told Helsinki Watch: "During the disorders, the city had no authorities. The government did not fulfill its responsibilities." A Russian-speaking resident agreed: "People want physical security, if the government cannot ensure it, it should not be in power."

This abdication of responsibility for public safety was particularly serious since there was widespread anarchy and violence in the city. While initial political and social protest in the Central Committee square had been peaceful, looters and arsonists soon fanned out all over the city. Thus, partially due to government passivity, Dushanbe experienced mob rule for several days from February 12 until February 18, 1990.

### **City Under Siege**

Dushanbe residents describe the terror of the civilian population, fearful of attack by roving bands of rioters. A Russian-Tadzhik artist, who lives in the city center told Helsinki Watch:

We sat at home. The entry area to our building had been burned. People were running around on the roof. [The apartment building is near the Central Committee building]. My sister had disappeared. My mother and father were there. The telephone did not work. We were all angry. I carried a metal rod. I am sure I would have killed someone if I had to.

A Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Deputy, a Russian woman, said:

My only son stood with a stick and the lid to a pan as his only defense against an armed crowd of thousands. Our young fellows were standing alone against armed men. We somehow managed to convince the crowd not to attack and rob us.

In the middle of the night, a gong sounded and they called me to ask me to summon the troops. They told me that a huge crowd was coming from Gissar and are coming here to beat us up.

I phoned the troops, then I did what I could to hide the children. Then, I ran on to the street to save my only son. After this, I said we must leave [Tadzhikistan]. No one can live through this more than once.

A Russian-speaking artist told Helsinki Watch:

At one point, the potential for violence was high. Two groups of 300 each [one from the *mikroraiion* and the other from the village] faced each other down.

## **Self Defense-Units**

### **Citizen Self-Defense Units**

Just as most witnesses agreed that the government abdicated responsibility for public safety, they also concurred that self-defense units, organized by the citizenry, saved the day. A Russian-Tadzhik artist told Helsinki Watch:

[The self-defense units] were organized everywhere. Courtyards were enclosed in barbed wire. Basically, the whole city was opposed to the rioters. Many Tadzhiks were also beaten. They had more victims.

Self-defense units sprang up everywhere. A Russian labor activist reported: "They saved the city and eventually restored calm on February 13 and 14." Agreeing, a local Russian deputy said: "Our self-defense units were all that saved us from the extremist forces. In the final analysis, everyone joined these units."

A Russian geologist told of the home-made weapons which were arrayed:

Russian-speakers got together in apartments. They collected sticks, axes, vinegar [Soviet stores sell chemical vinegar essence]. Our area was not attacked because it is near an Islamic cemetery.

A leader of a self-defense unit told Helsinki Watch of initial organization efforts:

To defend the *mikroraion* where I and my family live, I organized a group of 50 to defend a group of 700. We managed to get steel rods from a cement factory. The goal of my group and all others was purely defensive.

Typically, this Russian-speaker stressed that all ethnic groups in Dushanbe banded together in self-defense:

We had all nationalities in my *mikroraion* -- Russians, Tadzhiks, etc. We drove around to other *mikroraions* and they were also organized into self-defense units -- Koreans, Jews, Germans, Russians, Tadzhiks -- none of us wanted the riots.

The organizer of the self-defense unit told us how the group operated:

Our *mikroraion* is near a *kishlak*. It has seven entrances where we posted guards on shifts (12-3, 3-6, 6-9) at night. We had a group of 30 to defend the barricades at each of seven entrances all night. I coordinated this effort. We even had an official stamp for documents for cars going in and out. I took the stamp from an official who had come over to our side.

### **Official Defense Efforts**

The leader of a self-defense unit told Helsinki Watch about official defense efforts in the city:



One could call or go to a city defense unit to find out what was going on in the city. These central coordination points were well informed because they were in constant contact with the MVD. All over the city people formed such self-defense units. Five worked there; it was also organized by volunteers. Only some days later did the [regional headquarters] *raikomshtab* get organized.

The *raikomshtab* was largely staffed by former Tadzhik "Afghantsi" [Afghan war vets] who are considered officially "reliable." The reliable city "shtab" was located in a city school staffed by volunteer self-defense units.

The local *shtab* in my *mikroraion* was headed by a colonel who had radio contact with helicopters to keep us all informed of events. The helicopters would tell us where and when the crowd was moving.

A Tadzhik writer claims that the Soviet army, operating with a list from the regional party committee (*raikom*) distributed weapons only to Russians:

On February 13, a Soviet Army Major came to our *mikroraion*, Zarofshon, and handed out Kalashnikov rifles only to Russians. He did this in accordance with a list of names given to him by the *raikom*. When the Tadzhiks protested, the Russian major said he was just following orders.

Five or six Russian men in one block were given the Kalashnikovs. These people were supposed to serve as a sort of volunteer police (*druzhinniki*).

A Russian-speaker, however, denied that residents of his area were allowed to have weapons.

## **Armed Forces**

### **Role of the Army**

In general, witnesses agreed that the army arrived too late while republic units focussed myopically on protecting local government facilities-- even at the cost of the local citizenry. A Tadjik journalist made a clear distinction between national and republic armed forces:

Moscow assisted the local government only at the point when Russians were beaten or killed. As early as February 9, the local MVD had been on a special watch. Yet the locally-based army units were never given the order to help put down the disorders -- all the troops that did that were brought in from the outside.

A Russian-Tadjik economist added:

The army only appeared after the Makhkamov government had resigned. Tanks were everywhere right after these events. Soldiers in the city center were well received by the people.

Most of the Dushanbe population reportedly was glad when the army finally arrived. A Russian-speaking artist notes: "The army was received very well, also by the Tadjik population; it should have been summoned sooner. Rumors say the army was in Baku, but no one knows for sure."

This positive reception for the army was also reported by a Russian-Tadjik artist:

The soldiers who arrived were feted and greeted by local girls. The young soldiers said they had been hated in Baku. This happened especially on Soviet Army Day on February 20. I saw quite a few *kishlak* people come to Dushanbe to feed soldiers with *plov* [pilaf].

### **Troop Deployments**

On the key question of the role of the armed forces, witnesses were more negative. A Russian geologist said: "There were only enough militia to protect the Central Committee building. The militia did not try to stop the vandalism, almost as though it wanted these things to happen." A Russian lawyer added: "The army was inept. It was only interested in protecting government property."

It is important to bear in mind that different branches of the armed forces and the militia have different functions. The documentary film on the Dushanbe events points out:

The republic *spets-naz* guarded the Council of Ministers building and the Supreme Soviet Presidium. After the national *spets-naz* troops arrived at 10 a.m. on February 13, they went to guard the Central Committee building.

The film also describes the "law-and-order" functions of the national *spets-naz* units:

As soon these units arrived, they went to work beating people over the head. On February

14 and 15, they had a special bus with wire mesh windows. They drove around town to break up any crowd which had gathered. The troops would beat people over the head to disperse the crowds.

A Tadjik journalist at the film screening confirmed he had twice seen the troops break up small crowds on February 14: once at the Textile factory and once near the circus.

As for the specific troop line-up on Central Committee square, the observations of witnesses coincide for the most part. A Tadjik writer, an eyewitness, told Helsinki Watch:

Parachutists were in the first row, behind them stood the militia. Behind the troops were APCs to protect the Central Committee building. Although no one expected this, there were two or three tanks and five or six APCs. The whole area was closed. People approached from the side.

The documentary film shows the troop line-up: the army, the militia, the KGB troops, and the republic *spets-naz*. The national *spets-naz* only arrived on the last day. An eyewitness confirms that the main role of the troops on the square was to protect the Central Committee building. This assessment of troop deployment in the Central Committee square is confirmed by the Supreme Soviet Commission report which notes: "the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) forces, the KGB border troops and a USSR Ministry of Defense detachment mobilized to guard the Central Committee building."

## **Violence Begins**

Although some Dushanbe residents make little or no distinction between the Central Committee Square protestors and the violent mob which rampaged through their city, eyewitnesses agree that the demonstrators were not violent. A *Rastokhez* leader did make the distinction between the two groups: "When [in the Central Committee square] there was shooting, when blood was spilled, then people became furious [on February 12]. And that is how it all began. And then of course criminal elements got involved."

Eyewitnesses also agree that it was the armed forces which initiated the violence. A Tadjik writer, an eyewitness, reported:

One person was pushed; he reacted. This person was then hit over the head with a nightstick. He tried to grab the stick. The soldiers ran up to him and began to beat him. The people ran to his defense. A melee began and soldiers began to shoot in the air. The militia began beating people. The demonstrators who fell down were beaten again by the militia and soldiers. They were seized and thrown into police vans.

A Russian lawyer, also an eyewitness, added:

The militia surrounded the crowd and pressed on it. The crowd got angry and took away cops' nightsticks. Cops hit people with their sticks in the face and head. The crowd "took over" trolleys. The militia began the shooting. The crowd was unarmed. No militiaman was wounded from the gunfire.

**The Tadzhik writer told Helsinki Watch that a cease-fire went into effect briefly in the Central Committee square -- until the army violated its terms:**

**A cease fire was announced. The police van with the detainees was asked to remain in the square. The colonel agreed to these conditions. The delegation moved to the building, but the police van left and people got angry.**

**According to this eyewitness, it was only after the cease fire had been violated -- which the crowd protested by throwing stones -- that lethal force was first used:**

**The demonstrators attacked with stones. Then shooting began, first in the air, then at the snow-covered trees. People ran, five or six were killed.**

**I myself put two corpses in a car. One dead man, 15 or 16, had been shot through the mouth, another, in his mid-twenties, had been shot in the chest. Another had a leg wound, and we put him in another car. He was alive. Everyone was in shock.**

**The Supreme Soviet report puts the blame for casualties squarely on the shoulders of the republic leadership and of the internal security (MVD) troops:**

**In the opinion of the commission, these casualties could have been avoided if the republic leadership had met with the protesters -- after having prepared properly -- and if the internal security troops had not used billy clubs, tripping, and other acts of hooliganism against the demonstrators.**

### **Sniper Attacks**

**The issue of sniper killings was raised by a *Rastokhez* leader who referred to official investigations:**

**An expert investigation concluded that the women were shot by a sniper from the third floor of the Central Committee building ... The Supreme Soviet Investigatory Commission, in so far as it was permitted, presented its conclusions at a Supreme Soviet session. The procuracy is supposed to report on this matter to the next Supreme Soviet session.**

**An eyewitness to the Central Committee square events -- whose apartment overlooked the square - also says that a woman was shot by a sniper. He added:**

**I saw a sniper aim at a nearby photographer. Rather than hitting him, the sniper wounded the photographer's sister. She later died from loss of blood.**

**This eyewitness also told Helsinki Watch of the death of a cameraman who was filming events from his hotel room:**

**A film crew was in the "Tadzhikistan" hotel. The cameraman was filming events from his window. A sniper shot him dead -- right between the eyes.**

**An APC was sent to pick up the crew and take them to the airport. They were stopped by a hostile crowd. The actor climbed out of the APC and the crowd turned friendly.**

**The cameraman's death is confirmed in the Supreme Soviet report which notes that N.I. Matrosov, a Lenfilm employee, was shot on February 12 at 3:40 p.m. -- before declaration of the state of emergency.**

**There have been other recent indications that photographers may be especially targeted by Soviet troops during such disturbances. The most notable such incident was in Riga, Latvia in January 1991; two cinematographers who had been filming the army shooting at demonstrators were shot fatally.**

### **Lethal Force**

**Testimony taken by Helsinki Watch from a number of eyewitnesses makes clear that the armed forces initiated the use of lethal force. Protestors in the Central Committee square were shot on February 12, 1990 by the Soviet armed forces even before a state of emergency was declared later that night by First Party Secretary Makhkamov.**

**The Supreme Soviet report points out:**

**Despite the complex situation, the size and anger of the crowd, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) forces, the KGB border troops and a USSR Ministry of Defense detachment mobilized to guard the Central Committee building, had all the necessary means to refrain from the use of firearms and, thereby, to avoid bloodshed.**

**Moreover, the Commission notes:**

**Many victims injured during deployment of heavy military technology and automatic weapons near the protest area, as well as at other locations, testified that actions of the military, the militia and the KGB, on February 12 through 14, 1990, were poorly planned.**

**The report adds that in protecting government property with the use of firearms, the troops "exceeded their legal authority." The Commission further accuses various branches of the military of disobeying specific laws and regulations on lethal force:**

**The letter of the law aimed at preventing bloodshed was not always followed. Emergency rule, ominous as it sounds, does not justify deaths of the innocent. This is all the more so since every civilized state, including ours, has a body of directives and procedures governing implementation of "special" crowd control measures. None of those guidelines provides for use of lethal force against unarmed crowds before such measures had been employed.**

**Relevant portions of the MVD Directive on Crowd Control, cited in the Supreme Soviet Commission report, are attached to this report.**

### **Official Denials**

**The Supreme Soviet Commission report states that senior republic officials and military commanders totally deny the use of lethal force by their troops:**

**In an interview, republic KGB Chairman V.V. Petkel and Internal Affairs Minister M. Navzhuvanov, commanders of military detachments No. 5453 and 6593, stated that their personnel had not shot at protesters and had not carried firearms. They also confirmed that there are no documented instances of use of firearms by the demonstrators.**

**It is important to note that even the commission acknowledges that the demonstrators did not use firearms.**

### **Prosecutions of the Military**

**The Commission report calls for the criminal prosecution of those members of the armed forces who used of lethal force against unarmed civilians:**

**Is there justice in these actions of the military? Certainly not. Still, none of the military personnel has been prosecuted for any wrongdoing and none of the inquiries related to the actions of the military has received satisfactory answers. Meanwhile, authorities focus on prosecuting those who broke windows and looted. Yet, one cannot forget that human blood -- and human lives -- are the greatest value of all.**

## **The Human Toll**

### **Medical Care**

**A Russian-Tadzhik eyewitness told Helsinki Watch about the part played by medical personnel during the February events in Dushanbe. He said, "Ambulances played a most heroic role. They always rescued people in the most dangerous situations. Demonstrators attacked the doctors."**

**The Supreme Soviet Commission report supports this view. It describes the conditions faced by Dushanbe medical personnel in assisting victims of violence:**

**(They) faced difficult and dangerous conditions in aiding victims at the sites of injury, at trauma centers and hospitals. Medical workers were often ... threatened, physically assaulted ... ambulances were vandalized. Groups broke into emergency rooms and intensive care wards. Others threw rocks through their windows. Despite such actions, ambulance crews and personnel in medical aviation clinics and hospitals, performed their duties with honor. No complaints were registered about their performance.**

### **Information on Casualties**

**The Commission also notes that the republic procuracy confiscated relevant medical records:**

**Since republic procuracy officials seized medical facility records, one cannot completely analyze the treatment data of injuries on February 12 - 14 in Dushanbe.**

**Apparently, this was an effort by republic authorities to minimize public information on casualties, since even otherwise well-informed witnesses had only vague notions of casualty statistics. For example, one Russian eyewitness said, "I know that 120 were hospitalized, but I am not sure of the number of dead. It was about 15 or 20."**

**Some witnesses, believe that most who died were killed by the mob, rather than by the armed forces. A Russian-Tadzhik filmmaker said, "Seven people died at the hands of the army, more were killed by the crowd." A Russian-speaking artist told us, "Maybe 30 to 40 [died]. Most were killed by the crowd." It seems possible that the local government tried to create this false impression so as to downplay the lethal role of the armed forces.**

**Indeed, a *Rastokhez* member accused the government of deliberately concealing data on casualties:**

**No one knows how many people died. The registration lists from the hospitals disappeared for these nights. KGB operatives in the hospitals forced doctors to operate and send people home right away. Apparently, the Minister of Health had made a speech saying that many died. We looked for this speech in the radio archives, but could not find it. The KGB has these materials.**

### **The Wounded**

**The documentary film on the February events includes a series of interviews with the wounded:**

- The first is with a Russian man who suffered severe head wounds on his way home.**
- The second is with a Tadzhik who received nine knife wounds at 3 a.m. while he was sitting in his car in a suburban area near the Meat Processing Plant.**
- The third is with a man who told how his brother, wounded by gunfire, was turned away from a hospital.**
- The fourth is about an incident in a Dushanbe suburb, when a tank ran over a car. Relatives appealed to local authorities who said they could do nothing if it was a tank.**
- The fifth is with a man who said he wrote down the tank number and gave it to the militia who said they could nothing.**
- The sixth scene shows an operation on a man who was shot.**

**These scenes were not seen on local TV.**

**These interviews show a city at the mercy of the mob and the military. Even when the victims made efforts to document military abuses -- such as which tank ran over a car -- the local authorities were indifferent.**

### **Supreme Soviet Report on Casualties**

**The report lists 12 civilians who sustained bullet wounds in or near the Central Committee Square:**

- Saidakhmad Mukhamadiev (4:30 p.m.);**
- Khobib Shafiev;**
- Abdurakhim Sharifov (4:30 p.m.);**
- Sunnatullo Ikromov;**
- Khikmat Sodikov;**
- Dilshod Umalov;**
- Amirshok Akhmadov;**
- Ravshan Karimov;**
- Andrei Abdugafarovich Kolugin;**
- Abdullo Nazaraliev (5 p.m.);**
- Shakhmadsharif Umarov (5:15 p.m.);**
- Radzhabali Karimov, (5:55 p.m.).**

**The Commission also confirms that the civilian population suffered random attacks by the military. It details three incidents:**

- On February 14, 1990, at 5 p.m., citizen Teshabaev, was driving his own car with his wife and child on the road to the city of Giprozem. He was stopped at a road block. A soldier demanded that Teshabayev show his documents. Teshabayev said that he was going**



home and had no documents. He drove the car a few meters, when, without warning, he was shot in the back and fatally wounded. Teshabayev's wife and two-year-old child were wounded.

-- On February 14, 1990, at about 11 a.m., near the entrance to the Varzob *sovkhoz* an armored vehicle hit a parked Gaz-53 car parked by Buri Davlyatov's house. The car then hit Ismatullo Khuroedov who stood nearby.

-- After these events (on February 14), town residents gathered around the damaged vehicle. At this time, shots were fired from a tank (I.D. number MTL-BU-8143, detachment 0/62), which was leaving town for its unit. Abdali Karimov was wounded during this shooting. Despite surgery, he has not regained use of his arm.

The Supreme Soviet Commission presents the following casualty statistics:

-- On the days when most sought medical attention:

Of the wounded who sought medical attention, most, 565, (69.5 percent) did so on February 12 - 13. For February 14 - 15, the figure was 14.5 percent (120 people.)

-- "The vast majority of those who sought medical care were men (732 people or 90.1 percent)."

-- Although slightly over half of those who sought medical attention were Russian-speakers, Tadzhiks also constituted a major portion of the victims: "Most victims, 459, were from the Russian-speaking population (56.5 percent); while 354 were of the local nationality (43.5 percent.)"

-- Slightly over half, or 813, of those who sought medical care were between 16 and 30 years old; 186 (22.9 percent) were from 31 to 40; and young people from 15 to 25 were 3.1 percent.

## **The Dead**

The Supreme Soviet Commission report is the only available comprehensive official source on the crucial issue of civilian fatalities. Some sections delineate specific instances in which civilians in various parts of Dushanbe were killed at random by members of the armed forces:

-- On February 14, 1990, at 10 p.m. Azam Urunov, Yuri Yakovlevich Balabanov, Zieviddin Sangov and Islommodin Negmatov (one was returning from hospital and the rest were going to work) were shot by the military as they crossed the Dushanbinka River bridge. (The military were on the zoo side of the river.) Urunov and Balabanov died; Negmatov and Sangov survived, but still have not regained their health.

-- On February 13, 1990, Mikhmadsiad Safarov was shot and killed by an armored vehicle near the Barokat bazaar.

-- Israil Mirzorakhimov was also killed by a shot from an armored vehicle near the zoo.

The Commission also recounts the deaths of four civilians shot by the military in the vicinity of the Central Committee square:

**-- At 4 p.m., Azamat Sherov, 16, died instantly from a bullet wound.**

**-- M.V. Fanfando received a bullet wound to the head as she stood on the second floor of the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Works building. (She later died of her wounds.)**

**-- N.I. Matrosov (Lenfilm cameraman) and M. Negmatulina were shot at 91 Lenin Street, inside second floor apartments (23 and 16 respectively). They died of their wounds.**

**These last three fatalities, in which civilians were killed indoors, indicate that soldiers were firing into buildings.**

**The Commission also describes the killings of one civilian in the Central Committee square:**

**-- S.I. Madzhnunov, 32, resident of Navoi Street, shot at 4:30 p.m.;**

**The Commission presents the following conclusions on fatalities:**

**From February 12 - 14, 117 people sustained bullet wounds, of which 21 were fatal. Out of the total number, 25, of fatalities, four people were killed with knives and other weapons.**

**On February 12, before the declaration of a state of emergency and curfew (that is, between 3:30 p.m. and 8 p.m.) 46 sustained bullet wounds; nine of these individuals died.**

**On February 13, 31 individuals were wounded, of whom ten died; on February 14, 16 people were wounded and five died.**

**On February 12, all casualties sustained wounds in the Central Committee square and in its vicinity.**

**On February 13 and 14, some casualties occurred on Kutovsky Prospect, Giprozemgorodok, near the old airport, Dushanbe hotel and the Dushanbe-Gissar road.**

## **Aftermath**

### **Official Media Policy**

There is general agreement that the republic press presented distorted information about the February events. As one Tadjik intellectual told Helsinki Watch, all republic media are party controlled.

For example, a Tadjik documentary film director said, "Local TV showed only wounded militia or slightly wounded civilians. Serious wounds or dead civilians, especially children, were not shown." Another source, a Tadjik journalist, described a failed effort at official TV censorship:

One week ago [in November 1990] there was a TV interview with Yusupov [leader of the new Democratic Party of Tadjikistan]. The head of Tadjik TV was called to the Central Committee and reprimanded. The TV boss then scolded his co-workers and said this should not be repeated.

The conservative central Soviet media, particularly *Pravda*, presented the official version of the February events, stressing the heroic role of the Soviet army in coping with the mobs which threatened the city. A Tadjik filmmaker told us, "The official version [of the events] appeared in two *Pravda* articles, creating dismay among Tadjiks." Reportedly, even the conservative Tadjikistan Central Committee plenum passed a resolution protesting these articles. This resolution was due, in part, to a protest to republic KGB Chief Petkel by *Rastokhez* leader Mirbobo Mirrakhimov.

It should be noted, however, that other official and semi-official central Soviet press sources tried to present an accurate view of the Dushanbe February events. (Appended to this report is a Radio Liberty summary of such Soviet press reports.)

Only the conclusions of the Supreme Soviet Commission were published in *Kommunist Tadjikistana* (September 5, 1990.) Though the published conclusions reflect some aspects of the commission's work, its most controversial aspects -- such as its finding that the armed forces had employed illegal lethal force against unarmed demonstrators -- were expunged.

### **Western Media**

Coming on the heels of a similar -- where there were even more fatalities -- tragedy in Baku, the Western media paid little heed to the February events in Dushanbe. Due to Dushanbe's remote location -- and the dearth of Western contacts with informal groups there -- Western journalists were largely dependent on Soviet press reports. (As examples of Western reporting, articles from the *Washington Post* (February 13, 1990) and from *The New York Times* (February 16, 1990) are attached to this report.)

### **Reprisals against Journalists**

**Mirbobo Mirrakhimov, *Rastokhez* activist, told Helsinki Watch of reprisals against local journalists for covering the February events:**

**As far as we know, dozens have been fired from their jobs, particularly in TV, radio, newspapers. In other words, those who gave *glasnost* to these events. And those whom the Makhkamov regime does not like. There were various pretexts for firing these people.**

### **Media Blacklist**

**Helsinki Watch was also informed of an official blacklist still in effect in Tadjikistan in November 1990. According to a Tadjik writer:**

**Twenty people are on this official blacklist, most of them leaders of alternate parties. They are not allowed to appear on TV and radio:**

**Bozor Sobir -- poet, Tadjikistan People's Deputy  
Tokhir Abduzhabar -- Chairman, *Rastokhez* Tadjikistan People's Deputy  
Mirbobo Mirrakhim -- Deputy Chairman, *Rastokhez*  
Shodmon Yusupov -- Chairman, Democratic Party  
Adash Istad -- writer  
Mukhibullo Kurbon -- writer, member *Rastokhez*  
Bakhmaner -- writer, Board member, *Rastokhez*  
Safarali Kendzhaev -- Tadjikistan People's Deputy  
Salim Ayub -- journalist, member, *Rastokhez***

### **Criminal Convictions: Supreme Soviet Report Findings**

**As of July 16, 1990, regional courts and courts of the city of Dushanbe tried 35 cases connected with the February events, sentencing 48 defendants:**

- Cases involving eleven defendants were tried under Article 77 of the Tadjik SSR Criminal Code, participation in mass action aimed to disturb the peace;**
- Ten cases involving ten defendants were tried under Article 234 of the Tadjik SSR Criminal Code, unlawful possession of dangerous weapons (other than firearms);**
- Two cases involving two defendants were tried under Article 220 of the Tadjik SSR Criminal Code;**
- Eleven cases with 13 defendants were tried under articles 154, 155 and 90 of the Tadjik SSR Criminal Code, robbery and theft of state/personal property.**
- There was one Article 220 case with two defendants.**

**A review of sentences shows that 21 of the criminal cases involving 25 defendants are not connected with the February events. It must also be noted that none of the individuals tried and convicted**

by the courts was among the organizers of mass disorders in Dushanbe.

- Of those convicted, 16 are juveniles.
- By nationality, 29 are Tadzhiks, five are Russians, seven are Uzbeks. The rest belong to other nationalities.
- Three of those convicted were under the influence of alcohol when their crimes were committed. By nationality, one of them is a Tadzhik, one a Jew and one a Russian. Two crimes committed under influence of alcohol were not related to the February events.
- None of the convicted was under influence of narcotics.

Further, the investigations branches of the procuracy, the KGB and Ministry of Internal Affairs have yet to pinpoint either the key organizers of the tragic events or those who shot 117 people, 25 of whom died.

### **Other Investigations**

There are several other official bodies known to be investigating the February events in Dushanbe. One witness, whose apartment overlooked the Central Committee square, told Helsinki Watch that his family had been interviewed extensively by the KGB. Another witness mentioned that the procuracy is conducting an investigation, focussing on the attempted overthrow of the Makhkamov government.

### **Assessment of the Supreme Soviet Commission**

Khalif-Zade, *Rastokhez* leader, gave a positive assessment of the Supreme Soviet Commission, "I must say that it worked and investigated very conscientiously." He also noted, however, "It could not stand up for itself. Therefore, its conclusions were not its original ones." He told Helsinki Watch:

The report raises the issue of initiation of violence. It also says that the demonstrators outside the Central Committee building threw stones, making the soldiers shoot. Actually, the troops fired first at the crowd at 2:30 or 2:40. Even the soldier's name is known. But the first stone was thrown at the Central Committee building only at 5 in the evening. And then the Commission concluded that there were peaceful methods to calm the crowd which had not been used.

Flawed though the Commission report may be at times, it is forthright on many key points, particularly with respect to the "unfavorable" attitude of the republic KGB. The report points out that:

- Commission questions on the activity of several *Rastokhez* members, religious leaders, and those who wanted to illegally overthrow the Council of Ministers Chairman and assume power, were not given a clear, satisfactory answer.
- Despite promises, the commission was not allowed to see a three-hour film shot by KGB employees.

**-- The republic procuracy and MVD employees are to this day using every imaginable pretext to deny the commission access to essential information and materials. Repeated commission letters and requests remain unanswered.**

**-- These officials gave orders to deny the commission access to medical information on hospitals and medical examiners. Therefore, Ministry of Health leaders did not respond to the commission's official letter requesting information on those wounded with firearms on February 12 through 14, 1990.**

**The report concludes its discussion of obstruction by official bodies by calling on the republic procuracy and KGB to finally investigate the issue of who killed and wounded civilians:**

**-- It is the procuracy and KGB responsibility to collect data on the 117 people who were shot February 12 through 14, 1990, in the Central Committee square, at Abuali Ibn-Sino, on Kutuzovsky Street, at the zoo, and Giprozem.**

**-- It is also their responsibility to determine who killed 25 people, with what weapons and on whose orders.**

**-- More than five months later, however, the KGB and procuracy employees have yet to begin a serious inquiry into this matter.**

**-- The commission found that several casualties had not even been reported to the procuracy ... MVD forces carrying guns were among those who opened fire at the victims, which means the victims could recognize some who shot at them. No one has expressed interest in this aspect of the problem.**

**-- Not a single criminal case related to the casualties and killings has yet been initiated.**

## **Impact on the Community**

### **Social Relations**

All Dushanbe residents with whom Helsinki Watch spoke, regardless of nationality or political attitude, expressed regret about the violence that marked the February events. One noted that everyone had been affected and that many had been so shocked they could not work for a month. A Russian-Tadzhik woman told us, "During those days, we lost our homeland."

Various witnesses said that no one thought that such violence could occur in their city. Several Tadzhiks insisted that their nation is ancient and peace-loving. A member of the local German minority said, "People still talk about these events and are tense. My Russian wife didn't go out alone for several months."

Several subsequent instances of violence were purportedly related to the February events. A Tadzhik journalist told us, "In June, a Russian guy stabbed a Tadzhik woman, saying it was in revenge for the February events." A woman who had been beaten and kicked by two Tadzhik men did not know if the incident was related to the February events, but she feared it might have been a warning not to talk about what happened. A third witness, an ethnic German, told of violence towards his young son: "I have a 15-year-old son from my first marriage. He was beaten up by six guys; his arm was broken. He left Tadzhikistan until he emigrated to West Germany with his mother."

A Russian geologist vividly described the interethnic tension he faces every day:

On the Central Committee square demonstrators held posters which read: "Russians Get Out in 24 Hours!" "Tatars Get out in 48 Hours!" After that, how can one feel comfortable here? My old mother says, "I have spent my whole life here, now how can they ask me to get out?"

"I can't tell you what it is like when you are walking around the city and there is a half-whisper from some corner, 'Russians, get out of here.' The republic newspapers beg us to stay. There are two levels, the newspapers and daily life. In the stores, more than anywhere else, one hears anti-Russian views, such as "I am in charge."

These tensions existed before February, but the Russians always thought that Soviet power would protect them. But after Makhkamov said, "Defend yourselves as best you can," we no longer believe that.

Those probably most affected by tense interethnic relations in the post-February 1990 period in Dushanbe are families of mixed nationality. The daughter of one such Russian-Tadzhik marriage, told Helsinki Watch:

Many people came here in the 1930's from other areas of the country. Many Slavic women married Tadzhiks. There is a whole group of *metis* (mixed nationality) within the post-World War II generation.

A Russian-speaking witness, himself in a mixed marriage, told us, "Tadzhik-Russians are disliked

the most; Russians who speak Tadjik are suspected of being infiltrators." For members of mixed marriages, the issue of whether to leave Tadjikistan is particularly difficult; many couples have split up over this issue.

### **Displaced Persons**

Emigration from Tadjikistan is hotly debated. Many thousands of Russian-speakers have left Tadjikistan in recent years, particularly since February 1990. Yet a Russian native of Tadjikistan argued:

**There is no reason to leave Tadjikistan. Why have 100,000 Russians left Tadjikistan? They think if they go to Russia they will leave tension behind. They do not understand that Russia is even more tense.**

Not all of those who left have done so because of the ethnic tensions. Among other factors influencing emigration is the desire of Russian speakers to educate their children in Russian.

### **The "Migration" View**

A Tadjikistan Supreme Soviet Deputy, Galina Belogorodskaya, an ethnic Russian, is a leader of an unofficial group, "Migration," which champions the rights of those who want to leave Tadjikistan. The vast majority are Russians or Russian-speakers. Belogorodskaya spent several hours with Helsinki Watch in November 1990 describing the group's views and activities.

According to Belogorodskaya, most of those who are leaving Tadjikistan are doing so because the February events made them fear for their future in the republic:

**Most of us do not know where to go. We have lost our relatives who have stayed here. Some families are splitting up, some have already left.**

She told us that the would-be migrants want to go "mostly to the villages and countryside" where such new arrivals are well received. Belogorodskaya also discussed with us the areas of the RSFSR where they wish to resettle:

**Over half who filled out our forms said they want to go to "central Russia" or to the RSFSR. Since we have lived in the south for over three generations, we do not want to go further north than Central Russia...Others want to go, in order of preference, to Penzenskaya *oblast*, Voronezhskaya *oblast*, Belgorodskaya *oblast*, Kaluzhskaya *oblast* ... Kaliningradskaya *oblast* in the Altai has made offers to many.**

Due to indecision over whether to leave Tadjikistan, many families are splitting up, or changing their destinations:

**Now people are changing their forms so that they can follow their young relatives who have already left. Someone observed that only the poor intellectuals are left, along with pensioners and invalids. People who spent their lives working to benefit Tadjikistan are now left with nowhere to go and no one to take them.**



**Belogorodskaya describes the baffled attitude of the Russian republic government towards the would-be emigrants:**

**The RSFSR government does not refuse to help, but cannot understand why we cannot work here. They tell me, "We will pass a law on refugee status and on forced resettlers, wait for that." But they don't understand that this law will not solve anything -- just like all our other laws.**

**The Tadzhikistan migrants want to relocate with other migrants in their own communities:**

**We always said we want to organize compact settlements, in *mikroraiions* near cities or in villages near major cities so that people with urban professions can go there. We also want to live in these compact settlements so that mixed-nationality families will feel at home. None of us are really Russian any more.**

**As for what "Migration" wants from the Tadzhikistan government, Belogorodskaya told us:**

**We need proper compensation for our property and apartments. The price offered by the Tadzhikistan government, 209 roubles per square meter, of real estate is inadequate. We need fair compensation to buy a comparable apartment in Russia ... Where we want to go, they say they do not have anything for their own people. In Penza, 40,000 families do not have their own apartments, in Belgorod 3,000, and in Sary Oskol, 25,000.**

**In addition to compensation for decreased income in their new places of residence -- and payment of the pensions they have earned while working in the republic -- the "Migration Committee" has other demands of the Tadzhikistan government. Some seem far-fetched:**

**We want the republic to provide us with building materials, otherwise one cannot get cement ... We are willing to leave our apartments [to Tadzhikistan], if we get help in building our new homes somewhere else.**

**We want compensation [from Tadzhikistan] for our involuntary material and psychological losses and for possible deterioration of our standards of living. All our resettlers have lost money. If here they earned about 200 rubles, [in the RSFSR] they pay 100 or even 70, simply for some place to live.**

**"Migration" Proposal for Forced Resettler Status Law:**

**At the request of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet, we have sent it the following proposal:**

**"Forced resettlers" are deprived of their civil rights. As a result, they cannot continue to live in the republic which has deprived them of those rights.**

**This status is defined according to the following criteria:**

**-- 1. Human rights violations as defined in the UN Human Rights Declaration ratified by the USSR;**

- 2. Violations of Soviet citizen's rights as defined in the USSR Constitution;
  - 3. Threats to life which arose as a result of interethnic conflict;
  - 4. Fulfillment of discriminatory articles in republic laws, including the language law;
  - 5. Limitations on receiving education in the official USSR language;
  - 6. Systematic expressions of nationalism in daily life.
- In accordance with this status, compensation for forced resettlement should be provided by the republic which is being left.
- Such compensation should include financial and material resources for building houses and buildings to be used for cultural purposes.
- Such buildings will contribute to the receiving republic in general. Specifically, such buildings will assist in the development of an infrastructure in places of compact settlement favorable for the receiving republic.

### **The *Rastokhez* View**

The leadership of the Tadzhikistan Popular Front, *Rastokhez*, concerned with the republic's bad reputation after the February events, has examined migration patterns extensively and shared its findings with Helsinki Watch.

**An economist told us:**

Statistics show that from the 1950's until the early 1970's there was a greater influx than outflow ... Starting in the latter half of the 1970's, and in the 1980's, more people left than arrived. This trend sharply accelerated in the mid-1980's.

According to *Rastokhez*, if one breaks down migration patterns by nationality, this is the pattern which emerges:

Out of the total leaving the republic [about 10,000], about 30% to 40% are people who emigrated from the USSR ... They left because they want to live with relatives, not because they did not like living in Tadzhikistan. This is particularly true of Germans who went to Germany, and Jews, although they feel happy here. No one has ever had a bad attitude towards them. Crimean Tatars also return to their homeland in the Crimea.

The *Rastokhez* spokesman was careful to insist that most non-Slavs leaving the republic do so for personal, not political, reasons.

As for the migration of Russian-speakers, *Rastokhez* says their exodus is unrelated to the February events, but admits the new language law may have played a "political" role:

**The exodus of the Russian-speaking population has little to do with the "February events." But the local government policy still favors the Russian-speaking population.**

**Russian-speakers leave for various reasons. Some make of this issue a political statement, referring to the new language law. But why don't they mention that more Tadzhiks leave than anyone else?**

**(The *Rastokhez* view that Tadzhiks leave the republic due to the poor socio-economic conditions they face is discussed elsewhere in this report.)**

**Abdurakhim Khalif-Zade, a *Rastokhez* leader, summed up the organization's views:**

**Conditions for Russian settlers were created at the expense of the local population. When *perestroika* began, the local people began to understand what was going on. The local people demanded their rights, then Russians became dissatisfied.**

## **Political Aftermath**

**Most of those Helsinki Watch interviewed in Dushanbe were hostile to the republic government. They considered it ineffectual in dealing with pressing issues. Some Tadzhiks say the republic government is at the beck-and-call of the national authorities in Moscow. Russian-speakers, however, say the republic leaders are too compliant with the wishes of the Tadzhik population.**

***Rastokhez* Chairman Khalif-Zade claims that local Russians, beneficiaries of Soviet colonial policies, are now chafing at the pinch of change:**

**Why have some Russians begun to express dissatisfaction? I think this is due to decades-long incorrect government policies. Those people came here, most with privileges ...**

**Actually, our republic is basically a province, an *oblast* of our government. We have no rights. In addition, we have a huge number of economic and social problems, many injustices. Our rulers never had the right or possibility of doing or deciding anything. And small problems turn into big ones. Here we have so many injustices, so many stupidities, that they are unbearable.**

**Two Tadzhik witnesses told us that a change of republic leaders would make little or no difference:**

**If Karimov had succeeded in overthrowing Makhkamov, in three months he would be in the same boat.**

**A *Rastokhez* leader added:**

**"We understand to change one or two people in this system is not to change anything. Another Makhkamov will arrive ..."**

**A Tadzhik journalist told Helsinki Watch that the republic government is unable to deal with the root causes of the February events:**

**The government is still afraid to take needed measures. The government is afraid of a new outbreak. Things are boiling away under the surface. In addition to social problems such as poverty, there is long-standing hostility between the northern and southern regions of the republic, worsened by the clan rivalry.**

**A Russian-speaker, on the other hand, told us that the national economic situation made it impossible for the local government to act effectively:**

**The local government cannot do anything to improve the situation. It is the economy which is at the heart of the problem. Now there is a rumor that the RSFSR will stop providing gas, bread, etc to Tadzhikistan. I fear that local Russians will be blamed for this.**

## **November 1990 Presidential Elections**

**On November 30 1990, the republic Supreme Soviet held elections for the newly-minted post of**

**Tadzhikistan president. In view of the failed coup which First Party Secretary Makhkamov weathered early in the year, he sought a broader mandate. Makhkamov faced weak opposition for the post from former First Party Secretary Rakhman Nabiev -- who had retired in 1985 for "health reasons." Makhkamov was given a limited mandate by the republic Supreme Soviet, winning the new executive post.**

**Two Dushanbe residents, both Tadzhik filmmakers, told Helsinki Watch their reactions:**

**Elections were held under conditions of a state of emergency. The Constitution is suspended. Under these conditions, it is impossible to achieve the desired goal of a rule-of-law state with equal rights constitutionally guaranteed.**

### **Democratic Party**

**Helsinki Watch spoke with the Deputy Chairman of the Democratic Party of Tadzhikistan, Khabibullo Abdurazzakov, a well-known Tadzhik actor and director. In this lengthy interview, conducted in November 1990, he told us about his new party.**

**As noted elsewhere in this report, the Democratic Party was formed by Shodman Yusupov in anger over the lack of official investigations into the February events. By now, it has held its first congress. Shortly before the congress, Abdurazzakov said to Helsinki Watch:**

**The Democratic Party will hold its first congress on December 2, 1990. A meeting attended by 600 people has chosen 12 representatives from all over the republic to attend the congress. The party has had 10,000 to 15,000 applications for membership. As yet, we have no office space or staff. We recently bought a house for 30,000 rubles from our party dues.**

**Subsequent to this November 1990 interview, Democratic Party leaders threatened to go on hunger strike to force local political leaders to allow them to hold their congress. First, the Tadzhikistan government made fasts illegal; then, the Democratic Party was allowed to proceed with its congress.**

**In a political victory for the Tadzhikistan Democratic Party, in May 1990 Dushanbe was chosen as the site for a meeting of 12 Democratic Parties from all over the USSR. At that meeting, a proposal to organize one national Democratic Party was rejected, while the representatives of five Central Asian and Kazakhstan parties agreed to form a regional association.**

### **Local Government Obstruction**

**Although the leaders of this group call it "a party," republic authorities refuse to "register" or**

**legalize it either as a social organization and certainly not as a party. Moreover, the Democratic Party is not allowed to publish or distribute its materials in the republic.**

### **Basic Goals**

**Abdurazzakov discussed with us some of the goals and methods of the Democratic Party:**

**The charter of the Democratic Party of Tadzhikistan gives total freedom to all religions: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and guarantees *glasnost* and *perestroika*. One can develop any thought so as to freely express it.**

**The social base of the new party, according to Abdurazzakov, is the intelligentsia:**

**Basically, it is the party of the intelligentsia. Workers and peasants are also members. About 10,000 to 12,000 have already applied for membership. Academics are particularly supportive. We believe our party can improve the lives of our people who now are deprived of their rights.**

**In discussing the party's organization, Abdurazzakov said:**

**We recently were in Khaizabad *raion*, some 45 kilometers from Dushanbe. Things went well. We met from 10 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. Delegates came from all the *kishlaks*, workers, doctors – over 100 in all. They chose delegates for our first organizational congress which will take place on December 1-2.**

**He added that the Democratic Party attempts to deal with other political groups in a friendly way:**

**The Democratic Party very much wants to organize a roundtable with members of the Communist Party and of various informal groups. So far, nothing has happened. We hope that we will be able to sit together and discuss ways to improve the lives of our people – not our own ambitions. The Democratic Party tries to maintain good relations with all the public groups in our republic.**

### *Rastokhez*

**Helsinki Watch also conducted a long interview with three leaders of the Tadzhikistan equivalent of a Popular Front, *Rastokhez*. They described their goals, program, membership and government-imposed difficulties.**

### **Membership**

**The *Rastokhez* leaders told Helsinki Watch:**

**We do not have membership cards, since our organization is not registered by the authorities and encounters much opposition. We do have supporters in all the regions of our republic and there are affiliate groups there. Some have 20,000, others 30,000 to as many as 500,000 members. In any case, it is fair to say that we have many hundreds of thousands of supporters.**

**While these leaders told us that membership is open to all regardless of national origin, they said that most members are Tadzhiks:**

**Since the *Rastokhez* program affects everyone who lives in the republic, regardless of social position, representatives of all layers of society and various nationalities can and do participate. *Rastokhez* does not discriminate on the basis of national origin. Our aim is the development of our economy, the resolution of social and ecological problems. Various nationalities take part in our work, although until now our members are mostly from the native population.**

**Most *Rastokhez* leaders, are members of the intelligentsia:**

**We are well-off. One of our best minds is our chairman, a candidate of economic sciences. Khabibulo Khamidov is a candidate of historical sciences. A deputy minister is a candidate of law, our general director and your humble servant is a candidate of philosophical sciences.**

### **Local Government Obstruction**

**The *Rastokhez* chairman, Khalif-Zade, told us of government-imposed obstacles encountered by his group:**

**Now the government does not even allow our name to be mentioned in the press, let alone allow us to publish our views. Although we tried to register, the government would not allow it.**

**Mirbobo Mirrakhimov told Helsinki Watch of the complications faced by the group in getting official permission for rallies:**

**Whenever we wanted to hold a meeting and filed an application, we were asked if there would be bloodshed. We ask, "Why should there be?" We held a meeting on October 15, 1990. Everything was normal. But before each of our meetings, rumors went around the city saying, "Russians will be killed."**

**The *Rastokhez* leaders took pains to assure us that their group was not to blame for the violent February events:**

**I have told everyone, including Makhkamov -- and he knows this very well -- that *Rastokhez* is not to blame for what happened. The role of our organization is to prevent bloodshed. Yes, we do not deny that we are in the opposition. Yes, we demand the change of this**

regime, of its structure, power, we demand the democratization of society. But on the horizontal, not the vertical, plane. To democratize in the political, economic and social spheres. We want a democratic civil rights state.

A *Rastokhez* Deputy Chairman, Mirbobo Mirrakhimov, who is writing a book on the February events, cited the official findings that his group was not involved. He also discussed with us in detail evidence that an anti-*Rastokhez* campaign has been conducted by the local government:

For several reasons, the February events had a tragic effect on *Rastokhez*. It did not play any role in these events. The materials of the Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Commission – which was organized right after the events – confirm this. And the materials of the procuracy investigation also confirm this. But in the eyes of the people of Tadzhikistan, the *Rastokhez* reputation has been blackened.

After the official February 18 meeting, there was a campaign to poison people against the *Rastokhez* leadership. The republic religious leaders played a key role in this campaign. In the mosques, they read special statements saying that we are followers of Zoroastrianism. Therefore, people do not need to believe us. This was the first step.

The second was started on February 23. There was a broadcast prepared, called "Behind the scenes." Our chairman was accused of having talked to a representative of "Radio Liberty," that I had given an interview to the BBC, and that Khalif-zade had spoken with a representative of "Sajudis." They had only spoken, there had been no speeches. But for a simple reader it was enough grounds to discredit us.

Every week, there is at least one article against the *Rastokhez* leadership. But this year, there is a petition to support our press. This may mean that the leaders have lost. They may have slandered us, but history is not in their favor.

## **Basic Goals**

Khalif-Zade claimed that his group supports human rights goals and is keen for more international contacts:

We want contact with Helsinki groups and with human rights societies, because our human rights situation is really very bad. Even new laws passed by our Supreme Court are bad. The curfew continues.

Our program and charter were developed long ago, but were confirmed at our founding congress, held on September 14, 1989. We have various points to our program: political, legal issues, economic, social and ecological problems. Our main goal is to foster the cultural development of our society. We think the individual, particularly one who has attained culture, represents the highest value.

In order to achieve the needed high level of culture, people need a certain level of social and economic development. Economic development is the foundation of society.



**Therefore, in our conditions, we must solve many political and legal issues to create a rule-of-law democratic state. Naturally, in order to do this, one must destroy and change the existing structure. And achieve real economic and political sovereignty for the republic.**

### **Migration Group**

**Helsinki Watch also conducted a detailed interview with Tadzhikistan Deputy, Galina Belogorodskaya, and two other members of the Migration Group to discuss Migration's goals, methods and membership. As of November 1990, the Migration Group had 4,000 families, representing some 20,000 individuals registered with it.**

**Belogorodskaya told us:**

**The Russian-speaking population of Tadzhikistan is 500,000. Of them, 90% have expressed interest [in migration]. Already 100,000 have left. [Makhkamov referred to 80,000, but that was earlier].**

**We have heard that people were threatening repetitions of the "February events." They said, first you leave in trains, then with suitcases and passports, and finally feet-first.**

### **Official Confrontations**

**Belogorodskaya told us:**

**First we tried to form a branch of *Intersoyuz* [a politically conservative, nation-wide organization of Russians from the non-Russian republics] right after the "February events." We tried to organize the Russian-speaking population, frightened after these events, and realizing we can no longer be defenseless, in the face of such extremism. But the local party bosses stood in the way.**

**On February 24 we organized a founding congress. I said we should sit at the negotiating table with the government and ask them when martial law might be lifted. But others said, how can simple people negotiate with the government? In short, we were not allowed to organize *Intersoyuz*.**

**After that, the [government] told us to write our program and charter and then get together. Well, that is what we did for two months and then it became clear that our Tadzhik comrades do not want to propagandize peace and friendship with us.**

**Belogorodskaya told us of her early efforts to convince the national government to assist the rising numbers of Russian displaced persons:**

**Even before we formed "Migration," I appealed to Gorbachev with a request to make the emigration process irreversible. In order to make sure that the Russian exodus will not be reversed, certain measures need to be undertaken now -- before the movement assumed a**

**mass, uncontrollable form.**

**For two years now, we have had refugees in our country. We see how they suffer. We do not want to become refugees, but we can do so at any moment. That is why we asked the government to adopt preventive measures.**

**She also told Helsinki Watch of a heated meeting with a USSR Supreme Soviet representative on nationality affairs:**

**Rushana Musakhanova Konopyanova, the Senior Counselor for Interethnic Issues for the USSR Supreme Soviet, arrived in April 1990. We went to talk to her. I, as a representative of the local Russian community, asked assistance in getting us out of here.**

**Our meeting did not go peacefully. I told her that I see that you are driving the country towards civil war. Because if there will be crowds of dissatisfied refugees, then all one needs to do is to throw a match to start a civil war. And that is how we parted. We saw from her attitude, that we will get no assistance from the USSR government. On our weak backs, they want to preserve the disintegrating Union.**

### **Local Government Obstruction**

**The republic government also opposes the activities of the Migration Group:**

**Today, our group is semi-underground. We cannot print our materials. The word "migration" is not supposed to be used. We cannot send our statements anywhere.**

**In fact, Belogorodskaya says that the republic procurator gave her an official warning that her group's activities are illegal:**

**I was summoned by the procurator and told that we had organized an illegal society -- the procurator did not have the legal right to do this since I have Deputy's immunity -- and therefore you are in violation of the law. Our commission on legal matters here in Dushanbe held a session to discuss this matter and reached the conclusion that we are illegal since we are not registered.**

**The Migration Group has apparently been officially declared illegal by the local authorities:**

**The republic authorities do not want to register us, although as of June 15, all our documents are in the Council of Ministers of Tadzhikistan. The Commission on Legal Matters declared our activities illegal and proposed that we end our activity, otherwise I should pay a fine of 1,000 roubles for the first violation. But we will not stop our activity.**

### **Activities**

**Despite these difficulties, the Migration Group functions and meets every week:**

**Our group will continue its work. We meet every week. People come to see us, fill out**

**forms, take addresses to which they can write in the RSFSR which are supplied by key organizations. But everyone wants young workers and most of us are over 50. Our only real hope is for the government to take up our problems.**

**Belogorodskaya discussed with us the three main activities of the Migration Group:**

**We assist in relocating people to Russia and to other republics -- we have members who belong to other nationalities. We also function as a migration center, fulfilling the function which we asked Gorbachev to do. We thought a government would have an interest in such a center so as not to lose our intellectual and industrial potential. We also function as a labor clearinghouse. We have records of those who want to leave and of various professions and work specialties. We have sent out inquiries about employment and housing to find out what is available.**

**We have already helped organize a cooperative in the Krasnodar area where about 100 people work. About 2,000 families can be employed at Prominform in the Perm area. But sometimes people are tricked. Our group also acts like a Helsinki Group; it defended the human rights of workers. Sometimes people were promised jobs and housing and when they got there -- there was nothing.**

**This is what we are doing to help resettle people -- without any government assistance to defend our interests.**

### **The Islamic Renaissance Party**

**The Islamic Renaissance Party held its founding congress in June 1990 in Astrakhan, according to Bess Brown in a Report on the USSR (May 10, 1991). The leading role in creating this national party seems to have been played by activists from the North Caucasus. A party spokesman said that its main centers are in Moscow, the North Caucasus, Tadzhikistan and in the Ferghana valley of Uzbekistan. Estimates of total national membership range from 10,000 to 20,000.**

**The stated goals of the party, open to all Muslims in the Soviet Union, are to enable them to live in accordance with the requirements of the Koran and Islamic law, to advance equal rights for all nationalities, and to espouse humanist goals. The party professes that it will engage only in constitutional methods of achieving its program; it rejects extremism and terrorism; and it seeks cooperation with like-minded political groups.**

**In Moscow, where the party claims a membership of several thousand, city authorities granted it registration and legal status. In Tadzhikistan, where its religious program potentially has great popular appeal, the government has outlawed all parties "of religious character" on republic territory. During the session of the Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet in late 1990 in which Mahkhamov was elected republic president, he charged the Islamic Renaissance Party with "extremism." Apparently, this was an effort by Mahkhamov to link this new party with his government's earlier unproven charges that Muslim extremists had played a key role in the February events.**

## **Recommendations**

### **To The Government Of Tadjikistan:**

- The State of Emergency, declared in Dushanbe on February 12, 1990, should be lifted. The danger to public order which first gave rise to this declaration has long since ended and the continuation of the State of Emergency has a deleterious impact on the public life of the republic. (As this report was going to press in mid-July, Helsinki Watch received news that the republic authorities have lifted the State of Emergency in Dushanbe. Helsinki Watch hopes that the closing of the official State of Emergency will also bring an end to official restrictions on freedom of speech, press and assembly in Tadjikistan.)**
- The 53-page report of the Commission of the Tadjikistan Supreme Soviet Presidium should be published in full in Tadjikistan in Russian and in Tadjik. These publications should be printed in large numbers and should be readily accessible.**
- The Tadjikistan Procuracy, KGB, and MVD should launch criminal proceedings against members of the Soviet armed forces who initiated and employed lethal force against 21 unarmed protestors in February 1990.**
- The Tadjikistan authorities should end the blacklist and any other penalties they have imposed on members of the local media or public organizations who have been critical of their handling of the events of February 1990.**
- The Tadjikistan government should lift restrictions on the unofficial and official media in the republic.**
- The Tadjikistan government should permit the registration of Rastokhez, the Migration Group and the Democratic Party as public associations or as political parties.**
- The Tadjikistan government and party leaders should agree to participate in a series of round table discussions with activists and members of leading informal groups and parties in the republic. The aim of such discussions would be to address chronic political, social and economic issues in the republic.**

### **To the USSR Government:**

- The USSR government should end restrictions on foreigners, particularly journalists seeking access to places of unrest.**
- Official investigatory commissions should be given subpoena power to obtain information and witnesses necessary for their investigations from other Soviet ministries and agencies.**
- Reports of such commissions should be published in full in both Russian and the official languages of the appropriate non-Russian republics.**

**To Soviet Military and Law-Enforcement Bodies:**

- During conditions of unrest, the USSR authorities should redefine the role of the MVD, KGB and Armed Forces so that their main goal will become protection of the civilian population, rather than protection of party property and buildings as is currently the case.**
- The Soviet military should not be used in police actions except as a last resort.**
- Soviet forces performing police functions should receive proper training in crowd control and in the use of non-lethal force.**
- Soviet forces performing police functions should be given the necessary equipment -- and should be trained in their use -- to function in areas of civil unrest. Such equipment should include non-toxic tear gas, rubber truncheons, plastic shields, bullet-proof vests, and horses for crowd control.**

## **Appendix A**

### **Excerpts From July 6, 1989 Ministry of Internal Affairs Order "On MVD Forces Special Measures"**

**Article 13 of the instructions on "The Procedure of Employment of Special Measures by the Organs of Internal Affairs and Internal Security Forces," approved by Order No. 127 of the USSR Minister of Internal Affairs (MVD) on July 6, 1989, states that special measures are to be employed in extraordinary situations for the following purposes:**

- Ending mass disorder and violent mass violations of public order;**
- Repelling attacks on buildings, facilities and means of transportation belonging to state and public organizations, enterprises, agencies and private citizens, as well as liberation of said buildings, facilities and means of transportation;**
- Repelling attacks on citizens, employees of agencies of internal security, military personnel and other individuals who uphold public order; as well as freeing hostages.**
- Apprehending an offender offering resistance to an employee of the organs and agencies of internal affairs, military personnel or the people's militia.**

**In such cases the Ministry of Internal Affairs is instructed to use the following special equipment:**

#### **Means of protection of personnel:**

- Helmets. (Army steel helmets or plastic protective helmets);**
- Bullet-proof vests and jackets;**
- Impact resistant and armored shields (Vitrazh, BZT-75, BShch-82, Zabor);**

#### **Means of active defense:**

- Handcuffs (BR, BR-S);**
- Gas canister hand grenades (Cheremukha-1 Cheremukha-6);**
- Gas canister equipped shells (Cheremukha-4, Cheremukha-7);**
- Aerosol can (Cheremukha-10);**
- Special carbine (KS-23)**

#### **Means for carrying out special operations:**

- Backpack apparatus (Oblako);**
- Flare grenades and devices (Zarya, Plamya);**
- Low-intensity explosive devices (Klyuch, Impuls);**
- Firefighting water tank (ATz-40/375n);**
- Armored vehicles (BTR, BMD, BRDM, BMP);**
- A device for stopping motor vehicles (EZh-M).**

**It is explicitly prohibited to deploy special equipment not listed above.**

## **Appendix B**

### **Supreme Soviet Commission Report Final Conclusions**

**After investigation and preliminary analysis, the following conclusions can be reached:**

**1. The events of February 12 through 14 were not spontaneous. They were presaged by serious economic and ecological difficulties, a low living standard, scarcity of land and residential facilities, inequitable development of regions, lack of attention to the needs of the people and to the preparation of local cadres, parochialism and inadequate use of cadres, increasing unemployment, violation of human rights laws. One can also state with certainty that these conditions were deftly exploited by politically ambitious elements, religious leaders, informal organizations, as well hooligans and criminal elements. This was clearly shown by the attempt to use unconstitutional methods to unseat the head of government and replace him with B.B. Karimov.**

**2. Protests and rumors were a forewarning of these events. Unfortunately, responsible officials did not live up to their sacred duties, failing to: (1) pay due attention, (2) give them appropriate political analysis, (3) take concrete measures to prevent tragedy, (4) notify the appropriate state and party officials. The KGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) were clearly sluggish in their responses. Disarray in those two organizations, primarily in the KGB, must become the subject of further serious discussion. Their operational style must undergo fundamental change and culprits within their ranks must be punished.**

**3. Another reason for these events is that in recent years the republic has seen a rash of unlawful activity; lowered vigilance by the procuracy; increased incidence of crime, especially organized crime. The republic procuracy and MVD have inadequately discharged their duties in uncovering, investigating and preventing criminal activity. Thirty percent of crimes are never solved. The least likely to be solved are crimes involving false accounting, substantial theft of state and public property, production of low quality, substandard and nonstandard goods as well as poor quality construction. In addition, many law enforcement units are plagued with lack of management, disarray, more time needed to investigate criminal cases, unlawful convictions and charges brought against the innocent. There are also numerous violations of laws. It is essential to root out defects in the operation of the republic MVD and the procuracy. In addition, the procuracy must be forced to intensify prosecutorial vigilance, shorten the time required for investigation of criminal cases related to the February events, and identify those who caused the tragedy, its chief culprits, as well as the military personnel who shot people. The procuracy must bring criminal cases against these people and assist in the process leading to the triumph of justice.**

**4. The February events, as well as the new atmosphere in the republic, were due to the**

lower intensity of ideological work. It is clear that this important area is still dominated by the same people. These people work as they always have, detached from the people and their concerns, still relying on the same old slogans and demands. As a consequence, religion has taken a stronger foothold, especially among the youth. The February events have shown that people are more inclined to listen to chief *mullas* than to state and party leaders. Unfortunately, in those [February] days the republic leaders and organizers of ideological work also placed all their hopes in the chief *mullah*, certain that only he would be able to pacify people.

5. The intelligentsia, both in the arts and the sciences, has always been the pride of our nation and state. Unfortunately, in recent years party organizations have forgotten that truth, and the intelligentsia has responded by removing itself from the political process. As a result, a schism developed between the party leaders and our nation's finest representatives. This was keenly felt during the February events. This situation must be rectified immediately. The creative intelligentsia must become the pillar of political and educational work.

6. The events connected with the Armenian refugees demonstrate that parochialism is on the rise in the republic and that patriotic and internationalist work have reached a very low level. This can present a serious danger for the republic.

7. As is known, the February events accelerated the rate of departure of Russian-speaking residents of the republic. The departure of skilled and experienced specialists can lead to a decline in many areas of the republic economy. Therefore, the slowing down of this unwelcome process, as well as concern over preparation of local cadres, becomes a major political task.

8. Although circumstances warranted declaration of a state of emergency and curfew legislation, the February 12, 1990 *ukaz* of the Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Presidium was unlawful in its content, jurisdiction and legal aspects. The principal culprits of this violation of the law are the employees of the legal department of the republic Council of Ministers and the Supreme Soviet, as well as the former Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Presidium Secretary, Comrade A.T. Kasymova.

9. Measures must be taken against those officials who allowed the doctoring of records, causing financial losses. These officials are in leading positions with: the Tadzhik Supply Union, the concern "Khizmat", Ministry of Auto Transport, Ministry of Water Works, the State Printing Committee, Ministry of Internal Affairs, State Construction Board, Ministry of Local Industry, Ministry of Committee Accounting, Savings Bank, Ministry of Communications, the Central Asian Railroad Dushanbe Division, Ministry of Bread Production, Tadzhik Energy Board, State Agriculture Board, Ministry of Health and TUGA.

10. It must be noted that during the events of February 12 through 14, the military, in several



**instances ignored limitations on their authority and illegally used firearms.**

**11. B.B. Karimov and N. Tabarov, after receiving a protocol about the resignation of three republic leaders, unaware of the legal technicalities and mistakenly believing that the protocol had entered into force, upon communication with each other attempted to draft a Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Presidium *ukaz*. The *ukaz* was aimed at relieving I.Kh. Khaoev of his duties as Tadzhikistan Council of Ministers Chairman and replacing him with B.B. Karimov. In order to commit this self-serving deed in a legal manner, the above-mentioned persons sought the help of specialists and officials. They had also compiled a list of persons serving on the provisional bureau of the Central Committee of Tadzhikistan Communist Party.**

**12. M. Mukhabatoshev, in order to engineer an agreement between B. Karimov and N. Tabarov, misused his authority (he violated the Communist Party Code, disobeyed the directives of the Tadzhikistan Communist Party Central Committee, violated orders from the first deputy director of the ideological department of the Tadzhikistan Communist Party Central Committee) by publishing the protocol of the republic leaders' resignation in the newspaper *Tadzhikistoni Soveti*. He also concealed the agreement that had been reached at Gosplan from the leaders of the party, state and members of the Tadzhikistan Communist Party Central Committee.**

**13. N.Kh. Khuvaiddullaev, in violation of party ethics and law, accepted the invitation of B.B. Karimov and N. Tabarov and met with these individuals in Gosplan. He gave them a legal briefing and later tried to warn party leaders by calling the offices of K.M. Makhkamov and G.G. Veselkov. For logistical reasons he was unable to reach these officials. In order to inform G.G. Veselkov about this he went to the Dushanbe Party City Committee, where he met M.M. Ikramov, who told him that he had already informed G.G. Veselkov. Thus, N. Kh. Khuvaiddullaev's actions show no traces of lack of principles and self-interest.**

**14. U. G. Usmanov, violating provisions of the law, accepted B.B. Karimov's invitation to come to Gosplan, where he briefed Karimov on the procedure for drafting an *ukaz* of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Later, after a conversation with G.P. Pallaev, he ripped up his draft of the *ukaz*. Thus, U.G. Usmanov's actions show no traces of misuse of authority.**

**15. A. Kh. Khabibov, misusing his authority and acting in violation of the law, during the period of state of emergency and curfew, neglected to ascertain the identity of a person and, on request of B.B. Karimov and with assistance of a military man, drove him from Gosplan to Ispechak. In presenting this report, the commission does not claim that this effort should conclude investigation of the sad events of last February. Much work remains to be done to determine the true cause of these events and to report them to the people. After the entire truth has been told the people, their souls and hearts might be reconciled. And the desire to work and live is a priceless guarantee of the republic's progress and further strides in *perestroika* and democracy.**

**Members of the Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Commission:**

**Commission Chairman:**

**Sirodzh Mikhtodzhiev** – lathe operator at the S. Ordzhonikidze Steel Reinforcement Plant (Dushanbe); Deputy of the Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet, eleventh session.

**Deputy Commission Chairman:**

**Safarali Kendzhayev** – Deputy Director of the Central Asian Transportation Procuracy; Tadzhikistan Deputy.

**Bedilkhon Odinayev** – Procurator in charge of monitoring observance with laws on juveniles, Tadzhikistan Procuracy.

**Yusufkhon Iskhaki** – Rector of the Tadzhikistan Abuali ibn-Sino Medical Institute; Professor; USSR People's Deputy.

**Azam Pulatov** – Chairman of the Department of Pediatric Surgery of the Tadzhikistan Abuali ibn-Sino Medical Institute; Doctor of Medical Sciences; Professor; Corresponding Member of the Tadzhikistan Academy of Sciences.

**Vladimir Giro** – Captain of a TU-154 airliner. USSR Deputy.

**Elizaveta Dedova** – Operator of a rotating kiln of the Dushanbe Cement Plant; Supreme Soviet Deputy, Eleventh Session.

**Negmat Yakubov** – Locomotive engineer, Dushanbe Locomotive Depot.

**Uktam Ayubov** – Student of the Tadzhikistan Abuali ibn-Sino Medical Institute.

**Buri Bobokalonov** – Brigade leader, concrete blocks and constructions; Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Deputy, Eleventh Session.

**Sirodzh Yunusov** – Brigade leader of Nonpoz complex, Dushanbe; Deputy of the Oktyabrskiy Regional Soviet, Twenty-first Session.

**Olim Norov** – Deputy director of the production facility at the F. E. Dzerzhinsky Tadzhiktekstil'mash complex.

**Mosharif Saidova** – Telegraph operator of Mezhgorsvyaz' Complex, Ministry of Communication, Tadzhik SSR; Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Deputy, Eleventh Session.

**Munavvar Nazriev** – Chairman of republic Goskompriroda; Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Deputy, Eleventh Session.

**Rustam Anoyatov** – Deputy director of Dozator, production complex Tadzhikgodroagregat.

**Bakhodur Razzokov** – Student at the Tadzhikistan V.I. Lenin Institute.

**Ibodullo Fayzullaev** – Secretary of the directorate of the Tadzhikistan Union of Writers; Tadzhikistan Supreme Soviet Deputy, Eleventh Session.

**In early February 1990, rumors began circulating that Armenians fleeing pogroms in Baku had been given apartments in Dushanbe. Many local families had waited decades for apartments, and angry meetings were held February 10 and 11 to protest what seemed to be preferential treatment for Armenians. Large crowds gathered in the Central Committee square, and a few demonstrators threw stones at troops guarding the headquarters.**

**From February 12 through 14, 117 people sustained bullet wounds and 21 of them died. Dozens were arrested and a state of emergency and curfew were imposed.**

**In the investigation of the killings in Tadzhikistan, Helsinki Watch calls on the authorities to try those responsible for the use of lethal force against unarmed protestors. The Soviet military should not be used in police actions except as a last resort. When necessary, soldiers and local militia should be trained in crowd control and the use of non-lethal force.**

**Despite the lifting of the state of emergency, political restrictions remain in force. Citizens groups continue to be barred from publishing inside Tadzhikistan, and the press is limited to certain topics.**

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