

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Mr. Albert R. Baron, Assistant Director
HAVR

DATE: June 1971

FROM : Richard B. Scott, ^{RS} Program Analyst
Office of AD/DP

SUBJECT: Your memo of May 17, 1971

1. Your memo of May 17 requires an answer; first, to clarify some apparently misunderstood items in my earlier reports, and, second, to indicate the implications of your memo relative to the possibility of any further productive survey work in the Helmand area on my part. To restate my position as a social scientist looking at the project, we (USAID) need to know what we are working with in the Shamalan Valley in terms of the detailed indigenous political and economic structure of the villages. This includes distribution of Khans and their relative importance from area to area, and proportions of small land-holders, share-croppers and farm labor. This does not mean a generalized understanding but a detailed knowledge upon which predictions and decisions about specific development blocks can be based. It will also give us basic information to work with when the problems of the social nature occur. Without such information we will never know exactly what is happening, good or bad. As a parallel, we have detailed plans for given development blocks on how they will be leveled and how the irrigation and drainage network will function, I assume. This is based on detailed study of topography, soils, strata, etc. We do not have any comparable information about the people in these blocks. The emphasis of the project is primarily technical in nature because that is the part that involves funding, requires budgeting for. But what has been budgeted or planned for the displacement of the population and the costs of the other social disruptions? The Governor and assistants say that now this is all taken care of, but does their statement let us off the hook? Not if the requirements and expectations of Title IX are any more than a stack of paper.

The second part of my stated position is that we established a dialogue with the village communities that will serve as a source of detailed information for the villages about what is about to happen to them and the meaning of all present work. This mechanism of dialogue would also serve as a source of information for us, since it would be an exchange, on what present feelings, gripes and rumors are, so they might be reacted to before any overt negative acts occur. While the Agriculture agents may be part of this mechanism, they should not be the only communication link, unless we have need for a handy scapegoat.



In short, we need to know what and who we are working with, and we need a continuous communication link with the villages themselves. We do not have this, and the local administration is not likely to be able to establish such a system; it is not, as I pointed out earlier, part of their life-style as government bureaucrats.

2. In response to your memo with reference to the Governor's reactions to my report: there are various levels of "knowing" about the Shamalan Project. As I believe I indicated, I do not believe I found anyone who knew nothing about the Project. Some knew, for example, that they, as landless farmers, would be given land. Others knew that they would lose land in the process. There was a full range of "knowledge" about the Project but no one could explain land consolidation. No one knew what was to be done about crops being lost for a season. No one knew if his vineyard and orchard was to be leveled, i. e., the detailed accurate information about how the Project would actually affect them as individuals. Truth and knowledge are relative things.

It would be interesting to get a picture of the understanding of the Shamalan Project by the various groups of Khans that visited the Governor. Do they have the answers to the questions I raised in my last memo? I do not think we have the answers to these questions of the costs of displacement.

3. With reference to the Afghan objection to my statement that they tended to be "indifferent" to village level problems; a more accurate statement would be that I said they were "ignorant" of village level activities and problems, which may, at least in theory, be a more harsh accusation. And given time, I have no doubt, I could footnote this ethnographic fact for at least every Muslim country on which there is data, including somewhere in the tomes Dupree has produced through the years on Afghanistan. That is to say, my comments were on bureaucracy in general (in its dealings with the public) and on the bureaucracy in Muslim countries in particular, all of which borrowed heavily, if not having it imposed, from the Ottoman Empire. As I noted, it is dysfunctional for a government administrator to know what goes on at the indigenous level, which generally has little relation with the bureaucracy that theoretically rules it. Villages rule themselves. A degree of social distance is maintained, which among other things, insures that no one is embarrassed by the fact that villagers and bureaucrats live in very different worlds of reality. The bureaucrats, but not the villagers, would be the last to formally agree with this statement. It does not fit the ideal-type of the Middle Eastern all-knowing father-figure of a great leader (just and kind, but harsh when necessary); which incidently appears over and over again in the Arabian Nights

(one of the richest sources of Islamic values and beliefs in Persian-Arabic literature, if a bit fanciful), but rarely, if ever, in reality.

4. Although all of the statements I have made on the Middle-East and Muslim Cultural area can be documented and probably supported by further research of the same sort in Afghanistan, if it has not already been done, it is not the sort of subject one would formally converse with a governor about. The distribution of the memo among the leadership group of the bureaucracy can have one result, to hamstring any further research activity on my part. To put it mildly, the bureaucracy will be on the defensive, and no one on government pay is likely to be an effective, unintimidated translator. If my memo has had the effect to get some officials out of their office chairs to tell some villagers the general outlines of the Project (to prove the accusations false) then it has had some positive results. Unfortunately, however, this will not make up for the darkness of ignorance of detailed information of village level structure in which the project is doomed to move.

To conclude, I am available at any time to discuss further any point raised in this or any previous memo, and to attempt to implement any of the research proposals. We need to know what we are trying to work with and change.

Drafted by: RBScott;jj