

FREEDOM HOUSE

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AFGHANISTAN INFORMATION CENTER

Rosanne Klass, *Director*

July 10, 1985

Dear Mr. Starer:

I left a message on your machine, but since you may be out of town, I am sending you this note also.

As I told you, there appears to be very little chance of locating one individual who has all of the qualifications Mr. Follett desires, i.e., a Tajik woman from the Panjsher Valley -- who also, by implication, must be able to read English and, to a degree, must understand the difference between a work of imaginative fiction and a scholarly document.

Most Panjsheri were poor and provincial; few went to the capital for even secondary education; hence, few are likely to be in the West, and few if any of them would be women. That's the first problem.

However, I have been in contact with, and have located, several Afghans of Tajik descent, including a woman, who are in the New York area, and who have the knowledge of English and the sophistication (i.e., to know that a novel is not a scholarly documentation) to be of help. They are not from Panjsher, but say that the cultural differences would for the most part not be major. They are also people whom I know well and consider reliable in terms of being frank about points on which they are not knowledgeable. I have also ascertained their willingness to be helpful.

Another individual, also an old friend, in the Los Angeles area, is of Tajik origin and comes from a village in the [redacted] area, which is the valley just north of the Panjsher valley, hence culturally very similar. This is, however, a man. Since I don't know whether Los Angeles is as convenient for you as the New York area, I have not contacted him yet; but I am pretty sure he would say yes if I asked him.

And I still think that I might be of some help myself. For example, Russian spellings of Afghan names have been creeping into the general press [e.g., "Tadzhik" for Tajik, "Vardak" for Wardak, etc.; the Russians do not have a "W"; while Afghan languages do not have a "V"]; since I presume that Mr. Follett does not want to recognize Soviet suzerainty over Afghanistan, I presume that he will want to use the standard English spellings, not the Russian ones.

On a number of points like this (which Afghans themselves might not even notice) I may be able to be of help.

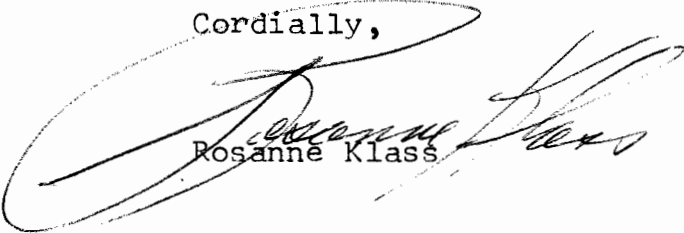
If you wish, I can inquire further in pursuit of the ideal Panjsheri lady, but I really doubt that she'll turn up. I would think that a combination of the Tajik woman (from near Herat), her husband (also from a village near Herat), and the chap from Andarab would give you a pretty good checklist.

All of them, incidentally, were born and grew up in the villages, not in the big cities; all of them are fluent in English (the men have M.A.s from U.S. universities); and all of them are my former students -- which means, since teachers are forever enshrined just one step below the gods, that if I ask them, they will almost certainly agree to be helpful.

Let me know if any of this can help meet Mr. Follett's needs.

F.Y.I. I enclose a review of my own (ancient) book on Afghanistan, which contained a description of Panjsher.

Cordially,



Rosanne Klass

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