

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
NOFORN

Human Rights Performance: January 1977-July 1978

Central Intelligence Agency
National Foreign Assessment Center

September 1978

Overview

Over the last year and a half, we believe, the human rights situation worldwide has, on balance, improved, but in several countries has deteriorated. We see this improvement reflected in two ways: first according to the rating (either *generally good*, *spotty*, or *poor*) the various countries occupied in July 1978 compared to January 1977; secondly according to the direction (improvement, no change, regression) they have taken during this period regardless of rating.

As to rating, we find 47 countries in the generally good category as of July 1978 compared to 44 in January 1977. India, Spain, and Thailand moved up from the spotty category; that is, we judged that these countries had endemic problems in only one or two areas of human rights as of July 1978, but in several areas 18 months previously. In terms of population, the improvement was much more dramatic than the numbers of countries involved would suggest: from less than 700 million people in January 1977 to more than 1.4 billion—nearly a third of the world's population in July 1978.

The decline in the *spotty* category during the same period was from 78 countries with about 1.8 billion people in January 1977 to 74 countries with about a billion people in July 1978. The change in the *spotty* category reflects not only the movement up to *generally good* by India, Spain, and Thailand but Afghanistan's movement down from *spotty* to *poor*.

The countries in the poor category, that is, with problems in all or nearly all areas of human rights, numbered 25 with a population of about 1.56 billion in January 1977 and 26 containing about 1.58 billion in July 1978.

Table 1¹ below summarizes the comparative ratings for July 1978 and January 1977. See also figure 1 for the rating of each country as of July 1978.

In terms of the direction countries have taken since January 1977 we see more significant patterns of change, both upward and downward, than the

¹ See the appendix for a more detailed listing of the information contained in the figures and tables in this paper.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

PER 5/20/99 CIA RE NLC-96-124

BY [signature] NARS DATE 7/13/99

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

NOFORN

Table 1

Human Rights Ratings, July 1978 and January 1977

Rating	July 1978		January 1977	
	Number of Countries	Population (Million Persons)	Number of Countries	Population (Million Persons)
Generally				
Good	47	1,409	44	678
Spotty	74	1,035	78	1,783
Poor	26	1,579	25	1,562

comparative rankings indicate. We judge that over 2.4 billion people lived under 41 regimes maintaining a generally higher standard of human rights in mid-1978 than in January 1977. Most of these regimes—35—still had ratings in July 1978 no better than *spotty*. Moreover, nearly a billion people lived under three regimes which, though improving since January 1977, were still rated in the *poor* category in July 1978.

The PRC is the most important case of poor but improving. There has been some easing of controls, and the recent rhetoric, promising the restoration of more regular judicial procedure, a prohibition against the use of force in obtaining confessions, and punishment for violations of “human rights” (Peking’s term), is of considerable interest. At minimum the rhetoric shows a new and noteworthy recognition by Chinese leaders that such concepts matter to countries the PRC now finds it in its interest to cultivate.

On the negative side it is fairly clear that for a substantial number of other persons (nearly one in 10) the standards of human rights declined between January 1977 and July 1978. Of the 10 regimes involved, seven, notably the USSR, Angola, Vietnam and Czechoslovakia, were already in the *poor* category in January 1977. For the average citizen of such countries, a very bad human rights situation actually worsened. While quiet diplomacy may have provided benefits in individual cases in these countries, by and large the regimes have proved insensitive to official public criticism, and at times have shown a tendency to react to such criticism by becoming even more repressive. This has been particularly apparent in the USSR and Czechoslovakia where, nonetheless, dissent seems to have become embedded in political life.

In 96 countries with a population of 1.2 billion we judged there was no significant change up or down during this period. More than half the people in this group live in countries with *generally good* ratings in human rights anyway. For the more than 200 million living in the 17 countries with *poor-and-unchanged* ratings—for example, Cambodia—Western influence generally has made no impact.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~