



CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

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Afghan Refugees

When Duke University Professor and Afghan scholar Louis Dupree was asked a year ago to edit a special issue of *Refuge* on Afghanistan, he immediately set to work on this project with the help of his wife, Nancy Hatch Dupree. The issue was beginning to take shape when Louis Dupree died of lung cancer in March of this year. Now that the project has been completed, we are dedicating the results to his memory.

Louis Dupree: In Memoriam

by Anders Fänge

There is a story about Louis Dupree. Once, in the early eighties, during a discussion about Afghanistan in the State Department, an expert on the Soviet Union said that the Afghans will lose this war because there has so far never been a case in history where the Soviets have left a country once they have put their hands on it. His argument was simple. The Soviet Union was a superpower with all its resources and the biggest war machine the world had ever seen; Afghanistan was a backward country, one of the poorest, with no army, a divided resistance, little organization, and so on. Louis was there and he objected. He told the man: "Perhaps you know the Soviet Union, but it is obvious that you don't know the Afghans. If you did, you would also know that they will not give up, that they'll go on fighting whatever the odds, they will continue to resist until the Soviets are forced out of their country."

He said the same thing on numerous lectures around the world, in articles and interviews, in every possible fora where he could make his voice heard. Even during the worst years, between 1984 and 1986, when the Soviets tried to bomb Afghanistan back to the Stone Age, when they attacked furiously in a last desperate attempt to crush the Afghan spirit of resistance, when many of us who supported and believed in the Afghan cause did not

dare to hope any more; even then he never expressed a single doubt that the Afghan people would reach victory in the end.

Of course, there were a lot of people who said that Louis certainly knew a lot about Afghanistan, but his analysis emanated more from feelings than from facts. I was one of them, and I was wrong. Louis was right, because he had, above all,

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one thing in common with the Afghans, which was crucial in his profound and unique understanding of them; just like them he was not a quitter. Just like the Afghans he was a fighter.

Now he has left us, attacked from within by that dreadful disease. But I refuse to believe that he gave up. I am convinced that he fought until that stage where no fights are possible any more, where you are left alone with your creator. He died the same way he had lived. He

came a long way. He saw the Soviets leaving, but he did not reach his own personal victory, which would have been to see his beloved Kabul once again. The Afghan people, and we who are working to help them, have lost one of our best friends and staunchest supporters. We will miss his deep knowledge and good advice, his stories and jokes, the spirit he created around him. But, above all, we will miss his straight-forwardness and honesty, his habit of calling things for what they are; because Louis Dupree never hesitated to call a cat a cat and a pig

a pig, to the satisfaction of many and to the dismay of those who deserved it.

There are too few Louis Duprees in this world and now there is one less; the world is a poorer place.

Anders Fänge started as a reporter in Afghanistan in 1981. He has been the Director of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan — one of the oldest and today the biggest crossborder humanitarian agency working in Afghanistan — since 1983. He was also one of the founders of the Agency Co-ordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) and is now its Vice-Chairman.

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The Current Situation

Most Members of the Citizens Commission on Afghan Refugees who visited Pakistan previously accepted the widely held view of governments and the general population that: "the regime in Kabul will probably fall soon after the Soviet withdrawal".

Obviously, the conventional wisdom was wrong and it now appears that the fighting will continue on for an indeterminate time that some speculate will last for years unless there is a negotiated settlement between the government in Kabul and the Interim Government based in Peshawar. Here it should be pointed out that one member of the Commission, Robert Cranborne, did not concur with this assumption. In an article in the *Spectator* (August 6, 1988), he points out that the Geneva accords provided an agreement for the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, but did not contain provisions that would guarantee peace. He discusses the "fiendishly complicated political situation" and opines that the existing parties are not likely to become more effective and that the West should encourage the commanders "to take power into their own hands".

As a consequence of the continued fighting, substantial numbers of Afghan refugees, largely from the Jalalabad area, continue to flee to Pakistan. During my stay, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, announced that 800-1,000 new refugees are now arriving daily in Pakistan. Others have cited a figure of 70,000-75,000 new refugees since November 15, 1988. I visited one of the refugee camps for new arrivals, the Shindand Camp near Hangu. There were an estimated 8,000-10,000 refugees living in tents, under a glaring sun, on a wind-

swept dusty plain. Many of the tents had been blown down by strong winds, and could not be reconstituted because of defective poles. Safe water and food had to be brought in by truck. The provision of basic health care was inadequate. I was told that ten children had died the previous day and was shown several fresh graves. Throughout my visit the refugee elders pleaded with me for additional help. An obvious point to be made is that programmes for refugees in Pakistan must not yet be de-escalated. To the contrary, additional support services are urgently required by the new arrivals.

The above comments have been excerpted from James C. Strickler's "Report of Visit (5/22-5/28/89) to Peshawar and Hangu Pakistan", dated June 16, 1989. The author is a Member of the Citizens Commission on Afghan Refugees.

Canadian Aid

According to Government of Canada sources, about \$300 million has been provided to Afghan refugees between 1980 and 1988 through the United Nations and the Government of Pakistan. It is mostly in the form of food commodities. While this may sound like a lot of money, given the magnitude and duration of this refugee crisis, it is not. It works out to far less than one cent per day per refugee. Government-to-government aid was also withdrawn in 1980. That is still in effect. In 1988, however, Canada restored aid through NGOs to Afghanistan. Only about \$2 million has been provided (through NGOs) inside Afghanistan during the whole war thus far.