

DANIEL STARER

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From: Rosanne Klass
To: Dan Starer
For: Ken Follett
Re: Five Tigers

Regarding accuracy in the portrayal of the Afghan situation, Afghan culture, the Afghan Resistance, and the situation in the Panjsher Valley in 1982--1983, this manuscript calls for extensive revision and correction. The present setting of the novel bears very little relation to the actual situation.

Fortunately, however, the question of authenticity and revision for authenticity does not call for any significant revamping of the plot line. It may be desirable --or occasionally necessary -- to alter some details [see comments below] but it should not be necessary to replot.

The notes below are based on notes I took while reading the manuscript, but may not be as tightly organized as we all might wish. I am doing this on my own time [it is not the sort of extensive analysis handled by my desk at Freedom House; it is much too lengthy for that] and I simply won't have time to edit and reorganize these notes, and retype them. They will be written as they come to mind -- but since that will be based on a page-by-page check of my notes, I hope they will work out to reasonable coherence.

First of all, Mr. Follett appears to have little or no accurate information on the structure of the Afghan Resistance and its organizations, and effectively none about the specific organization -- the Jamiat Islami Afghanistan, headed by Prof. Burhanudin Rabbani, which controlled/controls the Panjsher Valley. Commander Massoud [Massoud, Massud, etc.] is a member of the Jamiat, and in any major political decision would have to clear it with Rabbani in at least some measure. Massoud does not operate independently.

The Resistance is, and has been since 1979, in control of approximately 85%-90% of all Afghan territory. And in that territory under its control, the Resistance organizations provide, in effect, a shadow government of which Mr. Follett seems unaware. [This is true of all the organizational parties.] The Jamiat in the Panjsher has a particularly tightknit organization [or did, at least up to the May 1984 Soviet offensive, which shattered Massoud's control of the lower valley; and it still does where it holds sway]. The Resistance governmental structures includes committees in charge of :

Military affairs, financial affairs, medical care, administration (including village administrations as well as regional overall), courts and judges, agricultural production and food, information, education (they reopen and run village schools), and investigation (i.e., intelligence regarding spies, penetrations, etc.)

This is a well-organized, active, functioning governmental structure, based on traditional governmental structures with the addition of military and related wartime matters and of overall military commander direction.

Thus, a village such as "Darg" or "Banda" would have a full governmental structure, directed by one of Massoud's commanders, not the random sort of situation portrayed in the manuscript at present. The Resistance is not an outside group that turns up from time to time: it is the directing, constant presence, running civic life and communities; and it is the entire population. The man farming today is fighting tomorrow if needs be--or tonight.

I strongly suggest that Mr. Follett contact the following observers who have spent much time in the Panjsher valley during the period of his story; the fact that they are outsiders makes them more, not less, valuable, since his story deals with the situation as seen through the eyes of Westerners, not through Afghan eyes; and since there are many, many errors in the attitudes of the villagers toward Westerners, including Western women. (See my own comments below; I spent time in Panjsher in the 1950s, when even fewer western women had been there; but these people will be more up-to-date):

1. Edward Girardet
[Correspondent, Christian Science Monitor]
84 rue de Faubourg St. Denis
75010 Paris
Tel: (1) 246-2570

As correspondent for the Monitor, Ed has made many trips inside Afghanistan since 1979, many or most of them to Panjsher; in fact, it was largely Ed Girardet who brought Massoud to international attention and made him world-famous. He should be a goldmine of solid, detailed knowledge. He has a book coming out, but it's nonfiction; so far as I know, he doesn't plan to write a novel, so there should be no problem. If you could consult only one single source, then that source should be Ed Girardet (He's a bilingual American, so you'll have no language problem.)

2. Dr. Laurence Laumonier
c/o Aide Medicale Internationale (AMI)
119 rue des Amandiers
75020 paris
Tel: 554-3018
Laurence: Home Tel: 322-9370

Laurence (a woman) spent approximately one year working in the Panjsher; she and another woman colleague were pursued through the valley by the Soviets, who dropped leaflets identifying them as

"whores of Massoud" and urging the villagers to turn them in. [Instead, the villagers protected them with their lives. Cf. below, re the manuscript scene in which the villagers consider Jane to be a whore, which is way off base.] Lurence is highly partisan to the Panjsher resistance, who are her friends and whom she has doctored and suffered with; but she is probably the best single individual to give you a picture of what it is like for a foreign woman in Panjsher. Nobody else has her kind and extent of experience in that situation. She has spent a total of about 14 months in Panjsher since 1981.

3. For culture, resistance structure, etc.:

Olivier Roy
11 Blvd. Terrier
2800 Dreux, France
Tel: (37) 501-987

A scholarly type, not necessarily sympathetic to the needs of a novelist, but a top expert who is particularly close to the Jamiat Islami. Olivier has been all over Afghanistan since the invasion-- he spends 2-4 months inside every year, going to various areas. He is a partisan of the Jamiat, has been in PANjsher. He would probably dislike your book, (I don't think he's much of one for popular novels) so I don't recommend showing him the manuscript -- he might nit-pick you to death. But it would be worthwhile meeting with him and getting a picture of the overall situation and resistance structure, government, religious attitudes of the Jamiat, etc.

4. If you can't reach Ed Girardet, try Romy Fullerton, AfghanAid, 18 Charing Cross Road, London WC 2 ; Tel: (1) 379-7218.

Romy was in Peshawar for 3 years, co-covering Afghanistan with her husband John Fullerton for the Daily Telegraph. She is not as knowledgeable as Ed Girardet about Panjsher but I think she has been there and she has close associations with the Jamiat. Generally very knowledgeable. *She is very pro-Jamiat.*

The above people should be able to provide you with enormous amounts of information, local color, personal observation, first-person description (ESPECIALLY of the situation for women), etc.

Re the title, FIVE TIGERS

Every author is entitled to pick his own title, but the following information may be of interest to you.

I'll start with an opinion: personally, I don't know why you prefer to use Five Tigers instead of Five Lions or something else; but I don't need to know. Obviously you know that the word "sher" means "lion", since you refer to that on p. 97 ["Jean-Pierre always said 'five tigers', perhaps because there were no lions in Afghanistan." [Well, there are no tigers there, either--although there used to be lions long, long ago. But in any case, that's irrelevant, because the "Five Lions" for whom the Panjsher Valley is named were metaphorical lions, 2-legged lions, not 4-legged ones: they were five legendary heroes who supposedly lived and fought in the valley. "Lion" as in "Richard the Lion-Heart." For this reason, Massoud today is known as "The Lion of Panjsher". Obviously you are free to ignore this information, but I wanted to make sure you knew it.

Now I'll start on a page-by-page basis, going through the manuscript (with possible digressions, of course):

The map:

I think some of the names are misspelled, at least for English forms; at least, according to several maps I consulted:

"Comar", I think, is actually Chamar (both village and river)

"Aryu" usually turns up as Aru

"Mundol" is customarily spelled Mandol

"Atati" is usually Atiti

"Kantiwar" should lose the "r" on the end and be either Kantiwa or Kantiwah (river, pass, village)

"Teremengal" should usually be Terremangal

I am told that some people call the river you have so marked "Nuristan River" but it is on all the maps, and is traditionally known, as either the Alishing or the Alingar (2 different rivers, running parallel more or less, in that area; I don't know which one you are referring to.) By the way, "Nuristan" is a name given to the area only in 1895, when they were converted to Islam, and it tends to be used by outsiders (It means "Land of Light", they being enlightened by Islam in 1895.)

I have checked a number of maps, including some up to 1:500,000 and do not find Lake ~~Mundol~~. (This included air navigation charts and satellite maps). Are you sure of it? You might want to double-check-- I may have missed it, of course.

Bagram air base is further north of Kabul than shown, and much nearer the mouth of the Panjsher Valley.

The Khyber Pass is ENTIRELY on the Pakistan side of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, NOT straddling it as shown on the inset.

PAGES:

p.28/29 -- "going for two years."

No medical group sends people for two years, and it would be almost impossible to do so. The exhaustion, for one thing; health, for another; payment for another; and control, for another. ALL of the medical organizations run regular checks on their personnel. They must resupply them, too, with medications, equipment, medical supplies, etc. There is regular contact going on. [In fact, I'll go into this here because it also presents problems later on, when Jean-Pierre is presumably alone and unsupervised and freewheeling. I'm sure you can solve it, without too much trouble, to fit plot needs.)

Also, there is simply no need for anyone to go for two years-- certainly not without coming out to get some R&R in Peshawar, report back to Paris, check in with the Swedish committee or the French

etc. And Panjsher is so close to the border that there would be no need for such an extended stay. (Its proximity is one of the reasons so much has been heard about it in the outside world. Journalists were constantly tramping in and out all through 1982-83. They hit Peshawar and made a beeline for Panjsher and Massoud.)

Thus, anyone who wanted to go in, and stay in, for two years *without coming out + without supervision* would be immediately suspect.

And, oh yes-- the doctors can only work with the permission and assistance of the Resistance organizations. And THEY would be extremely suspicious of anyone doing something so unusual. They would be watching like hawks.

I suggest that you ask Dr. Laumonier to tell you in detail the way medical operations are set up.

Oh--there's the baby. Sorry.

However, when I finished the manuscript, I didn't see any particular need for you to have set up the 2-year time frame; perhaps it was part of a plot line that you later changed in the writing. I may have missed something, but it doesn't appear to be a necessary element, so you may be able to change it somewhat without difficulty.

Oh, yes-- while speaking of medical set-ups:

You may not be aware that several of the executives of the French humanitarian organization "Médècins Sans Frontières" have been actively involved in setting up a new foundation, "Liberté Sans Frontières", so your imaginary organization's name may be a little bit too close for comfort [especially since there is a good chance that MSF may win the Nobel Peace Prize this year or next, and might not be amused at the similarity.] Perhaps something like "World Medical Aid" or "Doctors for Humanity" or something like that might be safer.

p.29

Clinics can't stay put too much anyhow-- the Russians bomb them. And people have no problem finding them, believe me. The word gets out fast. (including to the Russians, via spies and air surveillance); the clinics have been repeatedly targetted (Laumonier can tell you about that, too). The people don't lack trust in doctors "because they don't know him well enough to trust him"-- that's an idea from a developed peaceful society. They come to anyone who might be able to help, even if he's a journalist, not a doctor. etc., etc. Check with Laumonier about the circumstances. (Even though the character Jean-Pierre is lying, it can't be lies he'll be caught in by other young medics.)

They do trust them.

As for getting terrific jobs when they come back, I have some doubts-- again, check. Most go back to what they were doing before. (By the way, you might want to talk to Dr. Phillippe Augoyard, who was pursued by Soviet troops -- and captured; he was a pediatrician who is now back doing pediatrics in Rouen. There have now been hundreds of doctors and nurses who have gone, and they do not, so far as I know, get special favors when they return. Indeed, they sometimes find they have lost ground if they have been gone a while. Most end up having to cover or do other favors for the doctors who covered for them, I am told. But check this with Laurence and a couple of other doctors from AMI, MSF, or MDM.

If so, Laurence can give you his address, or I can.

P.68

"The Russians, using tactics they had learned from the Americans in Vietnam, had littered the countryside..."

I suggest that you check this with Jane's Weekly or the Institute for the Study of Conflict, the Institute for European Defense & Strategic Studies (all in London) or Dr. Iain f. Elliot of the Institute for the Study of Conflict in Brighton. I believe you will find that you are quite incorrect. To the best of my knowledge, the Soviets are the first to use boobytrap mines disguised as toys, pens, watches, cigarette packets, red plastic toy cars, etc.-- which are the ones that attract the children...and are designed to do so.

A military specialist can also explain the different tactical uses of anti-personnel mines in Afghanistan, as contrasted with other wars elsewhere (including Vietnam.) You might also find it useful to read the article on soviet strategy in Afghanistan by Dr. Claude Malhuret (based on the reports of MSF doctors over a period of 4 years) in the winter 1984 issue of Foreign Affairs, for this and other aspects of the situation in Panjsher (air attacks, food situation, etc.) Anyhow, this should be checked with a military authority, preferably one who is academic and objective for an accurate analysis. Ditto other points below (bombing runs, jets, helicopters, etc.) See also the report of the Special Rapporteur of the UN commission on human rights; the report of Helsinki Watch, also.

p.61

The name "Mousa" should be spelled with a double "s", thus: Moussa (or no "o", thus: Musa). It is usually spelled "Moussa" among Afghans.

p.62

"...a sack-shaped dress over cotton trousers"
Nope. The dress (camise, from the western "chemise"; or ^{alternately} "peron") is fitted to the waist, then tucked and flared out over the hips; it comes to the knees. The top front panel of the blouse is often, even usually, elaborately embroidered; wrist-length sleeves. The trousers involve about 5-6 yards of fabric.

In fact, if you want to be technically accurate here, you've got a problem-- because the top, or dress, has plenty of material with which to make a tourniquet and leave enough to wear. The skirt is long and it's full.

Also, if she is wearing Afghan dress, Jane would have a headscarf.

Do you need the nude scene with Abdullah? (See below for more realistic alternatives and comment.) If not, a torn top, just a bra, or even bare arms (sleeves used for tourniquet) would be sufficient to create a "shocker" re Abdullah. Laumonier or Fullerton may disagree, but I doubt that any western woman with a year's experience in the Panjsher, or even a few months, would risk getting caught naked. Ask some of the French doctors about what their privacy situation was. (I know you need the hideaway for other plot purposes; that's okay. The question is the amount of nudity a woman would risk, even there -- and the reaction to it. See below.)

I can provide these if you want them.

p. 63

(Abdullah) "...a short man of about fifty-five -- a considerable age in this medieval country..."

Wrong on two points.

Fifty-five is not a considerable age, or an unusual one, in Afghanistan. Statistical life expectancies average out high levels of infant mortality, etc. Most people who survive childhood diseases live into their 60's or beyond. Every village has a few in their 80's and 90's. Villagers look older, earlier, because they work in the fields, etc. (Also, the water in Afghanistan is incredibly hard, mineral-filled, and it's hell on a maiden's fair complexion. Also, most villagers -- both men and women -- are tanned from working in the fields, which also ages their looks early.

But 55 is not a considerable age, nor is it thought to be. It's the beginning of the authority of the elders.

Nor is/was Afghanistan "medieval". That doesn't quite apply, it was pre-industrial. It was poor, and is now much, much poorer. It was pre-modern. But more like the 17th-18th c. in Europe than like the medieval world. I don't think of one word that wraps it up-- so you may decide to stick with "medieval". But you're asking for comment, so I'm giving it.

By the way, if Abdullah's beard is dyed red, that indicates that he is a hajji -- i.e., he has made the haj, the pilgrimage to Mecca.

p.63

"...mistrusted foreigners, despised women, and hated all practitioners of foreign medicine." If so, then he was different from almost every Afghan I have known --- including numbers of mullahs -- and different from most of those the French doctors have known. I was in Panjsher in the 1950s, as an unveiled woman, and was heaped with hospitality. And that was back when NO foreigners went to Panjsher (there were no roads)--I may have been the first--certainly one of the first-- western women to go there.

Few Afghans despise women-- women have a lot of authority within the family.

But let's say, okay, he was very anti-woman, etc.--all of the above (and I do know some like that); he would still be subject to the authority of the Resistance administration in Panjsher. And he had better not refer to her as a whore-- she's helping save lives, and the villagers would come down on him like a ton of bricks.

It's not that Abdullah would "hate to cross swords with such a great hero" as Massoud -- it's that Massoud runs the valley; the Resistance -- in this case, the Jamiat-- is the government; the doctors are working under their authority, and at their request; it's official. Also, if the Europeans are saving lives, the local population will protect them anyhow. BUT SEE ED GIRARDET AND THE OTHERS I REFERRED YOU TO ABOVE. This is a complex and detailed situation that cannot be covered in brief notes like this. The whole picture is askew and mistaken.

with whole permission she is there

By the way, a religious Afghan, confronted with a bare woman, wouldn't strike her-- he would immediately cover his eyes, as is enjoined by the Koran. And he'd almost certainly turn and run!

(I've had it happen to me just because my face was unveiled. The hands go over the eyes with a speed of light. The Koran does not say that women must be veiled (it says they must be modest) but it does specify that men should not look.)

In any case, I have an alternative suggestion for Abdullah as a villain:

as well as Abdullah
 You have entirely omitted a significant element: spies. They are all over the place. Some are Afghans. Some are Soviet Tajiks, pretending to be Afghans. This, too, is a complex situation with complex motivations involved. (Olivier Roy would be a good source on this, I think.) (This is also a far better explanation and motivation for the false guide, near the end of the book in the escape section, than that you have used.) Khad agents. (Khad is the Afghan KGB, East German trained, as you doubtless know.)

But then he probably can't be a mullah. ^(as a Khad agent) But he needn't be. (By the way, mullah's do NOT burn verses from the Koran! Horrors! The words of the Holy Book would never be treated like that!) And they aren't necessarily the village medical men, either.

p. 67

In many if not most cases of children who have picked up one of those "toy" boobytrap mines, amputation or partial amputation is needed, not just cleaning and dressing. Check with Laumonier and others who have handled such cases. I'm not sure about whether the tetanus injection is standard; but the big danger is gangrene.

p. 68

"...crippled children generally die young." I know of no particular basis for this statement. I have seen/met a number of crippled adults. One of them is reading your manuscript in California right now --she had polio as a child. If they survive the crippling disease, there is no reason for them to die young. Afghans are very fond of kids, and the toughest guys are very gentle and playful with kids.

p. 71

"...~~Mohammed~~ said }n Dari." One would always use his full name in a name like this. It should be "Mohammed Khan said".

p. 71

"...unclean...like all things uniquely feminine..." Are you sure of this? Perhaps the Afghan consultants can better advise you, but I think this is sweeping and probably inaccurate. There are many tales in which men help their wives in childbirth--including the story of the birth of Nur Jahan, later empress of India, on a roadside in Afghanistan. He still might hesitate. After all, it certainly is something that is usually left to women and midwives to deal with.

p.72

"It was unheard-of for a man to serve a woman, even with a simple drink of water." ABSOLUTELY WRONG. Just plain wrong. Men constantly serve things to women -- in homes, in offices, in teahouses, in the bazaars, everywhere. Many household servants are men. Besides, there's the tradition of hospitality -- for a foreigner, it's, "You are a guest in my country"--and they'll hand you the last scrap of food they have, *man or woman. Foreign women are esp. graciously treated.*

↑ This contradicts Qader .

pp. 72-73

"... had to contend with hostile villagers..."

Not very likely that they are hostile, since 95%+ of the people support the Resistance. Certainly possibly that they are frightened, even terrified, in view of the terror campaign waged to try to undermine support for the Resistance. (See the Malhuret article cited above. See also the eyewitness reports on atrocities carried out by Soviet ground troops against villagers in the Panjsher Valley, 1980 on, in testimony transcript from the Oslo hearings, March 1983; reports of the atrocities conducted in the Logar Valley, at Badkhab-i-Shana and elsewhere.) Helicopters are the least of it.

However, the routes used by the Resistance into Pasnjsher are usually under Jamiat governance. I suggest that you discuss this matter --again-- with Laumonier and Girardet. They've made the trip many times during the period you are covering.

p.73

"...as much adultery in this puritan peasant community as..anywhere else.." Since this is stated as fact (not just as Jane's view), sorry, nope, you're off the track. There is probably as much desire for adultery as elsewhere (though a lot of it may be repressed by mores, as it is in some societies, as it was in Europe and the U.S. 30 years ago; but almost certainly not as much actually happening. Oh, of course there is adultery-- but it's not so easy; and it's more in the cities, among the urban population, than in villages. *Also contradicted by Qader .*

Villagers (a) know one another before their marriages; (b) are often married to cousins (c) have less opportunity and (d) are in more danger of discover --and pay one hell of a price if they're caught!! The honor of an Afghan family is in the hands of the womenfolk, and at the very least they would be outcasts (probably worse would be in store). You have no idea how concerned and how Victorian Afghan girls are, esp. in the villages.

So, some adultery? yes, but it's tough to get away with. Thoughts of adultery? oh, yes, I'm sure. But not "as much as anywhere else." (On the other hand, a lustful Afghan man might readily think a western woman was available, and try to sound her out.) And once again, remember that (a) the Jamiat, which is orthodox, runs the government and (b) since the Soviet invasion, taking Islam seriously has become more important; people are more devout than before.

p.77

"washing the dead...considered unclean". this needs checking. I helped to bury a student; his fellow students shrouded and prepared him; I heard no indication of "unclean"--nor in other death situations. Check with Afghans.

p. 78

medicines"...contained rabbit brains or cat spleen...."

I trust you have solid authority for this. *I usually heard of herbs.*

"...it contained opium"

Opium was not widely used in Afghanistan; its users were much looked down on, like skid row bums. Nevertheless, this is certainly possible. Did you have information?

Olivier Roy, who has been a scholar of Afghan culture for years, long before the communist takeover, may know about this, charms, potions, etc. Worth a try if you want.

"folklore and witchcraft"-- not witches. Djinns.

p. 81

"the local birthing position" I trust that the Afghan sources will be able to confirm or correct this.

p. 83

"...She is normal... She's normal, Jane thought. She...a little girl..."

Sorry. Impossible.

Dari (Afghan Farsi) (and Iranian Farsi, too) DO NOT HAVE MASCULINE AND FEMININE PRONOUNS!! Only one pronoun for all--masculine, feminine, and neuter. Actually, since it is a fairly heavily declined and conjugated language, the pronoun is usually omitted entirely, as in Latin. And when someone is struggling to learn a bit of English, they will almost invariably use "he" for all English pronouns, as in, for example, "The prime minister of England, he's a woman." (I was always "Sir" to my students, no matter how I explained.) It takes a long time for them to master English pronouns. I doubt that Rabia had done so, don't you?

p. 96

"no longer front-page news...Often a week or two would go by with no reports at all..." In 1982, in New York and Washington, often several weeks would go by with nothing at all. In the spring of 1982, there was NOT something in the press every week. (The breakthrough came with the visit of the Padkhab-i-Shana witnesses in Feb. 1983, which got headlines. Before that, until June of 1981, the New York Times refused *even* to believe there was a war going on. I am happy to say I arranged both breakthroughs.) EXCEPT for the Christian Science Monitor and Ed Girardet -- his were almost the only serious stories being done in 1982 in any paper that would be seen by someone living in New York or Washington. (Except at the end of each December, the anniversary of the invasion.)

p. 97

The spelling is Panjsher [Panj= 5, as in punch, a 5-ingredient drink originally, or the Punjab, where 5 rivers meet; Sher = lion. See above for explanation of metaphorical lions.]

p.98

"They're all poets...It's because they can't read or write. Poetry is a spoken art form."

Since this is a character's opinion, accuracy doesn't really matter. But for the record: most Afghan (i.e., Persian) poetry is in fact written -- the works of Hafiz, Saadi, Omar, Jami, etc. Afghans themselves are not "all poets" --but they all know reams of poetry. They know it by heart because they can't read or write-- intelligent illiterates usually have prodigious memories, as I learned in Afghanistan. They have to. So, being illiterate, they memorize.

But literate, highly educated Afghans also know reams of poetry by heart, so there you are. Either way, many of them can recite it for hours-- the Shahnamah, the Gulistan, etc.

But you're right that poetry is an oral form, of course.

p.99

Sorry, but I'm afraid there are quite a few factual errors here. As Winderman's opinions, it doesn't matter-- he can be wrong. But I presume you are using this section to inform your readers for background. so here goes:

✓ No, they are NOT all divided into tribes!!!

The Pushtuns are tribally organized. So are some of the Hazaras.

THE REST OF THE POPULATION -- more than 50%, probably -- IS NOT TRIBAL. (This also affects many points in your story where you refer to tribal authority, etc.

THE TAJIKS ARE NOT tribal. PANJSHER IS TAJIK. Thus the Panjsher Valley is NOT tribally organized, and the term "tribe" is completely out of place in Panjsher.

And since the Soviet invasion, many of the barriers between ethnic groups have (at least temporarily) dissolved.

The divisions in the resistance are NOT tribal.

There are some ethnic elements.

But mostly, they are political, and are much more related to the political headquarters organizations in Peshawar, which you never mention, than to tribalism.

✓ Mahsud is NOT a tribal leader. He's a Tajik. He has no tribe. He is a military commander for one of the biggest political organizations. He has Pushtuns fighting under him, Tajiks, others. Jamiat's strength crosses ethnic boundaries. It is a political party.

(and once again-- Panjsher, not Panisher--spelling; this error occurs frequently.)

To explain the situation on paper would be far too timeconsuming; it's complex and complicated! But it would not be so difficult to do in conversation, with a couple of maps. So I suggest that you ask Olivier Roy to explain it to you; if you can't see him, ask Romy Fullerton. It won't take that much time and, once you have an idea of the real situation, it won't be difficult to change an adjective here and there and get it accurate. You won't need to lecture your readers-- all you need to do is get a grasp on the picture yourself.

p.99,cont.

"rebel leaders"

Well, maybe Winderman is the kind of guy who would call them rebels. But most folks around Washington call them the Resistance. (The press likes "rebels." Fits headlines, snappier.)

In the author's voice, though, I'd recommend "Resistance." Aside from the fact that "rebel" offends all Afghans, it is also inaccurate, implying as it does duly constituted authority. Unless you think the Soviet invasion is legitimate, and the Quisling they brought with them is duly constituted authority. In which case the same would have to be applied to Vidkun Quisling, Seiss-Inquart in Holland, etc. The parallel is quite precise. Anyhow, you might consider what terms you want to use for the author's voice. *Resistance is the one I find handiest, or Mujahedin. The Afghans like "Freedom Fighters."*

"...the Salang tunnel, on the only highway from Kabul to the Soviet border..." Sorry, not the only highway-- the only direct highway. The other one goes around the long way, via Ghazni, Kandahar, and Herat-- but it does go. Is this nitpicking?

pp.99-100

The characterization of Massoud.

I hardly know where to start, and don't want to go on endlessly, but you've much overrated him, good though he is, and mistakes, alas, abound.

He's not the best military brain in the country. He's one of a dozen or so top ones. Zabiullah, the Jamiat commander around Mazar (killed a few months ago) was probably better. Ismail in Herat (also Jamiat) and others from other groups are as good or better. Massoud was simply the one the press discovered, and could conveniently reach. It started with Ed Girardet. But the problem is, nobody who presumably had access to solid intelligence information would describe him as Winderman does here.

The emeralds are the least of it.

Yes, Massoud is a great hero-- but worship? well, maybe. Some.

No, it is not true that all the others hate the Pushtuns. It is not true that the leader cannot be a Pushtun. There is a very good chance that in longrange terms, the top leader might have to be a Pushtun, in fact. Tajiks are not a nation-- they are an ethnic group. They have never been a "nation".

And it is not true that "most of the rebel leaders are content to control their tribes (most are NOT tribal leaders! for that matter), collect taxes, and deny the govt. access..." this is not accurate, but it is too much of a mix of half-accurate, ~~w~~ wrong, yes but, ifs, etc., to cover here. Discuss with Girardet, Roy, Etc. (though keep in mind that they are partisans of Jamiat--except perhaps Ed Girardet)

The alliance being promoted is NOT among tribes, but among parties-- speciaifically, the six major parties based in Peshawar, plus the 4 tiny figures in the "Unity of 7" and (this is still 1982/83) the Shora headed by Sheikh Behishti in the Hazarajat. Some of the divisions are ethnic; most are not. Most are the result of attachment to specific leaders or political programs-- and also, as the result of methods of aid distribution in the refugee camps. You don't need to tell your

readers all of this, of course; but I presume you want to get a fix on it for yourself.

so, instead of "promote an alliance between the different Afghan tribes" you might shift to "...between the different Afghan fighting organizations..." or "the different Afghan parties..." or "the different Afghan leaders..."

John Fullerton's book, The Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan (1983) should be helpful. [The first 2 chapters are full of errors, covering the background; he wasn't there then. Ch.3 has fewer gaffes; and once he gets to the war, which he covered for 3 years, he's very good indeed, starting around the middle of Ch. 4 and then on.

If you read French, Olivier Roy has a new book out, also.

But you need to understand it first, I recommend Olivier & Romy!

p. 101

"...seal Kalashnikovs from dead Russians..." they get most of them from the Afghan army, defectors and sympathizers, or capture them in raids. Not that many off dead bodies. Russian casualties haven't been that high.

"Have Masud set up a kind of training scheme...Each tribe would send a few young men..."

Once again-- it's NOT tribes. It's parties.

As you doubtless know, Masud did set up training programs. But the way it's outlined here is not very effective--- and strategic coordination began a lot earlier. This whole tribal bit has you on the wrong, wrong track.

Fighting commanders of Pushtun and other ethnic groups WERE taking orders from Mahsud in the Panjsher in 1982/83; one of his top deputies was a Pushtun. In the field, there is much more cooperation--most of the divisions are on the party level, higher up.

Ed Girardet may be able to help you with this.

I know it's important to the plot-- it's the pivot of Ellis's action -- it gets him out there-- but I think you'll find there are other more accurate ideas that could be substituted.

But especially in view of the catastrophic results of Mahsud's (real-life) armistice with the Russians, which they used to surround and nearly destroy him, (he thought he'd get the better of it; he did not), you'd best pick a plot peg that hasn't been undone by events since. (Mahsud has been pretty much driven out of the lower valley that debouches onto the Salang highway. The French doctors were forced out. he holds only the upper valley now, and the situation is very bad. As of 1984/85.)

right now, its all offside and skewed. You need more and better information. The items by Yossef Bodansky in Jane's Military Weekly over the past year or so may be helpful to you on the military situation.

p. 102

Once again (ref. to previous notes):

Mahsud does not have the power/authority to sign such a piece of paper. He would have to get Rabbani's okay. He could agree to a field arrangement, though.

Also, there would not be just 2 other commanders-- Afghanistan is bigger than France. There would have to be at least a dozen.

Problem: the decisions would also probably have to be made outside Afghanistan, not inside; the risk is too great to bring so many together at one spot. Still, that's important for the plot. So another peg might solve the problem. But anyhow, 3 men do not control the entire effective Afghan resistance.

Once again, when you have a better overall picture, this will all fall into place; and I don't think it will take a lot of changes to make it more plausible and accurate.

"...the so-called rebels..." should probably be "the so-called freedom fighters..". If you read as much Soviet commentary as I do, you'd know they never even sneer at them as "so-called rebels"; the terms they sneer at are more honorable (rebel isn't, very--see above or check it in the OED).

By 1982, the White House was not talking about an "image problem." (maybe some others were, but..) President Reagan is very seriously concerned to help the Afghans. No kidding. *State + CIA may have been more image-oriented.*

[P.106 -- the recent emergence of spokesmen for Vietnam veterans would suggest that some of your log is more fanciful than realistic, and more may be coming out. But that may not matter since it is part of characterization, and any character is entitled to his own diary.]

p.108

Women bathing... the Afghans reading the ms. can better check the accuracy of this.

But I doubt that an Afghan village woman in Panjsher would have a towel. She would probably have a piece of cotton cloth, or some kind of cloth. But not what we mean by a towel.

p. 109

"canned meat" -- Afghan villagers tend to be wary of canned meat, because they can't be sure it doesn't contain pork. Anyhow, at that time they probably still had chickens, sheep, and goats. They were perhaps more likely to bring back green tea, sugar, cooking oils, etc. Laumonier, Girardet, the others can best check this.

p. 111

"But the Afghan women knew nothing of all this.."
Are you kidding? They sure do.

"They never spoke of war, only the consequences of war."

Once again, are you kidding? Afghan women have been known to go into battle in the past -- and in this war, too. They have lobbed Molotov cocktails at tanks, they have faced the guns, they have [picked up guns, and there is a report of a woman resistance commander (for the Mahaz organization, it's said) in the Herat area.

By 1982, it was clear that the Russians were trying to empty parts of the country (chemical weapons-- the yellow rain trichothecenes-- were selectively used for this in some areas)-- See the Malhuret article for an assessment of the policy that's firstrate. But of course Jane is not in touch with others, so just discovering this for herself.

"They seemed to have no feelings about the foreigners...."

This is an incredible statement. They hate them. They know they are the enemy. They also fear them. (Rape is apparently standard, and the Russians have taken to grabbing women, shoving them into copters, raping them, and then tossing them out-- confirmed in Ghazni and a couple of other spots, though not in Panjsher.)

"They regarded the Russians as an accident of nature.." No way! They regard the Russians as atheists, as invaders, as enemies, as (in the words of one] barbarians, as the new Genghis Khan. They hate, fear, and detest them, and want them out of their country. Yes, the women as well as the men. Girls led the first protests in Kabul, and were mown down. As early as 1979 I was talking to women in refugee camps who knew very well that the Russians were a vicious enemy--not "an accident of nature." A bombing raid is NOT considered "like a hard frost...nobody's fault."

Afghans are a highly intelligent people on the whole. And they have heard about the Russians from their neighbors in Bokhara, Khiva, Samarkand, etc., for a long time. Don't underrate them-- women or men.

p. 114

Jean-Pierre faced with a group of wounded guerrillas (and aha, don't forget the double R--but your copy editor will catch that.) No way would any of the experienced groups let a doctor be in without his support team (no way would they count his wife, with a few weeks of training; why should they? they have plenty of qualified volunteers. But you've got to get her there, so let it pass.) But, once again, Laurence Laumonier can probably give you much better information on how these things are set up. Also, since her group (AMI) is less highly organized and structured than MSF, she can probably give you better information on how they may improvise. You may need to add an aide for him-- a nurse or another doctor or something-- and have him fall off a cliff, leaving Jean-Pierre alone.

Don't forget, there are communist agents around all the time, so maybe they can help with some of the skulduggery.

p. 115

TOP LINE__ YOGHURT

P. 118, bottom

"my brother Matullah..."

No such name. It would be "Ismatullah" (-ullah = Allah, always. so there is always a first part. I don't recall what Ismatullah is, but I remember that Azizullah is "beloved of God"; and so on. Always a prefix.)

p. 119

"it was not clear to Jane just how they would get the information through..." She'd have to be deaf, dumb, and stupid not to know by this time that there are Khad agents operating all over. (In fact, in 1984 a Khad plot to kill Mahsud came within an ace of succeeding-- an agent had been planted on him.)

p. 119

"Jane was revolted by the war...stop killing poor homesick 17-year-old Russian soldier boys"

I know of only 2 people who have reported feelings even remotely like this-- one is of Russian origin, the other a French leftist. Neither spent time in the country with the people or the Resistance.

Is this really psychologically sound? That after having seen the slaughter of the people with whom she lives, who are her friends, and doubtless hearing of much more,, Jane's sympathies are with the other side, the attackers, the invaders? *Those who go with the Resistance end up fiercely partisan to the Afghans & The Resistance.*

All of which brings up the general picture of the Resistance, and of the Afghans as a people, and some serious lacunae there. But I'll make a special note of that at the end.

Here I will just say that every journalist, every doctor, every soldier of fortune, etc., etc., who goes into Afghanistan for even a few weeks comes out an impassioned friend of the Afghan resistance. Afghans are enormously dynamic and attractive personalities on the whole, and people fall in love with them as a nation. (Note Kipling, who never went north of Lahor but once, never saw the Khyber, and yet wrote obsessively about the Pathans and the Afghans. One gets hooked on 'em.)

p.120

Mosque --an open-sided building.

Afghan mosques are almost always closed buildings. The winters are too extreme. Panjsher is cold, wet, snowy, and freezing a large part of the year. A village mosque may have a small courtyard, but is likely to be a closed building-- and its usually used as the village school, too.

p. 131

last paragraph: "Comar" should be Chamar
"Caharikar" should be Charikar (a great town, incidentally)

p. 131

I suggest checking the distances to Charikar (it seems too far, unless your imaginary town is pretty far up the valley)-- and also, further in the ms., the time it takes to travel. I went from Kabul to the upper end of the dirt track in the Panjsher Valley-- the end of the road, literally -- in less than one day in the 1950's, when there was no paved road in the country. So then ~~the~~ road from Kabul up to Gulbahar and the valley mouth was unpaved, just dirt; and the road up the valley was incredibly nothing. We left about 10 a.m., reached the end of the road in upper Panjsher about 5 p.m. Total trip, Kabul to upper Panjsher, 7-8 hours by rickety bus with frequent stops.

Today, from Kabul to Charikar and Panjsher, there is a paved highway. [However, it is true that because of the fighting parts of the road are cratered and destroyed. Tank treads don't help either.]

~~It~~ Still, I'm not sure that Charikar is 60 miles from the center of the valley.

"The Russian-controlled plain..." That's the Koh Daman valley (formerly a rich fruit and grape-growing area, but the Soviets have cut down the orchards and vineyards now); it's no more "Russian-controlled" than any other part of the countryside. Mahsud operates actively there. So do others, out of Istalif and other towns which have suffered hideous atrocities in punishment. Because it's fairly flat, it is susceptible to Soviet attacks more than the mountains on its edges, but it's not really Russian controlled except for the military posts. What Mahsud and the others hit there are the convoys coming down from the border to Kabul.

p. 132

".. a clinic in Cobak..." should be Kobak. Also at top of p.133

p. 133 , bottom , & p: 134

re buzkashi :

"...they were barbarians, these Afghans."
Absolutely not! If that is Jean-Pierre's thoughts/opinions, it's written pretty much in the author's voice.
And it's neither fair nor true.

Buzkashi is dangerous, but it is not bloody. (It sounds bloody, but it is in fact not. The carcass is an object with 4 convenient handles, killed several days in advance; no blood visible. It is not the least bit visible. What the game is, mainly, is a riding game that makes polo look like amateur night. We use skins for footballs; they just use the whole object because they must have handles, and the legs serve perfectly. It is an enormously skilled game.

(I wrote a whole chapter about it in my book about Afghanistan, detailing the training, etc. -- which you do NOT need to read.)

continued, next p.

p. 134, cont. --and p. 141

Buzkashi, cont.

The story about using a man instead of a calf or goat as an object of play is absolutely outrageous, and to suggest that this is the usual treatment for captured Soviet officers is absolutely false.(p.141)

There was a single, UNCONFIRMED report that on one occasion around 1979 -- BEFORE the invasion, when Soviet forces were still wearing Afghan army uniforms -- a single Soviet officer was so abused. But, I repeat, the report was unconfirmed and is thought by expert sources to probably be false. (Some nasty things weere done to Russians in Herat, but then they had just machined gunned a crowd in the market, in March 1979.)

I doublechecked this with a top expert on the Resistance, and was told that the suggestion that this is standard treatment of captured Russians is absolutely false.(The treatment varies, and isn't always so nice, but they do NOT --- repeat NOT -- use them as objects in buzkashi and tear them apart alive.)

(By the way, among the confirmed actions of Soviet troops against Afghan civilians (ground forces entering villages, that is) are the following: burning alive, disembowelling, decapitation, tying them up and running them over with tanks, using them as shields in front of APCs, and a few other nice things. Many of these have occurred in the Panjsher valley, as well as widely elsewhere. The Oslo testimony mentions some, as do the helsinki and UN reports. Since at this point the ms. doesn't indicate very clearly why the Afghans are fighting, some of this might be useful.

p. 140

"Cobak" should be Kobak

p. 141

The standard spelling is Uzbek, not "Uzbak"

"...ethnic group of northern Afghanistan"--- and the Soviet Union!

Soan: "Oriental Russian" might be a Soviet from uzbekistan.

By the way, the Uzbek language is primarily Turkish

Some educated Afghans speak French. Others speak English (more now pehaps than French. Others speak German. Others speak Japanese. Most speak English plus a few others.

✓ p. 142

"Those mines injured livestock more than humans"... do you have verification for this? Do you mean injured larger numbers? or injured wors? unclear. I'm not sure it is correct.Olivier Roy might have some infomation.

p. 142

Anatoly wore a turban, check scarf, mud-colored pattu...

As an Uzbek, he would probably wear a distinctive turban cap, with or without a turban. He'd probably wear a long-sleeved coat called a chipon, striped vertically in dark blue or green, over his shoulders (not putting his hands in the sleeves unless it's deep winter.

And why would he wear a check scarf? What kind? Like the ones Arafat wears? That would make him look rather foreign. And with a turban and a coat, (or even a pattu), why would he wear a scarf? Around his neck?

p. 145

"...no electrical appliances..." Why not? Have they stopped selling batteries? the French doctors brought their own generators and ran x-ray machines. People have transistor radios.

p. 146

If an Afghan had a second language (see above re French, which was rapidly displaced by English from the 1960s on, but let that pass); HOWEVER, almost every Afghan, of whatever level of education, even illiterate, has more than one language!

In addition to his mother tongue, whatever that may be, everyone speaks Dari. It is the lingua franca. It is totally wrong to say that an uzbek might well speak French better than Dari; aside from the fact that few Uzbeks got education in the schools that taught in Euroepan languages, every Uzbek would have been talking Dari since childhood. It's the language of the bazaars from eastern iraq to northern India (i.e., Farsi is; and Dari is just a dialectal form of Farsi. Any Dari speaker can talk to any Iranian easily.)

(Also, all Muslim Afghans...which is 99.9% or more...know Arabic, at least in the classic Koranic form; many natives Dari speakers also know Pushto, though not as many as the Pushtuns who know Dari. etc.)

Also-- something was dropped -- a word? a line? between the bottom of p. 145 and the top of p. 146.

p.147 - Cobak should be Kobak, again

p. 149 - " " " " "

p. 150 -

"The medical details had been skimped (because) J-P would be around to tell her what to do." Not very likely, unless the organization was totally incompetent. Ask laumonier about the pressures on them. Are you portraying the French medical groups as bunglers and quacks? No sound medical organization would send unqualified people to substitute for qualified.

p. 150

Afghans do not generally use running streams for toilets, since they drink from them too. They go behind rocks or bushes. They do however use irrigation ditches. And they don't realize that privies may have underground seepage into streams below. I find it hard to figure how an Afghan would squat on his or her heels (the defecation position) in the midst of a fast-running mountain stream.

p. 151

No, Pushto is not the commonest language in Afghanistan. The commonest language in Afghanistan is Dari, which is the mother tongue of Tajiks, Farsiwans, Hazara, , and others, and is the second language (usually equal fluency) of the rest, and the lingua franca of the whole country.

Farsi is not "closely similar" to Dari-- they are the same language. Dari is a dialect of Farsi, just as, say, American is a dialect of English. (Pushto is second, but few except Pushtuns speak it.)

p. 152

Since when are Afghans immune to blisters? Of course they "have knowledge of such things." (This is mentioned again later, and is still wrong.) Their skin blisters just like everyone else's.

What is true is that Afghans don't complain -- about blisters, about bullet wounds, about appendicitis, about much of anything. They are extremely stoic, incredibly so at times.

Afghans are immune to blisters. Of course they have knowledge of such things. Their skin blisters just like everyone else's. What is true is that Afghans don't complain about blisters, about bullet wounds, about appendicitis, about much of anything. They are extremely stoic, incredibly so at times.

p. 158

"Moussa...swaggering..." Better check. I don't think an amputation heals that quickly. I don't think a child heals that quickly. I've seen these mutilated children. They are not swaggering. They are tragic. A loss of a limb leaves pain, it is a long healing, there are phantom feelings, etc. And this is only a few weeks after the loss. Too fast. He might be brave, might put up a brave front, but that's different. These children are very sad, and they are often frightened (though not afraid). But they are indeed determined not to be stopped by the maiming-- they want to help fight. So that is accurate, later on in the ms. But not so carefree. *at least, not so soon.*

p.161

"white pigeons inhabited by spirits"-- Do you have a reliable source for this? The main place where one sees white pigeons is flocking around the Great Mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif. I haven't heard this (but it may be the case). I hope one of the Afghan sources can confirm for you.

This has brought me up to approximately p. 181 in the manuscript. At Dan Starer's request, I pass this on as is now.

If it looks useful, I will continue through the latter part of the manuscript, which contains, I believe, more specific notes and questions in my marginal jottings. Time did not permit me to complete it all in one sitting.

F.Y.I.

The Jamiat has an office in Paris, directed by Homayun Tandar, who is at present inside Afghanistan. I can put you in touch with him on his returnbut: while he would perhaps be useful on the organization and goals of Jamiat in the Panjsher and elsewhere, he would also present you with the picture he wants you to have, which is not necessarily accurate. He would almost certainly exaggerate power and influence, minimize problems, etc. Also, if he read the manuscript and the sex scenes, he might refuse to allow anyone he knows to be involved with the book in any way, since Jamiat is for various political reasons extremely rigid on such matters, at least in public.

I am therefore not sure whether any help he might give you would not be outweighed by (a) the problems he could create and (b) the partisan bias which would influence the information he would give.


Rosanne Klass