

Afghan guerrillas seek Islamic state

by BARRY RENFREW
ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — Many of the guerrillas battling government forces in Afghanistan say they are fighting above all to create a pure Islamic state.

It would be the third Islamic state in the immediate area, next to Iran and Pakistan.

Some guerrillas' religious zeal transcends even their determination to topple Afghanistan's communist government and drive out the estimated 115,000 Soviet troops supporting it.

"First we fight for Allah, then we fight for freedom," Yaqub Shah, a senior guerrilla military commander, told an Associated Press reporter during a trip to eastern Afghanistan.

His comment was not unusual among the guerrillas.

However, some non-combatant Afghan exiles in Pakistan maintain the guerrillas might not get their way with the majority of Afghanistan's population. These exiles, some of whom are academics, hold the view that while Afghanistan's population is 80-per-cent Moslem, the mass would not favor a theocratic government.

The four fundamentalist groups among the seven main Afghan guerrilla parties say they are first and foremost Islamic revolutionaries, although all of the groups stress their adherence to Islam.

Many of the fundamentalist leaders began their struggle for an Islamic state long before the communist seizure of power in 1978 and the coup that installed a more pro-Soviet faction in 1979.

Barhanuddin Rabbani, leader of Jaimiat-I-Islami, one of the main guerrilla groups, who met President Ronald Reagan in Washington this summer as acting chairman of the Afghan guerrilla alliance, said no one should doubt that he is fighting for an Islamic state.

"First of all, I am an Islamic revolutionary. Then I am an Afghan nationalist," he said in an interview. "Islam is much higher than anything."

Iran is on Afghanistan's western border and Pakistan is to its south.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini established a fundamentalist Islamic state in Iran after overthrowing the shah in 1979.

But 80 per cent of Afghans are more moderate Sunni Moslems while Iranians are Shiites, stricter in their observance of Islamic law.

Afghans and Iranians have seldom got along and their differences in religious observances have played a key role in separating them.

The guerrillas say their Afghan state would not be like that of Iran, where Khomeini is the imam and the highest authority.

Pakistan became an Islamic state under the leadership of Gen. Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, who seized power in a military coup in 1977 and remains the country's president. Ninety per cent of Pakistanis are Sunnis, harboring the same kinds of differences with Shiites as the Afghans do.

Although Marxism, the foundation of the Afghan government, fosters atheism, officials in Kabul, the capital, countenance Islam and even practise it in public.

Najibullah, the nation's top leader as head of the Communist party, often is shown on television praying in a mosque.

"The character of our national democratic revolution is not in contradiction with Islam," he told a group of western reporters allowed to visit Kabul in October.

But Islam does not form the basis for the nation's law as the guerrillas would have it.

All of the top guerrilla leaders are adamant that they will decide the future of Afghanistan once they have gained military control of the country.

"Those who are now fighting the Soviets will decide what kind of state we will have," Rabbani said. "It will be an Islamic government."

Afghanistan, the fundamentalists agree, will be an Islamic republic based on religious law as revealed in the Koran, the holy book of Moslems. In addition to Iran and Pakistan, Saudi Arabia is another major nation in the area that lives by law based on the Koran.

The Afghan fundamentalists say their state would have an elected president, an elected parliament, a constitution and regular elections, but the nature and foundations will be Islamic and nothing will be tolerated that might challenge that.

Democracy, personal freedom and political liberty will be allowed to the extent that Moslem law and teachings permit them, the fundamentalists say.

GUATELMALAN REFUGEES GET FRESH START IN P.E.I.

CHARLOTTETOWN (CP) — Four years after fleeing the violence of their homeland, 13 members of a Guatemalan family have been given a new beginning in this pastoral island province.

With the help of a committee of Roman Catholic parishioners on Prince Edward Island, they left the Guatemalan and Mexican refugee camps they had lived in since their village was destroyed.

Fabiana Domingo Gomez, five of her children, six grandchildren and a son-in-law arrived in Charlottetown late last week and have

moved into a five-bedroom house.

"This is their idea of a miracle — to be pulled out of that," said Bill Campbell, a member of the committee that has so far raised about \$10,000 to help Gomez and her family.

"Their Christian faith is wonderful to see," he adds. "The first thing they wanted to do was to find a church and pray for us."

The parishioners' sponsorship of the refugees, arranged through Canadian immigration officials, was initiated in mid-August by P.E.I. natives Rev. Joe Kane and Mario

Carota. The pair met the family while working with refugees in Mexico.

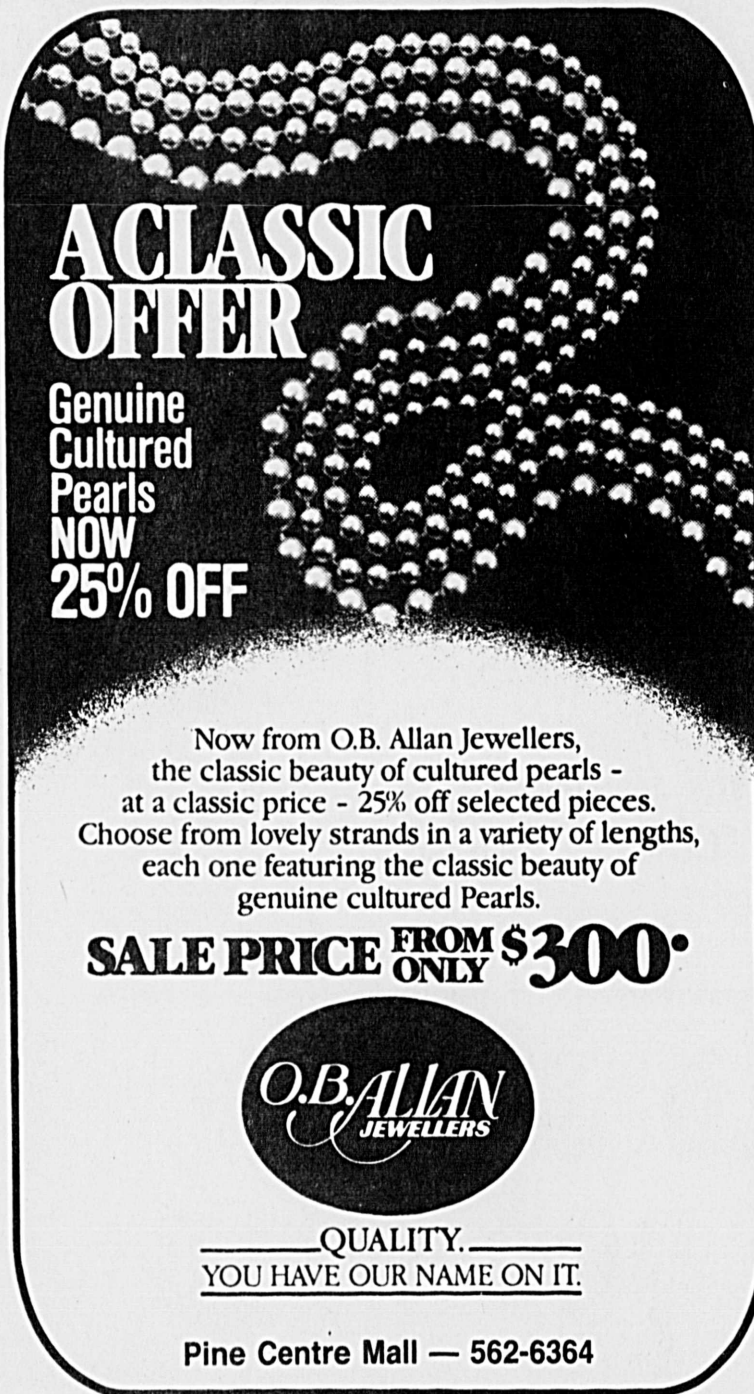
The family's village was destroyed in 1982 during a battle between guerrillas and the military government. Western human rights groups say Guatemala, which lived under three decades of military dictatorship before a civilian president was elected last December, has had one of the world's worst human rights records.

Campbell said the family felt it

was more endangered than most because two of its members were teachers, adding that educated people were sought by government troops and suspected of being anti-government leaders.

He said Gomez radiates joy and peace despite the hardships she's been through.

"She is a remarkable lady — the image of Mother Teresa of Calcutta — and she has the same virtues."



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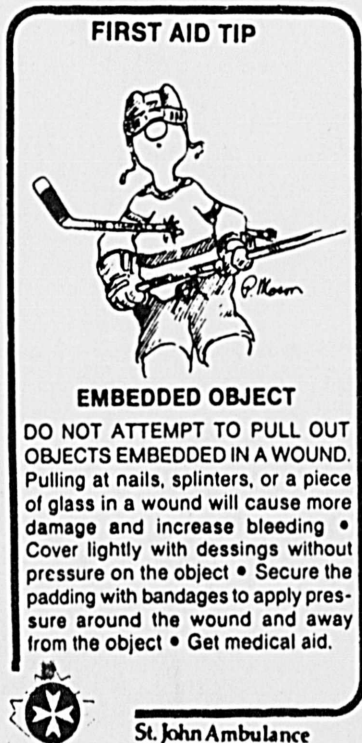
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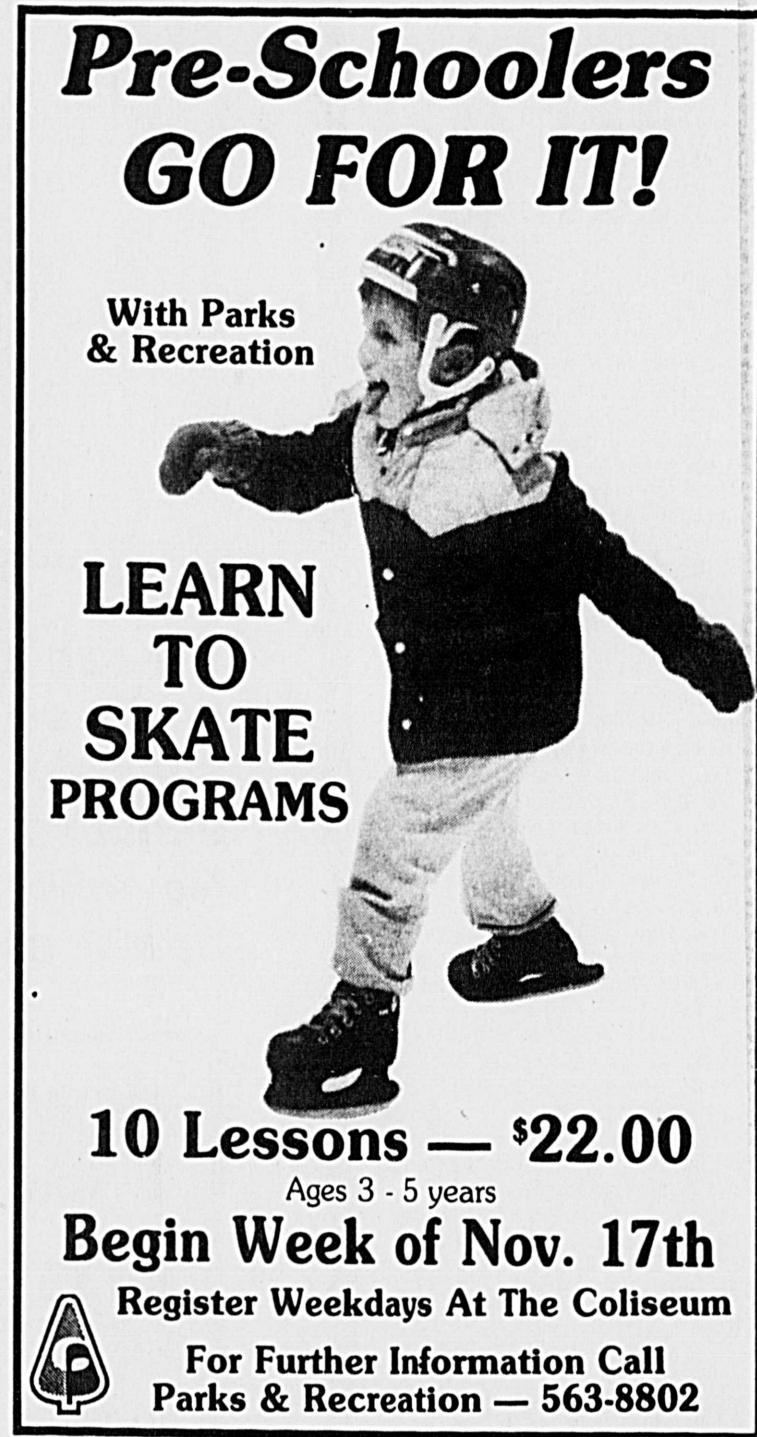


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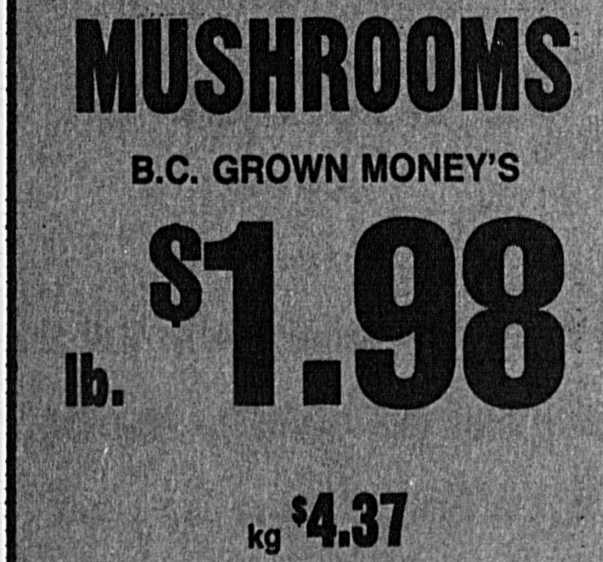
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