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Editor -in- Chief : Qasem Hasanpoor

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www.ebratmuseum.ir

Mail : international@ebratmuseum.ir

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Tuesday, January 16, 1979

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With formation and expansion of the Islamic movement, harmony of public uprisings led by Imam Khomeini, holding of the fortieth day ceremony for the martyrs in different cities, massacre of September 8, 1978, and strike of the employees of National Oil Company the regime lost control of the security of the country and the foundations of the 2500-year Imperial System were loosened within a short period of time resulting in the Shah's escape. Upon the failure of the military government of Azhari in establishment of order and security and resolving the strikes which had crippled the country's economy, the Shah resorted to the leaders of the National Front. Subsequent to failure of Jamshid Amouzgar, Jafar Sharif-Emami and Azhari in control the waves of public anger and resentment during the Islamic movement, the Shah resolved to

appoint a member of the National Front, who was affectedly to be an opponent of the Shah, to sooth the people's anger. Along these lines, Shapour Bakhtiar accepted the post of Prime Minister provided that he takes full authority of the country and the Shah leaves the country after the two Parliament's vote of confidence. Eventually the Shah left Iran for Egypt after years of oppression and crime against Iranian Muslim people while even his closest advocates and lords evaded admitting him. After his escape, people went to streets to celebrate this triumph with sweets and flower and it was when the despotic Pahlavi Regime was experiencing its final days. Less than a month later, the 2500-year Imperial System collapsed in Iran for ever.

Shah's escape from Iran

Shah's escape; last step toward Islamic Revolution

On January 16, 1979, when the Etellaat newspaper reported that Shah already left the country with a large bold headline of "the Shah went", people poured into the streets, celebrating not Shah's "departure" but his "escape" from the country.

In fact, they realized well that the anti-Shah resistance has forced the puppet ruler to flee after 37 years of despotic rule.

Unlike the series of increasing unrest and protests across the country in 1978 and 1979, no one of the pro-regime elements either inside or outside the country could predicted that the Shah's regime is experiencing its final days and is in imminent danger of overthrowing.

Like any other political and social change, the Shah's escape from Iran can be traced back to the sequences of events occurred in the prior months or year. In fact, due to the synthesis of developments inside and outside the country Shah and his family forced to exit the country.

Celebrating Islamic Revolution

On the occasion of the 37th anniversary of the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

This month (February) marks the 37th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Sunday, February 11, 1979

On 11 February 1979, the Islamic movement of Iranian people reached its milestone. On such a day the struggles of Iranian Muslim people eventually came to fruition and 2500-year monarchical system and 50-year tyranny of Pahlavi Regime was eradicated and the Islamic Republic system was established in the country by Divine Providence.

Ceremonies marking 37th victory anniversary of Islamic Revolution start nationwide

Victory of Islamic Revolution



Special ceremonies to celebrate the 37th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran kicked off nationwide Monday morning.

The first day of the ten-day long ceremonies coincides with the anniversary of return home of the Late Founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini from exile .

The arrival of the Late Imam in Iran on February 1, 1979 from his exile which last took him to Paris added new zeal to the uprising of the Iranian nation against the tyrant Pahlavi regime which culminated in the victory of the revolution just ten days later.

The nationwide ceremonies to commemorate the arrival started at 09:33 local time, marking the hour the Late Imam's flight landed at Mehrabad Airport in Tehran.

Large groups of people from different walks of life, families of martyrs and officials gathered in the Late Imam's mausoleum for the historic moment.

The route the Late Imam took from the airport to Behesht-e Zahra cemetery in southern Tehran, where he addressed a huge gathering of enthusiastic audience, was showered with flowers by Army helicopters.

Many similar ceremonies are underway all around the country to mark the occasion.

The bell of Revolution was rung at over 100,000 schools nationwide.

According to officials, thousands of different programs across the country will mark the auspicious occasion of the victory of the 1979 Revolution.

Many cultural and artistic events including the International Fajr Film Festival are also underway on the occasion.

In a special ceremony in the town of Khomein, the birthplace of the late Imam, in the central province of Markazi, bells tolled marking his return anniversary.

Prison Museums

Laogai Museum

Established by the Laogai Research Foundation in 2008, the mission of the Laogai Museum is to document and expose the Laogai System, China's vast and brutal system of forced-labor prison camps. Opened to the public in April 2011, our newly redesigned museum in the Dupont Circle area serves as a space for education, advocacy, and dialogue about human rights in China. Furthermore, it preserves the memory of the Laogai's victims



and raises awareness about the ongoing abuses of the Chinese Communist Party against its own people.

The museum style is bold, modern and engaging; it includes video interviews, short documentaries, Communist Party documents and prison artifacts. With free entry, self-guided tours, and bilingual signage, it is an ideal museum for visitors from the US and abroad who are interested in DC's role in international advocacy, as well as DC residents seeking to hear an alternative voice about China.



The Laogai System: China's vast system of prisons and detention facilities in which inmates are forced to labor and endure Communist Party political indoctrination.

Named after the historical laogai labor camp, which was the original prison camp system established by Mao Zedong in the early 1950s, the term "Laogai System" highlights the historical continuity of Communist Party criminal and administrative detention practices. Despite undergoing cosmetic changes, the ideology and purposes underpinning the Laogai System remain the same: to maintain the Communist Party's monopoly on power through detaining convicted criminals and those deemed disruptive to political stability in an effort to transform them to conform to socialist ideals through forced labor and political indoctrination. As maintaining the political supremacy of the Communist Party through expediently administering punishment serves as a core function of the Laogai System, procedures used to convict detainees often fall short of international standards proscribing arbitrary detention. In addition to neutralizing potential sources of instability, throughout history, the Laogai System has provided free prison labor to construct public works projects, produce consumer goods, enrich Communist Party officials, and arguably enhance the price competitiveness of Chinese exports.

Communist Repression With Chinese Characteristics

The Laogai System's emphasis on political indoctrination and forced labor is rooted in historical Chinese penal philosophies and communist revolutionary ideology. In line with Mencian and Confucian philosophies, Chinese penologists have long held that criminality springs from ignorance. According to this view, authorities could significantly reduce or even eradicate anti-social behavior by teaching ordinary citizens proper behavior and reforming criminals through education. During the Republican era, as the Nationalist government sought to modernize Chinese criminal detention practices, authorities established a nationwide prison system modeled after Western penal institutions but adapted to accommodate traditional Chinese criminal justice philosophies. The concept of ganhua, a term connoting moral transformation, served as the fundamental guiding principle of these early prisons. The philosophy underlying ganhua had three essential components: forced labor, moral instruction, and basic education. As Republican penologists believed that idleness and ignorance bred criminality, it followed that authorities could reduce recidivism by forcing inmates to perform productive labor and attend lectures. After 1949, the communists abandoned the Republican era prison project in favor of the labor camp; outdoor agricultural colonies that could better accommodate the massive influx of prisoners following "liberation." Despite repudiating traditional Chinese philosophies and customs, the communists essentially cloaked the concept of ganhua in new political garb. However, rather than merely aiming to reduce recidivism, the communists sought to transform labor camp inmates into "new socialist men".



The Laogai System is also deeply rooted in communist revolutionary ideology aimed at building a classless society through using labor camps to overcome resistance from capitalists or landowners who may oppose the nationalization of the means of production. In 1875, Karl Marx proposed establishing institutions that would transform deviants into benevolent citizens by forcing them to engage in "productive labor" under "non-exploitative" conditions. Felix Dzerzhinsky, Lenin's security chief, implemented this concept in the 1920s by establishing the Gulag, the term used to describe the Soviet Union's vast system of labor camps. Hardly unique to the Soviet Union and China, communist regimes throughout the world have established labor camps as fundamental components of their criminal justice systems.

Even during the Republican era, Chinese government officials--many of whom were hostile toward the Chinese Communist Party--increasingly looked to the Soviet Union's Gulag as a viable alternative to the country's overcrowded and inefficient prison system. In the 1930s, the Nationalist government experimented with the Soviet model by establishing agricultural colonies loosely modeled after the Gulag. When Mao took power in 1949, the communists naturally invited Soviet specialists to assist them in establishing the Laogai System.

The Chinese word laogai, meaning "reform through labor," refers to the most extensive system of forced labor camps in the world -- modeled after the Soviet gulag -- which has spanned the territory of China since the early days of the communist regime. The Laogai Research Foundation has identified 1,045 laogai camps still in operation today, though it is likely that many more exist.



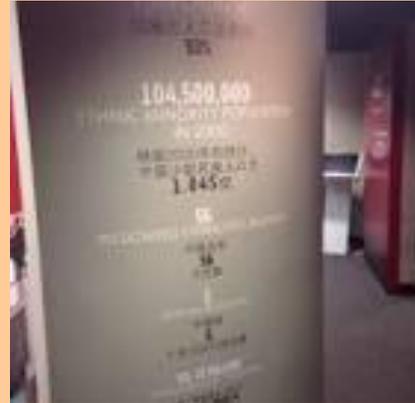
The Chinese government has consistently defended the laogai system against criticism, claiming that the labor camps comprise a normal, even model prison system, no different than that of any other nation. It is unlikely, however, that the government would designate the most basic details regarding the operation and population of its "normal" prisons as closely guarded "state secrets." A normal penal system should serve as an instrument of justice – one that serves to protect the people by detaining, punishing, and rehabilitating real criminals. The function of China's laogai, however, extends far beyond that.

The entire legal system in China is viewed by the Communist Party as, foremost, a tool through which it can maintain its dictatorship over the people, consistent with Marxist-Leninist thought. Accordingly, throughout its reign, the Party has used the laogai to persecute and intimidate large numbers of Chinese people who posed no real threat to their fellow citizens.

Soon after achieving victory in the communist revolution, Mao Zedong oversaw the creation of the laogai with the assistance of Soviet experts. As the system was being developed throughout the 1950's, Mao relied heavily upon the laogai to consolidate power, imprisoning within it many Kuomintang supporters and members of the bourgeoisie. They would later be joined by scores of the Party's own, who were purged for deviating from whatever the Party line was determined to be at any given moment.

Although such purges ended when Deng Xiaoping came to power, he and his successors continued to suppress political dissent, whether in isolated incidents, such as when a journalist oversteps the boundaries in reporting on government corruption, or on a larger scale, as was the case with crackdowns on the Democracy Wall movement in 1979 and the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

As with any totalitarian regime, holding on to absolute power requires that it restrict certain freedoms, such as the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and religion. Articles 35 and 36 of China's 1982 constitution supposedly safeguard these freedoms, but the State has consistently put forth other laws that trump these protections in order to maintain control over its people. And although China has signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which also protects those rights, its government has not yet ratified the treaty, despite continuing calls for it to do so .



Consequently, the same sorts of dissidents who in Mao Zedong's days were charged with "counter-revolutionary" or "anti-socialist" crimes are today charged with "inciting subversion of state power" or "revealing state secrets." The so-called national security laws are so broad and vague that the Party can effectively use them against anyone whom it believes presents a challenge to its rule or even a threat to its image. As a result, the laogai has been filled not only with common criminals, but also with journalists (China is the largest jailer of journalists in the world), authors, cyber-dissidents, China Democracy Party members, public interest activists, human rights lawyers, underground "house church" leaders, Falun Gong practitioners, and discontented members of China's oppressed ethnic minorities, especially Uyghurs and Tibetans .

All prisoners within the laogai, dissidents and common criminals alike, are victims of a Chinese regime that does not respect the rule of law. During the early years of communist rule, having established little in the way of a legal system, the regime often sentenced suspects without the benefit of a trial .

Today, despite having created a more robust legal system, the Chinese Communist Party remains in control of the courts, and this political interference comes at the expense of judicial independence and due process. Suspects often do not have adequate access to legal counsel and are unable to fully defend themselves. Indeed, guilt, not innocence, is presumed by the courts, and

suspects often must confess crimes under duress. What legal rights they do possess are routinely violated by law enforcement personnel, and widespread corruption and collusion among government agencies makes it extremely difficult for victims of such abuse to address their grievances through legal recourse.

Moreover, under some circumstances, current Chinese law allows for police to



arbitrarily detain individuals for long periods of time without clear judicial regulations. One such form of detention is the notorious laojiao (reeducation through labor) – an administrative measure which allows police to detain any person for up to three years without a trial. Laojiao enables the government to easily cleanse city streets of undesirables, including migrant workers, petitioners, vagrants, and dissidents, as was the case with Beijing during the 2008 Olympic Games.

In some cases, police have even committed healthy persons to psychiatric hospitals. Even prisoners who were convicted and have served out their sentences within the laogai may be forced to accept “jobs” at the same labor camps in which they were imprisoned or a nearby factory if they are deemed to be not sufficiently reformed. This practice, known in Chinese as jiuye (forced job placement), essentially extends the prisoner’s sentence indefinitely at the discretion of police or prison authorities .

All these practices clearly and severely violate international legal standards of due process. And regardless of their specific category of incarceration or the manner in which they came to be there, all inmates within the laogai system are subject to the two elements that distinguish it from most other penal systems— .thought reform and forced labor

Thought reform is perhaps one of the most unique aspects of the laogai system. Most other penal institutions, including the gulag, have never incorporated thought reform into their prisoners’ regimen, or at least have not placed as much emphasis on it as has been the case, historically, with the laogai in China.

The roots of China’s thought reform movement date back to the early 1950’s, when Premier Zhou Enlai instructed students and faculty at China’s colleges

and universities that thought reform was necessary for intellectuals to adapt to the new socialist society. Of course, “counterrevolutionaries” and other “hostile elements” within the laogai were presumed to require thought reform as well. Under Mao, this translated into forced confessions, endless oral and written self-criticisms, and struggle sessions (wherein inmates were forced to criticize and humiliate one another) .

Today, while the intense political study sessions common during Maoist times are no longer employed, many prisoners are still compelled to confess their crimes, recant their religious beliefs and political opinions, and, possibly, attend special reeducation classes. The entire process may entail peer pressure, humiliation, and physical abuse by fellow inmates as well as torture at the hands of prison staff. Collective forced labor continues to be regarded as the primary means by which to transform the thinking of prisoners.

The Chinese Communist Party views forced labor not only as a vital reformatory tool but also as an important source of economic growth, functioning to support the national economy. Soon after its creation, Mao Zedong came to see the prisoners held within the laogai as a valuable untapped resource – free labor. An amendment to the “Resolution of the Third National Public Security Conference” in 1951 states :

The large number of people who are serving their sentences is an enormous source of labor. In order to reform them, in order to solve the problems of the prisons, in order that these sentenced counterrevolutionaries will not just sit there and be fed for nothing, we should begin to organize our Laogai work. In the areas where this work already exists, it should be expanded.

Just as forced labor was used to construct the Great Wall hundreds and thousands of years ago, laogai prisoners have been utilized to carry out many of the country’s major public works projects, beginning with the Great Leap Forward in the late 1950’s and continuing through today, with prisoners employed in diverse forms of labor across the country, including construction, farming, and mining. Additionally, prisoners at many labor camps are forced to manufacture, assemble, or otherwise process products that are sold to consumers across the world. With no compensation and inadequate food, laogai prisoners are forced to work long hours under extremely harsh conditions without proper equipment, often to the detriment of their health and safety. Those prisoners who do not meet production quotas may be beaten or tortured.

The economic exploitation of laogai prisoners has proven to be an extremely effective means of generating profits for prison administrators and earning

revenue for the local and national governments via enterprise taxes. In fact, the generous profit margins possible from this free labor have encouraged expansion of the laogai's economic activity. Labor production within the laogai is monitored by Chinese authorities, and those whose performances do not reach government standards face "corrective" procedures. For a time, laogai units were required to be financially self-sufficient, and today many produce beyond such levels .

Despite being party to international and bilateral trade agreements which prohibit the trade of forced-labor products, China continues to encourage laogai enterprises to export their products to world markets, so as to contribute to China's rapid economic growth and foreign currency reserves. The Chinese



government denies this practice, pointing to Chinese laws that forbid the export of laogai products. Simultaneously, though, the government defends itself by arguing that such laws are difficult for the national government to enforce as many laogai camps are administered at the provincial or local level .

The international community has addressed the issue of the laogai on several occasions. The US House of Representatives (2005), the German Bundestag (2007), and the Italian Parliament (2007) have all passed resolutions condemning the laogai system and calling on their governments to take steps to prohibit the import of laogai products. Although the import of forced-labor products is already illegal under U.S. trade law, several factors help to obscure the original source of these products, making them difficult to identify. Most laogai prison facilities operate not only under an internal administrative name (as recognized by the Ministry of Justice) but also a commercial enterprise name under which they can publicly do business. Also, the involvement of many middlemen, including contractors and trading companies, complicates efforts to trace the path of laogai products back to their production. There is, however, much evidence, including research conducted by the Laogai Research Foundation, to suggest that laogai products are indeed being exported to foreign countries .

For many prisoners, thought reform and forced labor are only the beginning of the severe cruelties they must face. While the exact figures are state secrets and thus unknown outside of the Chinese government, human rights groups estimate

that the number of executions carried out in China every year amounts to several thousand—more than all other countries combined .

Moreover, the world became aware in the 1990's that China had found a new way to exploit prisoners, even after death. Undercover investigations revealed that Chinese hospitals were harvesting the organs of executed prisoners and transplanting them to privileged Party officials or, for a profit, to wealthy foreigners. In 2006, China's Vice-Minister of Health, Huang Jiefu, publicly admitted that most of the organs used in China's organ transplants, which rank second in the number conducted each year only to the U.S., came from executed prisoners. Although Chinese medical officials recently agreed not to use organs from prisoners (except to donate to their immediate family members), the law still does not clearly prohibit the practice, and many human rights advocates have little confidence that it will disappear. Disturbingly, the economic forces of supply and demand seem to have infiltrated even this most solemn realm of justice.

In the face of growing criticism over the laogai, China has responded with defiance and in some cases with cosmetic modifications. In 1994 it ceased using the word "laogai," and instead began referring to the system as "jianyu", meaning "prison". This change, however, was in name only, and it did not reflect any actual change to the structure or operation of the laogai.

Notwithstanding the misrepresentations of the Chinese government, the term "laogai" was later added to the Oxford English Dictionary; the German dictionary, Duden Die Deutsche Rechtschreibung; and the Italian Dictionary, Universale, thereby preserving within the annals of history the true nature of the brutal institution.

Only after the word "gulag" became well known, owing primarily to the efforts of the late Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, did pressure for the system to end begin to build. Hopefully, the same will hold true for the laogai. Until that time, democracy cannot flourish in China .

The Ceremonial cars for chiefs of Savak in Ebrat Museum of Iran

General Nematollah Nassiri



General Hosain Fardust



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