

December 23, 1981

TRIP REPORT - PESHAWAR

November 25-29, 1981

The undersigned visited Peshawar, Pakistan, from November 25-29. The trip was in furtherance of programs mounted and funded by the Washington Chapter, Afghanistan Relief Committee, and was carried out at no cost to the Committee.

Principal contacts in Peshawar included Dr. Levi Roque and Mark Ice of International Rescue Committee; U.S. Consul Douglas Archard; and John Fullerton, correspondent for FAR EAST ECONOMIC REVIEW of Hong Kong and DAILY TELEGRAPH, London. It was also a pleasure to meet briefly with a visiting senior delegation from IRC/New York which included Bob DeVecchi, Bayard Rustin and John Coleman.

Conclusions drawn by the undersigned from conferences with the above and other contacts in Peshawar regarding the Afghan refugee situation in Pakistan, the general situation in Afghanistan, and program priorities were as follows:

(1) In general, the approximately 2,000,000 Afghan refugees in Pakistan are receiving assistance at levels which compare favorably to refugee programs in other parts of the world. Massive support is being provided through such instrumentalities as the Pakistan Government, the UNHCR and a host of well-funded international voluntary agencies. Problems were cited, such as over-crowding in the camps, which some felt, could result in epidemics and long-term ecological damage caused by destruction of trees and over-grazing of land, etc., but in general the refugee relief program in Pakistan was at a level adequate to meet the crisis.

(2) Major institutions such as the Khyber Hospital - to which our Committee had made contributions in the past - were receiving major funding support from the U.N. and the Pakistan Government. Prosthetic surgery, to which ARC had contributed in the past, was in fact more actively provided for wounded Afghans by the hospital of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Peshawar.

(3) A small organization such as the Afghanistan Relief Committee could make its modest resources really count, not by adding marginally to the extensive funds already provided to the refugee camps and major hospitals, but rather by contributing to the French organizations MSF and AMI, virtually the only groups addressing the highest priority need, which is at this time not the plight of the refugees in Pakistan, but rather the sick and wounded inside Afghanistan. Whereas refugees reaching Pakistan receive massive international assistance, displaced persons inside Afghanistan - internal refugees, if you will - receive nothing. This makes the medical and surgical help provided by

the French doctors and nurses of AMI and MSF the most relevant and support-worthy single activity being provided to meet today's problems.

(4) A priority problem which is being met by no one is the need for such basic items as boots, socks, blankets, quilts and food for the population inside Afghanistan, including particularly the Mujahadeen.

(5) In general, the Mujahadeen inside Afghanistan are more numerous, better armed and more adept today than a year ago. Some local leaders are emerging (as in the Panjshir Valley area), and the resistance is more effective than before. Although the level of arms is now more adequate, a major problem is the lack of adequate training in the use of arms and equipment which greatly reduces their impact.

(6) ARC local funds:

During 1981, ARC had disbursed from Peshawar accounts some 113,000 rupees (approximately \$11,500), including 3,000 rupees contributed by the Buffalo Chapter and 10,000 rupees from the Chicago Chapter.

Remaining on hand for disbursement, after consolidation of all local rupee resources in our United Bank, Ltd. Peshawar account, were 111,184.78 rupees. (This sum does not include approximately 49,000 rupees, representing a contribution of \$5,000 by the New Mexico Chapter.)

In view of the program priorities discussed in the foregoing paragraphs, the undersigned directed that all rupees in our Peshawar account should be disbursed solely to the French organization, MSF, at the pre-existing rate of 15,000 rupees per month until such funds, and any future contributions, are exhausted. (Note that the other French group which we have supported, and which is very active in certain areas of Afghanistan, AMI, prefers to receive dollar contributions at its headquarters in Paris, and maintains no permanent local representation in Peshawar.)

COMMENT

Since MSF not only operates its clinics inside Afghanistan, but also administers to needs of people in the villages through which it passes on the way in and out, we are convinced that no funds contributed by American donors to the victims of the situation in Afghanistan are better spent than the dollars and rupees we are providing to MSF and AMI, and that no funds are more accurately targeted to provide the most help for the people who most deserve help.

ARC/Washington notes that it has recently donated an additional \$5,000 to the International Rescue Committee in Washington, D.C., which was formally presented by ARC's Board Member William McCulloch to Leo Cherne, Chairman of IRC, on December 10, 1981. Also, ARC/Washington has mailed a \$5,000 contribution on November 16, 1981, to AMI, Paris, as well as the final \$3,000 of a \$10,000 commitment to a Belgian medical clinic, to pay for a life-saving kidney transplant operation for an Afghan refugee.

ARC/Washington believes that in 1980-81, it has made a genuine, if modest, contribution to the cause of the Afghan victims of Soviet oppression. This has been made possible by the strenuous efforts of a series of volunteers who have served with or helped the Committee, most notably Philip Fagan and Sadie Goodman. Fund-raising has proven to be surprisingly, and sadly, difficult. For some examples, every one of twenty of America's richest Foundations declined to contribute when approached. Again, an appeal signed by Lowell Thomas, just before his death and sent to some 5,000 members of the Washington, D.C. "Green Book", or social register, garnered barely enough returns to cover the cost of mailing. Other direct-mail appeals have shown more promise, and two annual Afghan Fairs were profitable and well-attended. Street corner and door-to-door canvassing produced small but appreciated donations. But, in the absence of large-scale assistance from such sources as U.S. Government refugee funds, major private foundations or TV personalities, the Washington Chapter can no longer justify the time and effort of its volunteers, who have served full-time and without salaries, and will discontinue new fund-raising activities. Any contributions received in the future in response to previous appeals will be forwarded directly to our Peshawar account and go to support MSF activities inside Afghanistan. In any case, the New York headquarters of the Afghanistan Relief Committee will continue to function.

The Washington Chapter of ARC extends its thanks to all who have supported the cause and derives satisfaction from the fact that their past efforts will continue to provide help to the most deserving Afghan sick and wounded for months to come.



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