

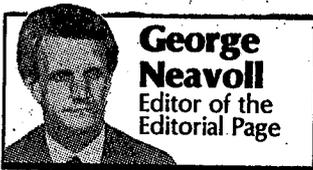
That's Why They Were Hanged

Iran: These Three Were Dangerous

Take a close look at the photo at right. The three people you see there are criminals who were hanged recently in Iran.

They are criminals, that is, in the eyes of the despots who now rule Iran. Their crime is that they would not renounce their Baha'i faith.

Hanged! Can you imagine it? The older man and women, Inayatallah



George Neavoll
Editor of the
Editorial Page

and Izzat Ishraqi, could be the father and mother of any one of us. Their 22-year-old daughter, Roya, could be a sister or a daughter of our own.

But they were strung up because they would not convert to Islam, on the orders of a judge who warned the rest of the Baha'i community in Iran: "The Islamic nation will, God willing, fulfill the prayer mentioned in the Koran, 'Lord, leave not one single family of infidels on earth.'"

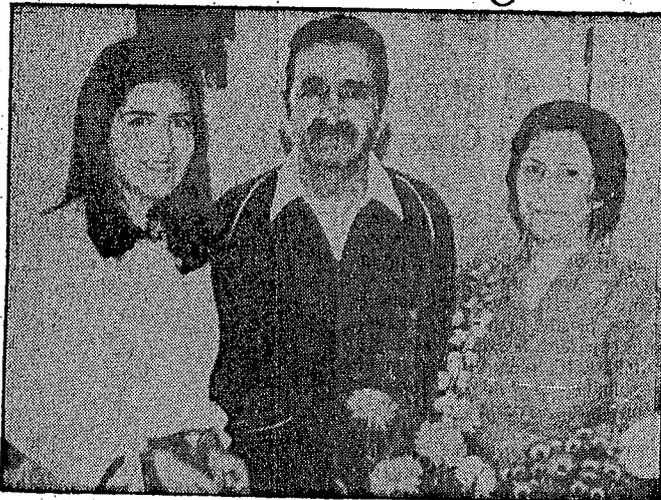
And so the sacred writings of the Koran are subverted to the evil that currently rules the hearts of a fanatical regime. It is the same evil that similarly bent the teachings of the Holy Bible to help justify Nazi Germany's slaughter of the innocents that began just 50 years ago.

Unlike the latter slaughter, however, today's persecution of the 300,000 Baha'is of Iran is not being smothered beneath a blanket of complacency. It is drawing the outrage of the civilized world, and if the Iranian government does succeed in leaving "not one single family" of Baha'is alive, it will have to pay the price in public censure.

THAT MAY SEEM a small thing, and indeed it is. But it is more than the Nazis had to face in their attempted annihilation of the Jews and other minorities, or the Ottoman Turks in their successive massacres of the Armenians — modern-day instances of genocide that went largely unremarked at the time of their happening.

President Reagan, Congress, the European Parliament, the U.N. Human Rights Commission and the parliaments of West Germany, Australia, Great Britain and Canada all have protested the killings in the strongest of terms.

"America and the world are in-



Inayatallah and Izzat Ishraqi (center and right), with daughter Roya (left), went to the gallows rather than renounce their faith

creasingly alarmed and dismayed at the persecution and severe repression of the Baha'is in Iran. . . . " the president said on May 22. "These individuals are not guilty of any political offense or crime. They have not plotted to overthrow the regime, and they are not responsible for the deaths of anyone. They only wish to live according to the dictates of their own consciences."

Within the month, Iranian officials in the southern city of Shiraz had hanged 17 more Baha'is, including the family of Inayatallah, Ishraqi. Apparently operating under some perverted sense of decency, they hanged the men and the women, including three teen-age girls, separately — six of the men on June 16; the 10 women two days later; and the seventh man some time after that.

EARLY THIS MONTH, 130 Baha'i men, women and children were attacked by mobs and driven from their village in northern Iran, in the Iranians' own version of *Kristallnacht*.

According to reports received by the U.S. Baha'i National Center, members of Baha'i administrative bodies in Tehran are being hunted, their families harassed and their homes violated. At least 22 Baha'is, 11 men and 11 women, have been jailed this month in cities across the country.

Since the 1979 revolution, 142 Baha'is have been executed or assassinated, and 14 Baha'i leaders, abducted in August 1980, have not been heard from since. Among the

hundreds who have been jailed, 60 members of the faith are imprisoned in Shiraz, where the June executions occurred.

In addition to these crimes against the person, Baha'i holy places and cemeteries have been desecrated, members' property and private assets confiscated, and their children denied schooling.

Just as it was dangerous to be a Jew in Nazi Germany, it is dangerous to be a Baha'i in Iran today.

IT ALWAYS HAS been dangerous, to an extent. The persecution of the Baha'is dates virtually to the time of the founding of the faith by a young Shiraz merchant, later known as the Bab, in 1844.

He and his followers advocated the unity of all peoples and religions, the equality of the races and the sexes, the harmony of science and religion, and universal education and peace.

Regarded as heretics, the Baha'is subsequently were hounded and abused with a special ferocity — but none so fierce or so blatant as that directed against the faith under the Ayatollah Khomeini and his fellow zealots.

Compared with the other victims of genocide around the world, the Baha'is are few in number, but their suffering is proportionately as great. Indeed, their very smallness makes them especially vulnerable to those who would eliminate them utterly.

May the God who is father and mother to us all prevent that ever from happening.

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WICHITA, KS.
EAGLE BEACON
D. 124,000 — S. 181,000
WICHITA METROPOLITAN AREA

BP000553