SHORTAKES

■ U.S. Refugee Policy — Double Standard

The Reagan administration recently granted special legal status to Nicaraguans fleeing their home country, allowing them to work in the United States without facing the risk of deportation. This arrangement is similar to that offered to refugees from Soviet satellite countries such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Poland. At the same time, the administration opposes granting such status to Salvadorans and repeatedly denies refugee status to Salvadorans and Guatemalans, claiming they are fleeing to the U.S. in search of jobs, not to escape political persecution.

Currently, the Reagan administration's standard for granting asylum to refugees is based on whether an individual can demonstrate "well-founded fear of persecution" upon return to their home country. The administration has been granting virtually all requests by Nicaraguans but rejecting similar applications by Salvadorans. There were more than 1,700 shooting deaths linked to political violence in El Salvador last year.

In response to this blatant double standard, the House voted on July 28 to postpone deportation of refugees from both Nicaragua and El Salvador for two to three years, pending the completion of a congressional investigation of human rights abuses in those countries. The legislation, sponsored by Joseph Moakley, D-Mass, is expected to face heavy opposition in the Senate. (M.F.)

■ Korean Americans Protest in the U.S.

"We didn't think middle-class Koreans in New York would join a people's power movement, but they did — just like in Korea," said Rev. Kyung Suk Soh, minister for youth in the Korean Church of Brooklyn. Korean Americans have long been silent on political issues, but recent turmoil in South Korea has sparked unprecedented political participation by Koreans in the United States. Many have kept a low profile because they believe that they are being watched by the Korean consulate, and fear that anti-government activity here might cause problems for remaining family in South Korea.

In late June, however, during the peak of the protest movement in South Korea, Koreans joined forces across the United States to protest the South Korean government's refusal to allow direct elections and free political prisoners. Three thousand participated in a Rally for Democracy in New York City; 3,000 gathered in a demonstration in Los Angeles, and 400 protested in front of the Korean consulate in San Francisco.

The potential of an emerging Korean-American people's movement is unclear. President Chun's recent concessions seem to have quelled protests here, and a Korean movement may not carry the same momentum as the Philippines' "people power" movement.

However, some activists believe that this could be the beginning of a new Korean protest movement in the United States. The organizers of the Rally for Democracy in New York, who include leaders from 20 Korean organizations and religious groups, have taken the first step toward the creation of a national organization by establishing the New York Coalition for Democracy in Korea. "In the future, leaders of Korean associations here will be forced by public opinion to be anti-Government," said Tae Hwan Cho, a participant in the New York rally. "Pressure has its limits; the people have reached the point of explosion in Korea and there is a parallel movement here. We can't be patient anymore." (A.H.)

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SPECIAL FEATURE Inter-Racial Violence

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daughter in the shoulder. The gunman and his accomplice returned later that evening and emptied the cash register and took food and cigarettes. Yi was one of three Korean merchants killed in Washington since October, 1986. In 1986, at least 11 Korean-owned businesses were firebombed in Anacostia.

Over the past two years in Tacoma, Washington, Black youth have beaten several Southeast Asian students and an elderly Cambodian man, and the tires of Southeast Asian-owned cars are slashed on a regular basis. Tom Dixon, president of the Tacoma Urban League, says that this type of conflict is common among poor people. Referring to the growing poverty in the United States and the slashing of social services by the Reagan administration, Dixon remarks: "When poor people have less they strike out at each other. It's happening all over the city, all over America. The priorities of the country are upside down, and things are going to get worse before they get better."

These outbreaks of violence are not isolated incidents. The past five years have seen a sharp rise in the number of conflicts between recent Asian immigrants and refugees and the Black, Latino and other poor communities they move into. For example:

- On November 4, 1986, 30 to 40 Black youth assaulted seven Cambodian high school students as they walked home from school through Olney, a predominantly Black neighborhood in Philadelphia.
- In the Fall of 1986, two incidents of inter-racial violence occurred in East Dallas, Texas: in the first, three Latino men dragged a Cambodian man from his car, beat him and took his money; in the second, a group of Latinos fired, unprovoked, into a crowd of Cambodians standing on the street.
- In the western section of Oakland, California, conflict between the Black and Southeast Asian Refugee populations has led to the deaths of two Blacks and one Southeast Asian.

In spite of the growing pattern of Black and Latino violence against Asians, many minority community leaders and activists insist that the problem not be viewed simply as one of racial antagonism. Black and Latino agression against newly-arrived Asians is far more complex: it is the consequence of differences in economic class, of language barriers and cultural misunderstandings, and of the government's inadequate preparation of low-income residents for the sudden influx of Asian immigrant and refugees into their communities.

Immigrants and Refugees: Two Distinct Groups

The complexity of this issue deepens when one takes into account the diversity of the Asian population and their relationships to other racial groups in the U.S. Contrary to popular belief, the Asian community is neither homogeneous nor monolithic. Some Asians enter the United States as immigrants with education, financial resources and skills. The majority, however, are impoverished refugees fleeing war and repression. When these diverse populations arrive, they occupy different positions in the communities they live in and enter into different economic and social relationships with the long-term residents they encounter. Given this diversity, it follows that the motivations behind an attack on Korean or Chinese merchants in the Black community are not identical with those behind a physical assault on Southeast Asian refugees in the schools or on the streets.

One factor which differentiates segments of the Asian population in the U.S. is when they arrived. The Asian population in the United States more than doubled between 1970 and 1980. In 1970 nearly 90 percent of Asians Americans were of Japanese, Chinese, or Filipino descent. By 1980, census reports listed 19 distinct Asian and Pacific Island populations, with the three largest groups comprising only 62 percent of the total.

The first wave of Southeast Asians arrived in the U.S. in 1975 following the U.S. defeat in Vietnam. In that year 133,633 Indochinese were admitted into the U.S. Between 1976 and 1978 the numbers dropped considerably, followed by an increase to 80,700 in 1979, to 166,700 in 1980 and to more than 200,000 between 1981 and 1982. Although the majority of Southeast Asians are from Vietnam, the proportion of Cambodians and Laotians has increased in recent years, particularly since 1980.

In contrast to the Indochinese refugees, Asian immigrants such as the ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, China, Hong Kong and Singapore, as well as many recently-arrived Koreans, come from relatively privileged backgrounds in their own countries. It is largely by virtue of this fact that they are able to afford the cost and negotiate the paperwork necessary to come to the U.S. in the first place. The Chinese and Koreans also have pre-existing communities and support systems in the United States. Many do not have to be able to speak English to get a job because they can work within the Korean or Chinese communities.

Since many of these immigrants were merchants and shopowners in their home countries, this background, coupled with fear of discrimination in the American job market, makes it logical for them to work as small entrepeneurs. By pooling their financial resources extended family networks are able to gather the initial start-up capital needed to open a business.

Communal traditions help these families to reduce costs. Asian immigrants will often reduce living expenses by eating inexpensively and by crowding several families into one house or apartment. Likewise, Asian merchants often reduce labor costs by employing family members. The free labor supplied by their large families also allows Asian