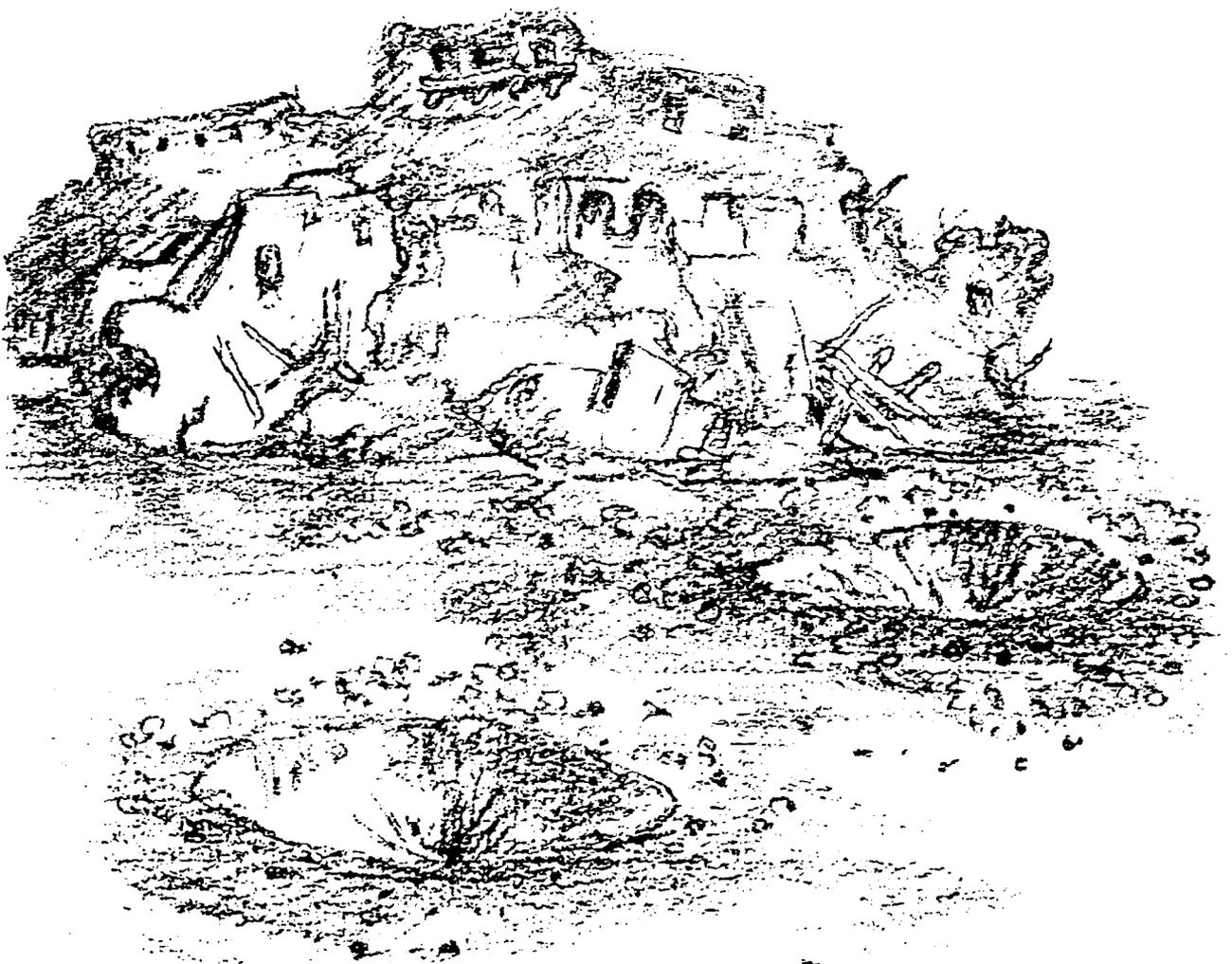


# "Notes from a bombed area"



Baraki-Barak, Logar  
Afghanistan 1987

Text and photo: Maria Söderberg  
Drawings: Stig Danielson

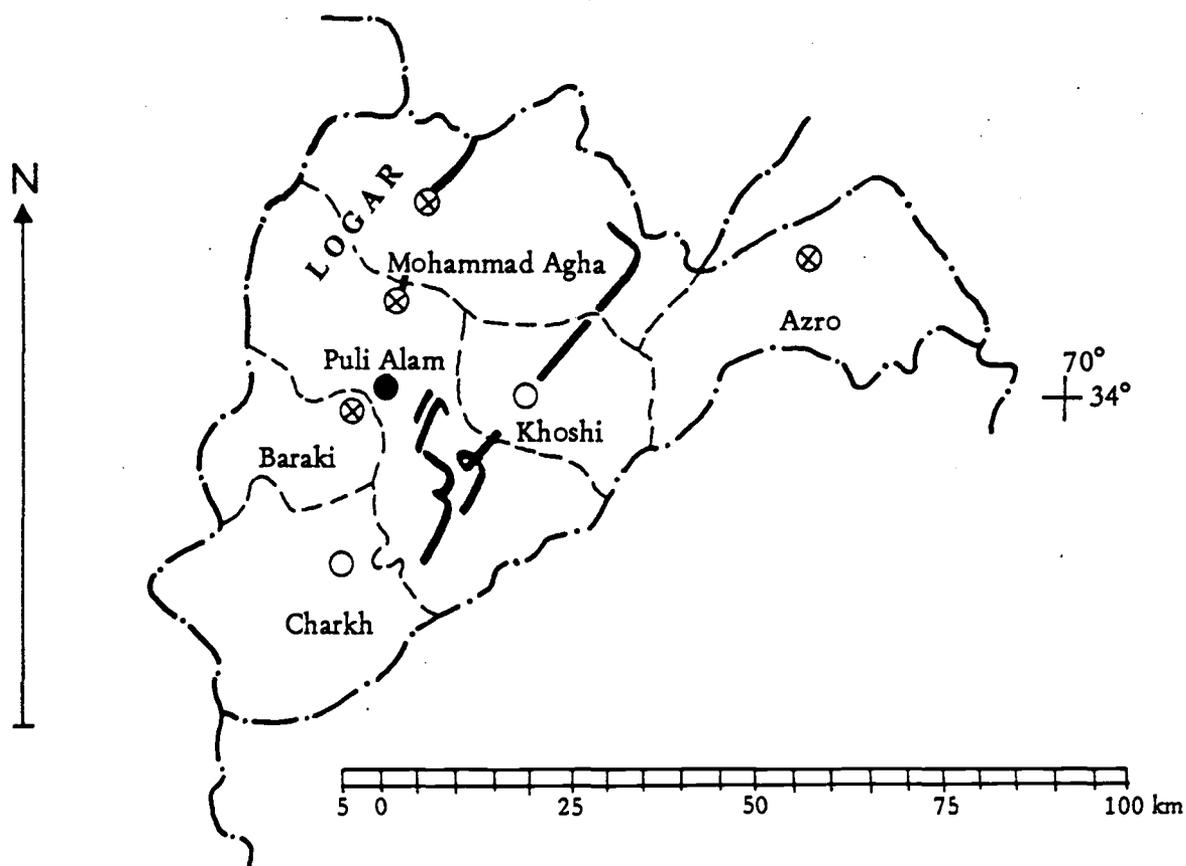




MAP: Kabul and southeastern Afghanistan.

Edited by Ludvig W. Adamec, Ph.D.

### Administrative Divisions of Logar Province



Logar province is situated in eastern Afghanistan and borders on Kabul. The distance between the described Baraki-Barak area and the capital city Kabul is 60 km. Logar is the country's smallest province. In 1977 the population was estimated by the Central Statistics Office of Afghanistan to be 329 000. The population of Logar is, therefore, 1.9 percent of Afghanistan's total population. It is difficult to estimate the number of inhabitants in Baraki-Barak today during the war, but it is approximately 80 000. The guerilla leadership estimates that some 10 percent have fled since the beginning of 1980. Approximately 60 villages are to be found in the district.

23 October, 1987

"If you had seen the bombs fall on Baraki, you would have gone mad!"

Ghulam Jelani is 19 years old and on his way to Pakistan with a horse caravan. He came to Kharwar Valley with his younger brother during the night. Now they are waiting for night and for the darkness to fall over the mountains.

"Our house was bombed. We had three rooms, now there is only one left for everyone to live in."

"How many?"

"Father, mother, brothers, sisters and sister-in-law with one child, 13 all told."

The attack on Logar began 12 days ago. Ghulam Jelani and his family remained in their house in Baraki-Radjan. Bombs were dropped over the area at varying intervals.

"The first days the Mujahedin guerilla counterattacked. They hid in the mountains. Planes and helicopters came with soldiers to Khosh-Koo, but the mujahedin forced them back."

No troops were landed in the Baraki-Barak district.

"The government troops fired from a long distance. On the second day they dropped napalm from a great height.

"During the bombings we sat under a tree. We were afraid of bomb splinter and the new weapons.

"Once I counted 276 bombs that were dropped over Qalai Gili. I saw 24 houses which had been hit by bombs."

"Any injured?"

"Perhaps 15-20. Five were martyred -- two children, one woman and two men."

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*Shirazi/son*



Ghulam Jelani

"Was there any doctor in the district?"

"Yes, Doctor Ali Ahmad -- he lives half-an-hour from Baraki-Radjan, and then Doctor Zarif.

"Now I am on my way to Pakistan to try to find help. Perhaps make some money. I have a cousin there. We would like to build up the house again. We are poor. We can't flee to any other place."

"Why did the family decide that you should be the one to go?"

"We didn't have enough money to rent horses for ourselves and take all our things with us."

Two years ago Ghulam Jelani's family was forced to leave their eight jeribs of land. They had borrowed 140 000 afghanis which they were unable to repay and had to surrender the land as payment.

"It's that loan that drives me away. We were forced to take it after a big offensive. Then they burned all our wheat and barley. We are totally dependent on the harvest which we barter for goods.

"To repair our house today would cost about 100 000 afghanis. Bricks, land and people who must be employed..."

The family has received 2 000 afghanis as aid from Hezb-i-Islami after the bombings. Ghulam Jelani's older brother belongs to Hezb.

"A delegation came to our house, but 2 000 afghanis won't go anywhere"

He himself is a member of Jamiat-e-Islami.

"Why do members of the same family belong to different parties?"

"In the beginning Hezb did not have enough ammunition. So I joined Jamiat. We must protect ourselves.

"I know that I will die in Jihad. Why shouldn't I shoot a hole in some Russian before I die myself?"

Kharwar was our hiding place for a week. Reports of battles and new bombings reached us every day. Attack planes and helicopters flew in wide circles around the valley. One morning our village was inspected by four Mi-24's, helicopter gunships. The next day a helicopter was shot down further away in the valley.

We were served every day by Abdul Kadir. He is 13 years old. His father has rented out his two horses and accompanies them on the journey to the Pakistan border together with some families who have elected to flee. During his absence the oldest son, Abdul Kadir, is responsible for the guests together with his uncle. In order to mark his position, he wears a large green turban on his head.

He answers all our questions briefly.

"What are your duties?"

"I bring home wood, water... weed the garden. Bring food here."

"Are you the one who makes decisions for the family now?"

"Yes, but it is limited by my age. I talk with the elders, my relatives, if a more difficult decision is to be reached."

His day starts at five o'clock. Then he goes to the mosque, where he is also instructed in the Koran.

"There isn't any regular school here."

"What do you learn?"

"The beginning of the Koran -- in Arabic."

"A village in Kharwar was bombed two months ago. One person died and three were injured", says Abdul Kadir. He heard when the planes came.

"What did you do?"

"Nothing."

"What did you think about?"

"Nothing."

"Where you afraid that the planes would come here?"

"Yes."

"Would you consider fleeing?"

"No..., but 20 families from here have left."

"It is bad to end up in a camp in Pakistan"



Abdul Satar

On the 20th Abjoosh, south of Baraki-Barak, was bombed. It is a village with 200 families, and was also under fire a year ago. The mujahedin used to gather in Abjoosh and the attack a year ago was a warning: "This happens to the families who support the mujahedin". Abjoosh is one of the villages which was severely damaged earlier. Twenty families have left. Here there are 35 widows and many orphans are cared for by relatives. Twenty men have become shaid, martyrs, because of the war.

This autumn it was their turn again. Abdul Satar, 44, from Abjoosh told us. He is fleeing with his family to Pakistan.

"We are leaving now. The house is completely destroyed. Three hits by a BM-13 from long distance. Our 25 sheep, a few goats and a cow were all killed. The attack came suddenly. I myself stood with the plough out in the field and the others were in the house. After the attack they lay hidden under the ruined walls. It was God's will that no one was injured or died!"

"120 families had their houses destroyed. Some of them decided to flee, others are waiting and hope that they will receive help".

"Which ones are fleeing?"

"Those who can afford to."

"Will Abjoosh be built up again?"

"How can that be done?"

"When the village was attacked last year, where the houses repaired?"

"Then we received help from Harakat-i-Inqelab, where I am a member.

"They gave money to the affected families. But it costs something like 500 000 afghanis just to rebuild one house."

"Have you been in Pakistan before?"

"Once when I went to get ammunition."

"And now?"

"Perhaps a place in a camp".

"What will happen to the family's land?"

"We have 14 jerib. I won't sell it, not yet anyway. My mother and father will remain there and see to it. But they will have a difficult time. Damp wood won't burn, as we usually say".

"If you received money from someone, what would you do then?"

"Build up our house again. What will I do in Pakistan?"

"Can't you stay in Logar, in some other village?"

"Why not? But where? During the entire war I have lived dangerously in Abjossh. I can stay here, in Kharwar, several years."

"Here?"

"Yes, everyone says that we should stay. I can probably get some work with someone, perhaps collect wood -- but that is not enough to give my family food.

"My brother and I are the only ones who can make money. We have our wives and, together, seven children. Two are new-born".

\*

During the afternoon a 45-year-old woman Khasa, relates how she once went to Miran Shah, a border city on the Pakistan side:

"You are poor. Come to Pakistan. There they give people food and money, someone said to us. But we received nothing and returned home".

\*

White cloth was sold out in the bazar at Baraki-Barak. This material is used for shrouds for those who have become sheid and are to be buried.

Now their families look for white cloth in the bazars at Chark.

\*

Gul Agha, a 25-year-old peasant and guerilla soldier, told us how the Soviet outposts send messages to the civilian population in Baraki-Barak. Two days ago he heard that they sent a message by means of an Awan, an air defense rocket, on which was written:

"Cultivate your land instead of fighting. Sweat instead of blood. We will give you shoes and rice. Otherwise we will do what we did at Kandahar!"

According to Gul Agha, the guerilla's reply was:

"We need neither rice nor shoes. We want our freedom."

\*

Abdul Kadirs father Sanak, 45, returned home with two horses. He had gone to the Pakistan border town Miran Shah and back with them. He was part of a larger caravan consisting of some 20 horses. Twelve families had decided to flee. Their flight was not only due

to the war. The adverse result of a family feud had forced the twelve families to leave.

"But if it happened before the war they would have stayed," says Sanak. "Now Pakistan is open for Afghans so it is possible to decide to settle there."

The caravan travelled by night, except for the two last days. It took 8 days to reach the border. The women, old people and children rode on the horses together with their packs.

Every horse could carry about 175 kilos. "Once everyone had to walk. It was when we were going through a high pass early in the morning."

The road to Pakistan goes through a desert area and stony mountain passes at a generous distance from the Soviet military posts. There is a considerable risk of ambush by Afghan government soldiers and Russians. There are also thieves along the way who do not hesitate to threaten the refugees and take anything of value.

The twelve families had four Kalashnikovs to defend themselves. Two young mujahedin who belonged to Harakat-i-Inqelab joined them after a few days. They each had a Kalashnikov and went in the lead to inspect the road. One morning they were found dead.

"One morning we began our travel at 4 o'clock. After a time we came to a little flour mill. The two men lay on the road beside the mill. One had been shot through the mouth, the other beaten to death. Their Kalashnikovs were gone. I still don't know why they were killed. I didn't know either of them."

On the fifth day the caravan was forced to interrupt its progress. A pregnant woman gave birth to a child three weeks earlier than expected. "Everything was fine. She was allowed to rest for a day before we began to move again.

When they reached the border they looked for a jeep or a transport vehicle to take the families down to Miran Shah. Sanak received his pay: 20 000 afghanis. His costs amounted to 3 500 afghanis for fodder. He usually received food from the people who rented the horses.

After waiting for ten days for a new customer in Miran Shah he was ordered to deliver ammunition by his own party, Jamiat-e-Islami. They paid him 30 000 afghanis.

"Have you ever seen any returning refugees during your travels between the Pakistan border and Logar?"

"No, only those who have something to do with Jihad, the holy war. During the years I have travelled to the border with the horses I have not seen any women or children return."

"Have you yourself ever thought about fleeing or emigrating to Pakistan?"

"I intend to stay here as long as possible. I won't leave this place voluntarily."

"Do you often think that it will soon be your turn to flee?"

"I hope that Allah will help us to stay. I accept death, I am already prepared to die in this war. I won't leave for Pakistan just to try to improve my situation."



"Between 20 and 1 000 mules and horses pass here every day."

A commander in the Kharwar Valley, who will not tell us his name, said:

"No one stays here. All of them go on. Many come from northern Afghanistan, others from Kabul."

In his village 15 men have been killed in the war. Of the 70 families, 20 have fled to Pakistan. There is too little arable land in Kharwar and the war has not made it easier to break new land. The irrigation project which had been started is now at a standstill.

"Most of the families do not have any land of their own. And those who do, have somewhat less than two jerib.

"People are afraid, worried. They don't know what will happen. Bombing can destroy their homes at any minute.

"Just a few days ago", he continues, "the bombs set fire to a wheat silo building. 3 300 kilos of wheat burned up in Karez, a little village consisting of 20 families in the Kharwar Valley."

25 October, 1987

Finally, we reached Baraki-Barak. It was late and the sun soon set. It was clear two days ago: the troops would withdraw. They concluded their two-week offensive and withdraw to their bases -- the regiments in Kabul, Pul-i-Alam and Ghazni.

Fifteen minutes before our departure for Baraki-Barak we saw four helicopters land to investigate a truck in the desert. We stood in the outskirts of Chark and estimated the distance to be about 500 metres. Two helicopters landed beside the vehicle, the other two circled around in the air above it. Dust swirled around them.

The vehicle was probably on its way to Kabul with goods from Chark.

"At best they will have to turn over everything of value as money and watches. At worst, they will set fire to everything, commented one of our companions.

We took a different route through the desert -- one where the helicopters are seldom seen. "The mujahedin's road" said the driver.

The helicopter crew respect their anti-aircraft missiles.

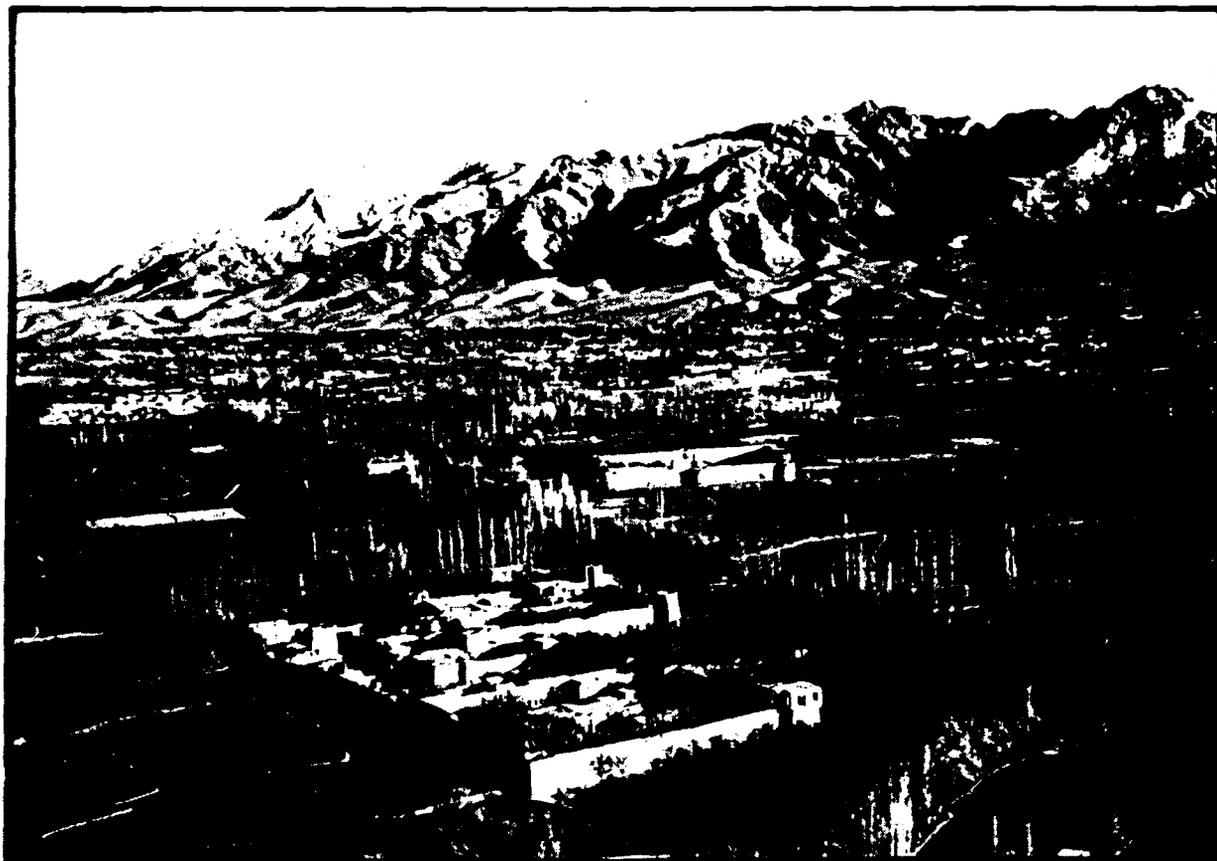
The atmosphere was strained when we arrived. A popular commander from Kolangar had been taken prisoner by Soviet soldiers. As a prisoner, Sardar Agha was already considered to be dead. "He was so brave and handsome" says Baharam.

\*

When the bomber dropped its load, all of the women ran into the woods with their children. They threw themselves on the ground and crept back and forth among the trees like a tidal wave.

Ghulam Hazrat, responsible for the work of the Jamiat-e-Islami education committee in Logar, witnessed the bombings at Baraki-Barak. There are several bomb craters on his land in the village of Qariay Qadder. He took us to see the destruction.

\*



Baraki-Barak and the mountain Khosh-Koo.



Destroyed house in Babori.



Piece of iron from rocket near Padkwab-e-Papani.

Baraki-Barak is free again. There are people everywhere. Farmers are filling in the bomb craters in their fields -- some of them are several metres deep. Others sow or sift the grain. The peasants are two weeks behind in their work and are now hurrying to catch up. Mules carrying sacks of earth come along the road. The women and children carry water to mix the earth and straw to make building material.

Here and there are pieces of iron from the bombs and rockets. The pieces have been found in trees, in the fields and the houses. And splinter -- small sharp slivers of metal which spread around at great speed when a bomb falls. A little piece is sufficient to kill a person. Or an animal.

Several people are engaged in lifting up a two-metre long rocket from a canal. It fell approximately 50 metres from a large house with a stout wall, not far from the village of Babori. The wall displays great cracks and holes but the dwelling within is undamaged.

Our guides do not want us to stay too long in the same place. People can believe that we have come to distribute money.

\*

"This is where Azizullah died" says Ghulam Hazrat. "He died when he tried to run and hide from the bombs". Azizullah was the son of Haji Khair Muhammed, one of the people who arranged our trip to Logar from Peshawar.

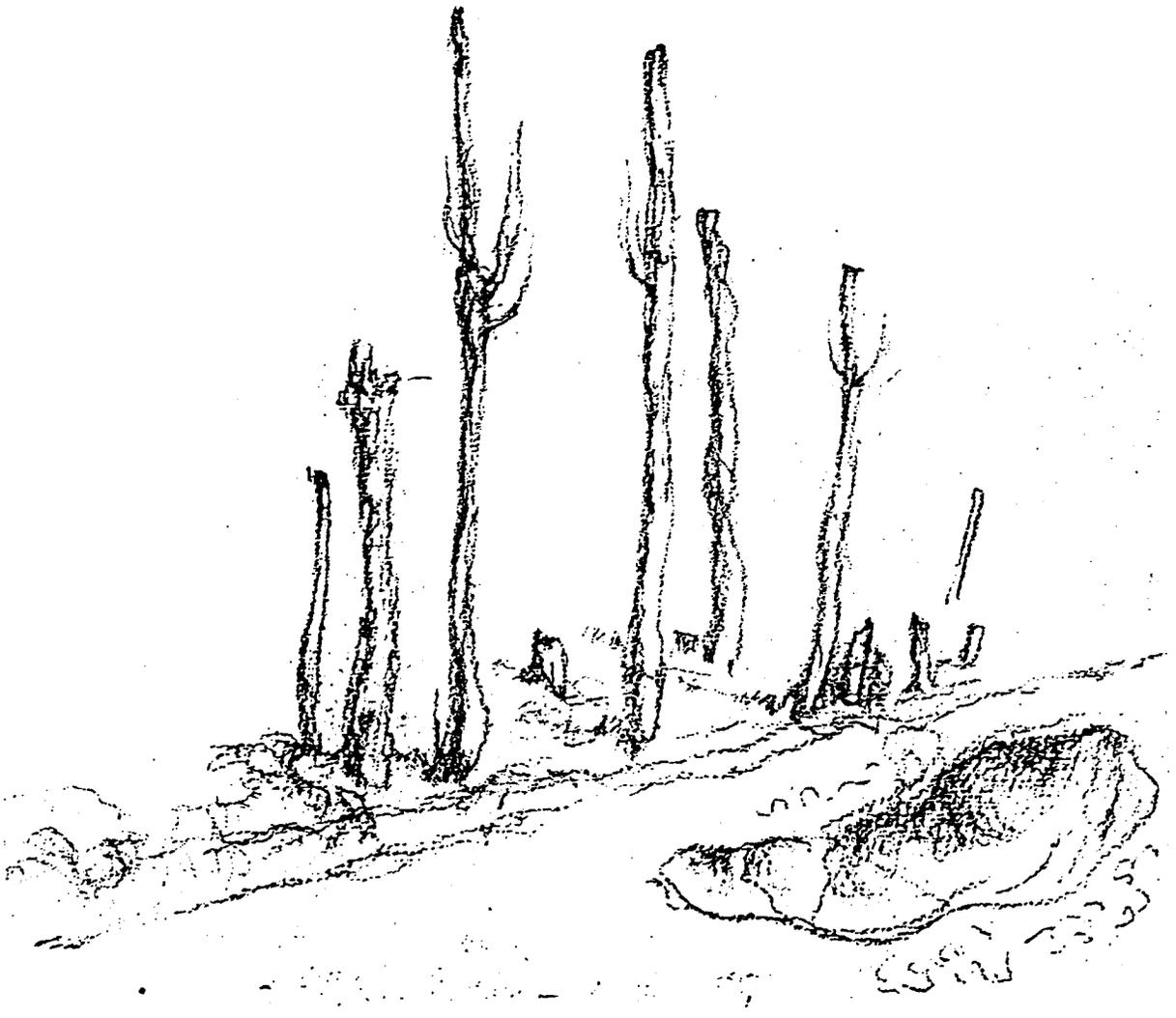
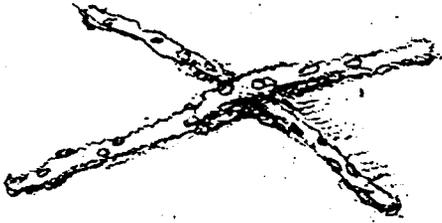
"He was an intelligent boy, about 15 years old, who took cover in a ditch with some others. Azizullah was hit. The others survived."

Azizullah's grandfather Nor Muhammed, came out of the family's house 50 metres away. In his cracked voice he said:

"We were in the house when it happened. My grandson never managed to come in. For the second time our house has suffered a great loss. It is Allah's will... We can only continue the fight...."

Our guides and Nor Muhammed hodl a short memorial ceremony for Azizullah, a fatea.

A branch is laid on the place where the boy died. It is blood-stained but now -- a week later -- the blood has dried to a red-brown colour.



In the village of Babori five people were killed and five injured during the bombing. Ten houses were completely destroyed. A total of 250 families live here. Twenty families left Babori after earlier attacks and now several more families have decided to leave. Outside one house a family is packing its quilts and household articles. The women, even the younger, are so occupied in their work that they do not bother to cover their faces when strange man pass by. Their house is in ruins.

Shreds of fadded blue chaddri are spread over a courtyard. It had been worn by a women who was hit by a bomb.

"There was nothing left of her" says a male relative.



Wounded in the ear by bomb.

A young man, perhaps 20 years old, was wounded in the ear by a shrapnel and now has a bandage around it. He's standing in a room together with some male relatives and points to a door. It is leaning against the wall and has large dried blood spots along the right-hand side.

"Another women died there."

"They ran back and forth, tried to find shelter but yhe bombs took them. It was Allah's will. Now they are at peace."

Other houses consist only of piles of earth and beams which once held up the ceiling and walls. We tramp around in the rubble and see the broken porcelain, scraps of fabric and paper.

In the two homes we encounter dogs in a state of shock. They have not been able to move since the bombings and barely react when spoken to. They regarded their surroundings with great suspicion.



Shocked dog in a corner.

A rocket hit the entrance to a home and the man in the next room was killed. He was thrown up toward the ceiling and fell back onto the floor with such force that he died. A bit of his brown shirt is still stuck on the ceiling beam.

The mosque in Babori which they had all worked to build was destroyed. The roof had fallen in. Earth, straw and beams lay in piles on the floor, half of which was a gaping hole.

Yummadin, a 25 year-old peasant, sat with us inside the mosque: "Babori was bombed at noon on the 21st of October. I myself sat and ate lunch with my family. We fled out into the woods.

"This time the bombs fell over a larger area. They weren't so accurate."

The house belonging to Muhammed Amin, a 50 year-old peasant with two jeribs of land, was partially destroyed during the attack. He has not been able to cultivate his land for two years now.

"The Russians are too close. They set up an outpost in the mountains and sometimes shoot at us when we work in the fields. But they must not be allowed to seize our land. And if they try, then we -- inshallah -- will hit back. Even if it is difficult..."

Today Muhammed Amin supports himself by day labour for others. His monthly wage is about 2 000 afghanis.



Rahmatullah, 10, listened to the interviews. After a while he also wanted to relate what happened the day the bombs fell.

"I was out with the animals. Then those planes come. I ran and hid. The animals ran in all directions. Late in the evening I managed to find all of them".

Rahmatullah lives with his brother and uncle. His parents died of disease some years ago. His other brother became a shaid, a martyr, due to artillery fire on the village.

The bombed houses in Padkwab-e-Rogani stand like a theatre backdrop on a hill. Empty windows glare in the less damaged houses. Some 750 families live here. Over the years about 70 families have left their houses. Many have been killed in the fighting since the beginning of the war. A figure of almost 400 was mentioned.

Padkwab-e-Rogani is one of the most severely damaged villages. Five people were killed here during the three-day attack and about ten were injured. Only a few houses have survived undamaged.

More than half of the shops along the bazar street are closed, some totally demolished. Behind one shop patients wait in a queue to consult medical technician Abdul Ghafar and his clinic. His work is supported by funds from the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan. There are twice as many patients on days after an offensive.

But Abdul Ghafar was on hand during the attack also.

"I went around to the injured. On one occasion I was almost hit myself. I left my house just as a rocket was fired. I threw myself on the ground and heard that another one was on the way. I ran to a canal for shelter. A third rocket landed a few metres away."



Ghulam Rasool

Abdul Ghafar survived but a 50 year-old man was killed by the third rocket. His son was hit by shrapnel which penetrated a lung. Now this 25 year-old son, Ghulam Rasool, is waiting at the clinic to have his wounds attended to.

"He will be fine" says Abdul Ghafar and prepares an injection. "People here are strong. One day bombs, the next day they are in the fields again. Their faith in Allah gives them psychic strenght."



Young patients in the clinic of nurse Abdul Ghafar.  
The clinic is supported by the Swedish Aid for Afghanistan.

"Everything was so unsettled in Mazar-i-Sherif that I moved back to Logar."

Two of the 36-year-old blacksmith Nek Muhammed's three rooms were destroyed during the bombing. Eight months ago he returned after working for several years in northern Afghanistan. He had hoped that it would be more peaceful here in Baraki-Barak.

"In Mazar-i-Sherif the government was looking for soldiers. They attacked and destroyed houses -- there were constant struggles..."

Padkwab-e-Rogani was bombed on the morning of October 16th.

Six days earlier they shot rockets at us from the Russian outposts Pire Blind och Mir Abdal.

"On this particular morning my wife was busy making bread. The oven was hot. The children sat indoors. Suddenly we heard the plane coming from the direction of Paktia. It began to drop bombs. We ran behind the house and pressed ourselves against the wall. The ground shook. The children cried. We were surrounded by a big cloud of dust".



"At 9.30 -- after two hours -- it was over. We had counted up to 250 bombs. It was a miracle that we survived. We saw a women running with a child in her arms. She refused to let go of it. She just kept screaming that the child had died in her arms.

"When the planes disappeared we all went to the Sultan Shah Shrine. I left my wife and children there and went back to the house. At 11 o'clock the plane returned. That time they bombed for an hour.

"When the bombing began the rockets from the Soviet post two to three kilometres away stopped. Bullets and bombs can collide."

Nek Muhammed's forge was completely destroyed. Only a few tools could be salvaged. Now he works just outside his former forge.

"I borrowed 10 000 afghanis to get started again. I had to buy buckets, tools, a grindstone.."

Eight months ago he took his first loan of 20 000 afghanis and had repaid 2 000 afghanis of it. The loan is without interest and was granted to him by a mullah.

"I should have paid it back after five months but that was impossible. Now I don't know how it will be. God alone knows!"



San. Nazami / 1587



Bazar Baraki-Radjan.



S. M. Z. ardi e (552)



Doktor Fazullah, commander of Jamiat-e-Islami in Logar.

Baraki-Barak has suffered similar offensives twice before. The second one, in May 1985, entailed less destruction of buildings but a greater loss of human lives. Doctor Fazullah -- called 'doktor' after two years of medical study in Kabul -- is Jamiat-e-Islami's leader in Logar. He estimates that 40 people died in the latest attack. Two years ago 250 were killed.

"Today the planes bomb from a greater height and their accuracy is therefore reduced. The bombs are spread over a wider area."

He believes that the planes flew at about 6 000 metres. The reason for the Soviet Union's altered tactics are the Stingers, American anti-aircraft missiles which the mujahedin received from the United States. But doctor Fazullah speaks reluctantly about the Stingers. Like the rest of the guerilla, he does not want to reveal their location unnecessarily.

The figures are still uncertain but in all Logar some 70 people have died. It is estimated that 25 of the total of 70 dead were women.

It is believed that 2 000 buildings were partially or totally destroyed in Logar.

"Always remember that at least four families lived in one building" says doktor Fazullah.

The losses on the Soviet side amount to four helicopters, one jet plane, some 50 tanks -- primarily along the Kabul - Gardez road -- and an unknown number of rockets such as the RPG, 107 mm, 175 mm. It's very difficult to estimate the number of dead Afghan and Soviet soldiers. An approximation can be obtained if it is presumed that there are six crew members in every helicopter and four in a tank. The losses must therefore be approximately 230 men.

This is an expansive offensive for the Russians. It also costs them much prestige to send home dead Soviet soldiers.

In addition to bombs from the planes, the Soviet Union has employed BM-13 and BM-41 rockets as well as 4.5 metre missiles. They have been fired from a great distance -- both from Pul-i-Alam, the largest base in Logar, and from Kabul. The distance between Kabul and Baraki-Barak is sixty kilometres. The helicopters, heavily armed Soviet Mi-24, have primarily been used to land soldiers and to carry goods.

"They can't fly over the mujahedin territory. There is a great risk that they will be shot down."

"Did you foresee this October offensive?"

"Yes, it has been more than two years since the last offensive. During that time the mujahedin has maintained an offensive position. Convoys have had great difficulty in passing along the Kabul-Gardez road. We also received information from Kabul that something was being prepared against Logar."

"How can you say that Baraki-Barak is a liberated area?"

"People can keep on living here. They can work on the land. When an attack comes, most of the people stay in their houses. The moral is high. The Russians respect the mujahedin. They can bomb the area and shoot at it with rockets from long distance, but they can't come in with their soldiers. And there are no government officials here!"

20 November 1987

Only after intensive persuasion was I permitted to visit the village of Dushanbe. It was late afternoon and my Afghan guards wanted to go home. It could also be dangerous:

"The might have seen us from the Russian posts".

They nodded up toward the mountain ridge where the military posts were located. In order to avoid detection by the soldiers up there, the mujahedin's automatic rifles were covered by blankets. Even I had a blanket over my head to cover my jacket and head.

"But there are lots of people!"

I argued and pointed at the people outside the village's only shop.

"That is because we and you are standing here".

"Only half-an-hour," I continued.

They agreed. I was, after all, a guest. We went down into the village and were soon meet by the village's head man, malek, an elderly man who introduced himself as Mir Ahmad.

"Just before you came they fired at the village for half an hour", he said when we sat on thin mattresses along the walls of the guest room.

"But that is unusual. Ordinarily they fire a shot now and then during the night to keep the mujahedin at a distance."

Forty families live in Dushanbe. The families live in one of the most frequently attacked villages in the Baraki-Barak district. There are three military posts manned by Afghan government soldiers and Russians within a radius of two kilometres.

"In Dushanbe the war has taken 25 lives up to the present" says Mir Ahmad. "Of them, four men and three women, were killed while they were out in the fields. They were just shot down by some

sniper at one of the military posts. Every week they shoot cows, sheep and goats in the same way."

Many peasants have had to abandon their land. Mir Ahmad estimates that families in Dushanbe can only cultivate a fifth of the land today, as compared with the amount cultivated before the war.

*Vialdre satte oss till ting och  
bestamde oss för att aldrig  
lämna byn så länge blod  
fauns i vara adrop. Sen ryska posten  
tre kilometer upp på berget skjutet var bo-  
skap och oss varje vecka för att vi skall  
ge oss.  
Stij Ericsson  
1987*



Mir Ahmad in Dushanbe.  
(Given name)

"They want us to leave here" he says and lets the tea grow cold in his glass.

"We have decided to stay" says Mir Ahmad. "Some years ago we all gathered for a meeting, a jirga. We agreed to stay and fight, if necessary to the last man. We wanted to fight for Islam and to support the mujahedin. If this village is emptied of its people, then the Russians can advance. Then it will be like Deh Mogholan, the village near here."

Mir Ahmad pointed westward and peered at me:

"Shall we take you there?"

The next morning we wandered to the deserted village in groups of two or three. As a guide we had engaged Father Jan, or Muhammed Jan to give him his real name, an energetic 52 year-old man with a reputation for being a good soldier.

The house in Deh Mogholan greet us with silence. Most of them have been razed by bombs but here and there I see intact rooms with empty wooden shelves and abandoned wheat containers.

"200 families were forced to leave at the end of 1985" says Father Jan.

"The governor in Logar wanted to show his Russian masters that he could also set up a military post. He placed it 400 metres north of Deh Mogholan and barricaded it in four dwellings."

I looked up at the house through the destroyed glass panes of a window which suddenly was converted into a government nest.

"It took almost a year to defeat them. Eighteen mujahedin and about 40 civilians died".

Without a word Father Jan began to walk in the direction of the defeated post. I followed. After half of the distance I could see a tank moving along the road on the mountail ridge toward Mir Abdal, one of the posts up there. The dust swirled behind it. I stopped for a moment to see whether Father Jan intended to turn back but he just continued on. I estimated the distance to the tank and decided

that it was about a kilometre, perhaps somewhat less.

There is a deserted atmosphere up at the defeated post.

"They left everything as it was and simply fled right out into the night."

Father Jan kicked some tins which proved to contain milk and were produced in "CCCP". There was also a Bulgarian cigarette package, a Russian news magazine and, among the junk, Father Jan found a blue pamphlet with the title "Speeches of Babrak Karmal". In the rifle room were piles of shells.

"They didn't have an easy time here" he stated.

"They could scarcely get outside the house for water or for the toilet."

"Was it worth such a long struggle with so many sacrifices -- 18 mujahedin and about 40 others?" I wondered.

Father Jan nodded slowly:

"During the battles the women sometimes sat on the roof or in the windows and called to us to direct our fire. Sometimes they shouted 'You missed' or sometimes 'Hit'. They also cooked food for us when we lay in the trenches.

"Then everyone agreed?"

"If they come back, we would begin all over again. With the same struggle."



Haroon (right) speaks to Sher Muhammed in the village Qariay Qadder, near Padkwab-e-Rogani.

27 November 1987

It is five weeks since the bombing of Baraki-Barak came to an end. Two days ago we heard that Muhammed Haroon Mujadiddi, doktor Fazullah's elder brother, had come to Baraki-Barak. Haroon works as a translator at the office of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan in Peshawar and its subsidiary, Food Aid Project. He had been commissioned to distribute emergency aid to the afflicted families. Haroon is assisted by Abdul Mobin who represents Afghanaid.

"We received early reports about the offensive against Logar and

told us. He had visited Logar earlier in the year on a similar commission, although on a much smaller scale.

A day's rest after the journey in a transport truck and they were ready to start. They had a tough job in front of them and it had to be finished within six weeks. They have 3 300 000 rupies with them, which is equivalent to 30 million afghanis. An almost incomprehensibly large sum of money to an Afghan peasant in Afghanistan.

In addition to the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan and Afghanaid, the Norwegian Committee for Afghanistan participate in the mission. Of the 3 300 000 rupies, NCA and Afghanaid have each donated 150 000 rupies and SCA has donated 3 000 000 rupies.

"It is five to six weeks since the people were bombed. How can you help those who are worst hit -- some of them have already left?"

"Most of them are still in the area. Some have been informed that help is on the way."

"How large amount do you intend to give each family?"

"Better to give significant help to a few, than to spread the money around to too many people. We have made estimates based on the size of the household and the number of family members."

"How will you decide which of them should receive help?"

"There are already lists on the different villages and the families who need help but we will also make our own independent investigations. It is detailed and is based on a questionnaire in which all of the village representatives will participate.

"Who do you choose then?"

"From the different parties as soon as possible. Most of them are represented in every village. The questionnaires will also be sent to the mullahs and the elders in the various mosques."



From the left: Abdul Mobin, Haroon, Ali Gul and Muhammed Said Jan.

29 Novmeber, 1987

The next day we met in the village of Qariay Qadder. Haroon and Abdul Mobin each had a bicycle. Pieces of a bomb were strapped onto Haroon's package holder. Haroon said:

"There aren't so many damaged houses here, only one or two with cracked walls or broken windowpanes."

The next visit was to the village of Baraki-Barak, with a population of 1 500 families. Haroon sent a message ahead to say that a representative of every part should be present at the home of Muhammed Said Jan, deputy commander within the Jamiat-e-Islami party in the village. After half-an-hour the shopkeeper Ali Gul arrived. He is also a member of the same party.

Haroon said:

"Ordinarily there are representatives of every party. Now everything is such a rush."

He went through the list carefully with the two men who listened seriously. Haroon's finger wandered down the paper. At the same time, Abdul Mobin drew up new lists.

"Here we will fill in how many have become martyrs...  
And here how many cripples live in the village...  
And finally you fill in the number of destroyed houses."

Ali Gul said that most of the houses have been damaged during the offensive. I asked him:

"Is this a good way to distribute help?"

"Yes."

"Way?"

"Everything that is damaged and everyone who is injured is registered on the list. The money is distributed to the people, irrespective of party or tribe."

"Muhammed Said Jan and you both belong to the same party. Will you discuss this with representatives of the other parties?"

"Yes, we do whatever You like... we will assamble the others."

Haroon told that every mosque -- there are seven in Baraki-Barak -- will have its own list. The responsible mullahs and representatives of the seven parties will sign it before it is returned to him.

"It will take one or two days."

After a lunch of bread, radished and meat, Haroon and Abdul Mobin continued their travels. It was the first time during my five weeks in the area that I encountered Afghans in a hurry (in Swedish: "jåktade"). And it is not an easy job they have in front of them.

30 November, 1987

We left Baraki-Barak and started our trip back to Peshawar.

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