

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

Rapport från ett besök i Afghanistan, nyligen befriat från talibanstyret och där en optimistisk stämning dominerade. Besökte Kabul University, utbildningsministeriet, Afghanistan Research and Evalation Unit (AREU), the Centre for Policy Research och Svenska Afghanistankommittén. Besöket var en del av min och Staffan Lindbergs kontaktresa för SASNETs räkning till universitet i Pakistan och Afghanistan. För mig var det dessutom en återkomst till ett land jag tyckte mycket om när reste där 1972 och 1975 – som jag berättat om i ett flertal resebrev.

Jag stannade kvar några extra dagar i Kabul och upplevde staden till fots och fick dessutom tillfälle att besöka Baburs – den förste mogulkejsarens – gravkomplex



Kabul money exchange dealers

Report from a fascinating contact journey

by Lars Eklund and Staffan Lindberg

In November–December 2003 we made a contact journey to Pakistan and Afghanistan. The purpose was to network with researchers and institutions, and get to know under which conditions and with what expectations they function.

We travelled for three weeks, met lots of people and had fascinating experiences. Here are our impressions from Afghanistan recently freed from Taliban rule and where an optimistic mood prevailed. We visited Kabul University – where academics returned to take up positions; the Ministry of Higher Education; the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU); the Center for Policy Research; and the Swedish Afghanistan Committee (SCA). We were also lucky to meet the eminent Afghanistan expert **Nancy Dupree**. The visit was part of mlne and **Staffan Lindberg's** contact tour on behalf of SASNET to universities in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Read our detailed reports from the tour.

For me, it was also a return to a country I liked a lot when I travelled there in 1972 and 1975 – which I told about in several travel letters. I stayed in Kabul three days more than Staffan, and after saying farewell at the airport, I decided to walk back on foot from the airport, and stroll along in the city without any fear. Visited the bazar taking photos, and met lots of nice people in a friendly atmosphere. Together with **Christer Persson** from SCA we went to see the beautiful grave monument of **Babur** – the first Mughal emperor, and also the deserted royal Palace outside Kabul.



Afghanistan/Kabul

The Ariana Afghan Airlines flight to Kabul took off at about 13.00 on Monday 1 December 2003, and after nice overview over the plains of Punjab and NWFP and of the mountain ranges separating Pakistan and Afghanistan (with snow covered mountain tops), we landed in the valley of Kabul. After landing we proceeded to the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) compound in Shar-e-Nau where we were accommodated during our stay in Kabul.

In the afternoon we had an appointment the Swedish Counsellor **Jörgen Persson** at the local Sida office, and in the evening we met the staff at SCA.

[Report from meetings in Kabul Monday 1 December 2003](#)

On Tuesday 2 December we visited the **Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, AREU**, in the morning; and in the afternoon we had a meeting with Dr **Sharif Fayez**, Afghanistan's Minister for Higher Education. In the evening we met a few expatriate scholars staying in Kabul.

[Report from our meetings in Kabul Tuesday 2 December 2003](#)

The following day was mainly devoted to visiting **Kabul University** and its faculties. We also visited the National Centre for Policy Research and were impressed by its ambitious programme to train Afghani researchers. In the evening we met some expatriate Swedish experts.

[Report from our meetings in Kabul Wednesday 3 December 2003](#)

On Thursday 4 December Staffan returned to Islamabad by the PIA flight at noon, whereas Lars stayed on in Kabul for another three days. Before we parted there was however still an appointment that we were happy about, namely a meeting with Nancy Dupree at the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan office. Nancy had just flown in from Peshawar to give a lecture at the Afghanistan Academy of Sciences.

[Report from our meeting with Nancy Dupree, Thursday 4 December 2003](#)

Lars enjoyed staying more days in Kabul, having plenty of time walking around in the city and visiting interesting places in the Afghan capital that he had previously visited 28 years ago, including the Bagh-e-Bala palace on a hillock with a grand view over Kabul (photo to the right).

On Sunday 7 December he then departed for New Delhi, India with once-weekly Ariana Afghan Airlines jumbo-jet flight. From there he proceeded to his beloved Kolkata to spend his holiday there before returning to Sweden in the beginning of January 2004.

[Read Lars Eklund's article on Kabul Revisited](#), published in SYDASIEN 4/2003 (in Swedish only)



Report from our first day in Kabul, Monday 1 December 2003:

At about 13.00 our Ariana Afghan Airlines flight to Kabul took off and after nice overview over the plains of Punjab and NWFP and of the mountain ranges separating Pakistan and Afghanistan – with snow covered tops, we landed in the valley of Kabul. During the flight we made friends with Mr. [Bashir Ahmad](#), General Manager for the [National Engineering Services Pakistan](#), a building consultant overseeing the construction of road between Torkham border and Jalalabad. A Swedish company is involved in a similar task with designing the road construction from Jalalabad onwards to Kabul.



It was a rather depressing landing, on one side of the runway we could see a large number of aircraft wreckages (see photo above), and on the other side we had the military bases full of attack planes and helicopters. The airport building was also depressing, a small two storied building run down by lack of maintenance. An enormous silk screen painting of [Ahmed Shah Massoud](#), the late hero of the liberation war against the Taliban, covered the front entrance of the building (photo to the left).

We were invited to stay with the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, and they had sent a van to pick us up, and the driver Mr. [Nadar](#) immediately spotted us without having to show any name poster, as there had been only about 20 passengers on this Boeing 727 flight from Islamabad. We drove through

the beleaguered city, passed the fortified American Embassy, and towards the area of Shar-e-Nau (once upon a time the area of Kabul where most tourists stayed) where the Swedish Committee since the Spring 2003 has its living quarters for expatriates and volunteers (photo to the right). Ironically, the same compound used to be the living quarters of the Taliban leaders before they had to run away in 2001. It is a nice compound with several buildings, apartments and common space of various kind, and functioning but slow Internet connection. Also a very nice staff.



On the way we saw some women in the street, most of them veiled in the typical Afghani light blue burkhas, totally covering the body with an embroidered grid over the face. We also saw soldiers from the United Nations Isaf forces in their armoured cars, but not many Westerners on foot.

Meeting with Jörgen Persson at the Sida office in Kabul



After installing ourselves in the apartment we were so grateously provided with, we took a taxi to the Sida office, situated in the neighbouring area of Wazir Akbar Khan, to meet Mr. [Jörgen Persson](#), Counsellor and head of the Sida office in Kabul, who had been most instrumental in organising our visit to Kabul.

Jörgen told us that he only recently took up the posting, and the Sida office had just been fully equipped. It functions as a branch of the Swedish Embassy in Islamabad.

Sida is mainly working with multilateral projects in Afghanistan, and Jörgen Persson's job is to negotiate and coordinate this cooperation. The main agencies are the UN, EU and the World Bank. The Americans are big donors and also participate in coordination activities, but mostly end up running their own projects in their own way. Bilateral cooperation consists mainly of support to the Swedish Committee and to the transport sector.

Jörgen informed us that the security situation is bad, on the edge so to say. Maybe it would become better after the Loya Jirga to be held from the middle of December. Otherwise he thinks it is a real challenging task to be here at this time, Afghanistan being a 'laboratory' for fast

development.

Evening meeting with SCA workers

We enjoyed supper together with a few of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan staff (expatriates and volunteers) in the SCA compound dining hall, and had a chance to present SASNET and our activities, as well as getting ourselves informed and updated about the valuable work that SCA carries out running primary schools, health clinics, etc. in a really big way in several parts of the country. SCA employs more than 9,000 persons in the country, and moved its head office from Peshawar to Kabul in the Spring 2003. It is one of the major NGO's working in Afghanistan with very good reputation as it has been working with Afghani refugees in Pakistan and inside Afghanistan ever since the early 1980's, and even during the Taliban regime from 1995–2001 SCA managed to continue run its schools and clinics in both the Taliban held areas as well as in those regions controlled by opposition forces.

We met:

[Christer Persson](#), Manager for the Southern region, Ghazni
[Börje Almqvist](#), Information Officer, Central Management Office Kabul
[Ahmed Abd el Rahman](#), Senior Health Advisor
[Dawn Laboc](#), CNM MSN MCH Advisor for NRO
[Kerstin Björk](#), MCH Trainer, Provincial Health Unit Kunduz

[Börje Almqvist](#) (photo to the right) has worked as a journalist for many years, and we know of his informed writing on Afghanistan through AfghanistanNytt, and he has also had some relations to Sydasién, the magazine Staffan and Lars have been involved in publishing for the past 27 years.

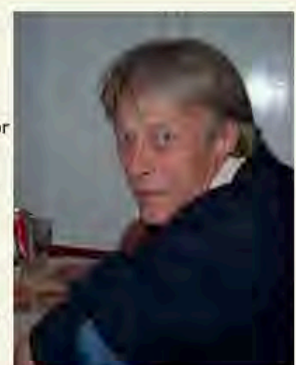


[Christer Persson](#) (photo to the left) is working for SCA as Manager for the Southern region. He has previously worked for private companies in South East Asia and Australia. He is supposed to be stationed at Ghazni, southwest of Kabul, but due to security considerations – it was in Ghazni a French aid worker was killed in the middle of November – he is now temporarily posted at the SCA head office in Kabul.

[Ahmed Abd el Rahman](#), coming from Sudan is a medical doctor. He is health advisor to SCA, posted at the head office in Kabul.

[Dawn Laboc](#) is a midwife by training and is working for SCA in the northern region at Kunduz with mother and child health care.

[Kerstin Björk](#) is a senior midwife working at Astrid Lindgren Hospital in Stockholm, who recently joined SCA to work as a trainer at the SCA provincial health unit in Kunduz in north eastern Afghanistan.



Meetings in Kabul Tuesday 2 December 2003:

Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, AREU

Web page: www.areu.org.af

We spent the whole morning meeting with various staff members of this interesting institute, which was set up in 1999 by donor agencies in order to produce research and information for policy decisions by the government and the same donor agencies. AREU is located at Charahi Ansari, opposite the Insaf Hotel and Popolano's, in the Shar-e-Nau area.



Meeting with Ms. Alexia Coke, Programme Manager, Livelihoods Research; and **Dr. Ian Christoplos, consultant to AREU** (also working with the Swedish Agricultural University, from January 2004 as head of the [Dept. of Rural Development and Agroecology](#)).

Alexia Coke (*photo to the left*) informed us about the background of AREU. With the advent of the new interim government in the beginning of January 2001, and the ambitious development policies supported by the international donor agencies, it was felt that there was a great need for data on the situation inside Afghanistan. So AREU got a very challenging task of providing these data.

There is a research staff of ten persons, eight of them being expatriates, since very few Afghans have the necessary training to do research. AREU's ambition is to include Afghani researchers as soon as possible. The funding situation is quite strong. There is also an ambition to work together with other research organisations.

For the time being it is action oriented and policy relevant research that is being pushed. There are six priority areas for this:

+ political economy of markets; + governance; + livelihood; + gender; + natural resources management; and + health.

A number of projects have already been carried out, like:

- « The Public Health System
- « Strategic Coordination
- « Basic Education
- « Addressing Livelihoods
- « Refugee Issues
- « Land Issues

The research reports are published in English and Dari, and also disseminated via seminars, workshops, etc.

As an example of the research projects, we came to know about the Livelihoods project, which is undertaken in cooperation with NGOs, and which also shelter AREU researchers from attacks by the opposition (through their local anchorage and legitimacy). It builds on DFID (the UK [Department for International Development](#)) methodology, a combination of political economy and anthropology. From rural issues there is also a plan to study urban livelihood with 40 household studies in Kabul, Herat and Jalalabad; trans-national networks established via migration (refugees, migrant labour).

A major preoccupation is agricultural development and an attempt to go beyond the usual extension with seeds and tools, to address the water issue (most severe of all), and the current reliance of opium cultivation (in 28 out of 32 provinces).



AREU has also recently published a Briefing paper on the coming Afghan presidential elections (Afghan Elections: The Great Gamble), arguing that it should be postponed in order to gain more legitimacy. Currently, there seems to be no preparedness to listen to this argument, neither among donor agencies nor among the members of government

With [Ian Christoplos](#) (*photo to the left*) we talked about the possibility to build a Swedish group of Afghan oriented researchers. Sida's [Department for Natural Resources and the Environment](#) has declared that it has no capacity getting involved in Afghanistan.

Ian had also tried to introduce the concept of 'security studies' at Uppsala, but had met with very meagre response.

Meeting with Ms. Christina Bennet, Communication Manager (about to leave her post); and **Mr. Thomas Muller, Communication Manager**, AREU, just taken up the post

The Communications department at AREU is responsible for ensuring that research and information on Afghanistan is made accessible, [through the AREU web site](#) and by publishing reports and organizing workshops. The ambition is to link donors outside Afghanistan and the NGO's together, and raise important issues. We presented SASNET and our web site, and decided to link our activities.

As part of AREU's efforts to disseminate new research they offer the possibility of letting Swedish scholars come to Afghanistan.

Meeting with Mr. Royce Wiles, Coordinator, Resource Centre, AREU

[Royce Wiles](#) (*photo to the right*) comes from New Zealand and has recently taken up the post to head the Coordination Resource Centre at AREU. He is involved in cataloguing a major books collection of Afghanistan literature that AREU took over from the British Institute of Afghan Studies. The library will be open to researchers as soon as the database is completed and the books are arranged. Royce is also preparing a Guide to Research Institutions and Libraries in Kabul, as such a comprehensive presentation does not exist today. Besides AREU itself the guide will give updated information and further links to ARIC ([ACBAR Resource and Information Centre](#)); DAFA (Delegation Archaeologique Française en Afghanistan); The Institute of Archaeology; Kabul Public Library; Kabul University Library; [The Kabul Museum](#); The National Archives of Afghanistan; and SPACH (Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage).



Meeting with Mir Ahmad Jawada, Deputy Director for Program Support



As the Deputy Director for Program Support at Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, AREU, [Mir Ahmed Joyenda](#) (photo to the left) is AREU's link person to officialdom in Kabul. He is well adapted for this role as he formerly used to work for the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including serving as a diplomat at the Afghanistan Embassy in India for a few years after 1993. He joined AREU in 2001, as the first non-Western employee in the organisation. Mr Joyendra is an archaeologist by training, educated at Allahabad University in India 1975-78. After that he worked at Kabul University, which was functioning all through the 80's in spite of the ongoing civil war in the country.

It is a fact that Kabul University never stopped its activities during the years of communist regime and Soviet occupation, but was only closed down for a period in the early 90's due to the devastating internal fighting between the different mujahedin groups that took over power in Kabul in 1992.

Mir Ahmed Joyenda is also Chairman for the Foundation for Culture and Civil Society, an independent, non-political NGO promoting Afghan culture in the forms of films, poetry, music and other cultural activities. The foundation is sponsored by the World Bank, but is also seeking alternative funding.

We made good use of his extensive knowledge of academic life in Kabul at the University, and the Afghan Academy of Sciences. He strongly recommended us to contact the Kabul University Chancellor, Prof. [M Akbar Popal](#), a key person in the efforts to increase International

cooperation; Prof. [Seihan](#) at the newly established National Centre for Policy Research; and Prof. [Daud Rawosh](#), Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Meeting with Dr Sharif Fayez, Minister for Higher Education

We travelled by car from the AREU office in the central part of Kabul to the Ministry for Higher Education southwest of the city centre, on the way to Kabul University. It was a depressing journey as the roads were lined with ruins on both sides. Two years after the latest fighting stopped in the capital most houses are not rebuilt. The traffic is dominated by the land cruisers belonging to the hundreds of International organizations, from the UN to NGO:s from all parts of the World.

The stark contrast between modernity and tradition struck us, as the blue burkha-clad women one sees everywhere, moving about surprisingly easy, are mixing up with women draped in various modes of modern dresses. The ethnic mixture in the street life, with Pashtuns, Tadjiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras, each with their characteristic features and of course different headgears, remind one of the good old times in the 1970's when Kabul was a beautiful, multiethnic, city attracting travellers from near and far.



We reached the Ministry and went up the stairs to see the Minister without making any appointment beforehand. The whole building was being renovated, and armed soldiers guarded it but still the security apparatus was relaxed. We happened to arrive just at lunch time, and without any doubt we were with typical Afghan hospitality offered a small lunch consisting of saffron rice and bread, plus green tea, to be eaten in the Minister's waiting room. What Swedish Minister would ever offer an unannounced visitor lunch in his/her waiting room? Dr [Sharif Fayez](#) (photo to the left) took time to meet us in his big office, while a delegation of US-based Afghani educationists waited outside, and so were two people from a South Korean university. It is obvious that the whole World is involved in the efforts to upgrade the educational system in Afghanistan. The situation is extreme. Few institutions of higher education exist in the country at the moment, and the quality in the ones that do exist is not up to International standards. Dr Fayez who seemed a bit resigned declared that at the moment the main priority for the Ministry is to improve the standard of teaching, especially in the fields of Medicine, Computer science, and Engineering. Research will have to wait.

We discussed the possibilities of promoting contacts between Swedish schools of Education with institutions in Afghanistan, and the minister said that he would be most happy if such links could be established. Dr. Fayez also suggested we meet with the Chancellor of Kabul University, the dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Mr. [Alimi](#), the Rector of the Kabul Polytechnics, Dr. [Mir Farhredin](#), people at the Faculty of Education, etc. Dr. Fayez was originally a lecturer in Literature, trained at Firdaus University in Iran, and has spent several years in the U.S. He returned to Afghanistan in 2001. He told about the great changes that have already taken place at Kabul University. During the Taliban regime the number of students were only 4,000. Now there are 36,000

students, out of which 8,000 are women. In 2001 there was not a single computer, now it is rapidly being supplied with computers (at present 1,000).

The university was also totally isolated from the outside World, but now there are established links with a number of American universities, as well as German, British, Korean and Japanese institutions. Bringing guest lecturers to Kabul is part of these exchange programmes. Dr. Fayez hopes that from next year it will also be possible to send Afghans for further education abroad. Some contacts have also been established with India, but the Minister decisively declared that the relations to Pakistan are absolutely none.

Some Afghan university professors have returned to the country from exile abroad, but it is a problem to attract them with the low wages given at Afghan universities. Presently there are around 1,700 university teachers, out of whom only very few have PhD degrees. So there is need for augmenting their qualifications with Masters courses and PhD studies. Foreign scholarships and seats at universities are very welcome. The World Bank has promised to finance a programme from 2004, to recruit diaspora Afghan and International teachers on assignments varying from 6 months to one year.



Another initiative to revive the standard of teaching has been to import textbooks from Iran. As the medium of instruction at Afghani universities is Dari, a dialect of Persian, Iranian textbooks can be used without any problem. Dr. Fayez however frankly explained that no books with an ideological content will be allowed to pass the border.

To complement this interview, it is interesting to know that private elite universities in the form of two international colleges offering high-quality teaching are currently being planned, both of them in Kabul. According to a report published by the [Institute for War & Peace Reporting](#), IWPR, 29 October 2003, there seems to be enough of high-income families ready to give their children such an education. One of them is an American university of Afghanistan along the lines of those already established at Cairo and Beirut.

Institutes in India, Germany and Japan have also expressed interest to set up colleges in Afghanistan. This is a new development since there is a law that the state alone has the right and duty to run institutions of public and higher learning.



Meeting in the evening with foreign scholars resident in Kabul:

We were invited to dinner at the residence of [Ole Jensen](#), working for the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees, DACAAR, and Alexia Coke working for AREU, whom we met earlier in the day.

We met:

Dr. [Ian Christoplos](#), consultant to AREU, whom we also met in the morning
Dr. [Gorm Pedersen](#), Anthropologist, Director for DACAAR with head office at Wazirabad in Kabul (photo to the left).

Dr. [Adam Pain](#), East Anglia University, UK. Adam Pain (photo to the right) has been connected to AREU in publishing a report on "Addressing Livelihoods in Afghanistan" in September 2002 (co-written with [Sue Lautze](#)). It is available through [AREU's publication page](#).

Adam Pain is a scholar dedicated to research on the Himalayan region, and he has spent eight years inside Bhutan, and took part in the [International Bhutan conference held in Thimphu](#) in August 2003.



[Back to Journey](#)



Meetings in Kabul Wednesday 3 December 2003:

Visit to Kabul University

Kabul University is located in a big and beautiful campus area east of the city centre. The University was started already in 1931 during the rule of King [Nadir Shah](#), and it played a major role for the development of the Afghan society up to 1979. During the 20 years of Soviet occupation, and civil war, the standard however severely declined, mainly because most proficient scholars fled the country. And for those who remained the isolation from the outside World meant that the development in research stopped completely.

Some of the buildings are in poor shape, but actually we did not see any concrete war damages. And outside almost every single faculty building signs stand today, signalling that cooperation projects with foreign countries (mostly Germany) are under way to rebuild the institutions. Sweden however is absent in these projects.

What also struck our eyes was that we did not see a single book in any of the rooms of the ordinary professors or deans we visited.

The university's winter vacation had already started for most students. Some examinations were however still held, so a small number of students were present on the campus (*like the students of Economics in the photo above*).



Unfortunately we could not meet the Chancellor for Kabul University, Prof. [M Akbar Popal](#), who has taken a great interest in improving the standard of the university and is a driving force in opening up exchange programmes with universities around the World. We sat waiting for over an hour in his waiting room, along with a women reportage team from the [Times Educational Supplement](#) in London, working on a feature on Kabul University, and its new computer training courses. But we finally had to give up, as Prof. Popal was still busy with appointments. We had a small chat however with the Director of President's Office, Mr. [Akram Mukthar](#), who acts as an assistant to the Chancellor.

We returned the following day and tried to fix an appointment with Prof. Popal through the university's secretariat, but his schedule turned out to be totally full for the day. Well there is nothing strange with this. Exactly the same thing would probably happen if we had tried to make an unexpected visit to the Vice-Chancellor of any Swedish university.

This time we met another British resident in the waiting-room, [Tim Eyres](#) from Oxford, working as Programme Manager at Kabul University's newly established [English Resource Centre](#).

Meeting with Prof. Gul Rahman Hakim, Dean of the Faculty of Education



Instead we headed straight for the faculties. Our first meeting was with Prof. [Gul Rahman Hakim](#), Dean of the Faculty of Education. He is a psychologist by training, with a PhD from an Indian university, and has worked at Columbia University in New York.

The faculty which encompasses teaching of pedagogics, psychology and social sciences, was in the pre-communist days organized in three sections, one for the social sciences, one for the natural sciences, and one for administration. The communist government after 1978 changed the system, and divided the faculty into two departments only, one for pedagogics, and one for psychology. Now the faculty will return to the original three-tier division and at the same time use the American university system as a model. Today the priority set in the faculty is to produce competent teachers trainers and administrators.

Currently, the Faculty has 300 students and 18 teachers, of whom 12 are very young (eight men and four women) and lacking even a Masters degree. There is also a major problem with language proficiency, most of the faculty is poor in English and would have to attend intensive courses before qualifying for a Masters course abroad.

Prof. Hakim has been in touch with [Pia Karlsson](#) and [Amir Mansory](#) from the [Institute of International Education](#) (IIE), at Stockholm University, while working on their joint PhD thesis project titled "*Islamic and 'Modern' Education in Afghanistan – Also for Girls?*".

He would welcome an opportunity to send some of his staff abroad for Masters courses in Pedagogics, etc. Prof. Hakim specifically points out the utmost necessity to train the Afghan students in methodology, and the art of learning how to do that is non-existent in Afg\lanistan today.



Visit to the National Centre for Policy Research at Kabul University

We then visited the National Centre for Policy Research, established as recently as January 2003. There we met Mr. [Mohammad Bashir Ahmadzai](#), Project Assistant Administrator, and Mr. [Werner M. Prohl](#), Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung Country Representative.

The Centre, financed by the German private foundation [Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung](#), was set up with the specific political purpose to promote democracy in Afghanistan. The way to do this is augment the capacity of social scientists at Kabul University to do research. As such the Centre is autonomous in relation to the faculties at Kabul University, and the salaries are paid by Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung.



The centre has three departments:

- Dept. of Law and Political Sciences, headed by Prof. [Qazi](#)
- Dept. of Economics, headed by Prof. [Seihun](#)
- Dept. of Social Sciences, headed by Prof. [Nasreen Gros](#)



The heads of the departments are permanently employed. The ambition is that research should be carried out by Afghani themselves, and not by foreign experts. Mr Werner Prohl (*photo to the left*) said that they are well aware of the present lack of research consciousness among the academics at Afghani universities, and the need for this to be adjusted. But the German financiers do not see this as a short-term project, but instead take on a long-term view (20–25 years) on the funding of the institute, just like they do in all International projects they decide to get involved with. We asked if they have contacts with the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, AREU, that we visited the day before ([see our report](#)). They know about AREU, but there have so far been no formal contacts between the two centres.

The National Centre for Policy Research offers scholarships to Afghani researchers for carrying out Masters and post-graduate studies in Germany. But even here, Mr Prohl points out, it is still difficult to find suitable candidates for scholarship programmes. Four German universities are involved in these programmes, and the goal is to establish working PhD sandwich programmes between these German institutions and the University of Kabul. A working PhD sandwich programme in Economics has already been evolved in cooperation with the University of Bochum.

Mr. Prohl does not fear that the students going out for studies will stay on in Germany after completing their studies. Those who get an opportunity of going abroad for higher studies will definitely prefer to return to good, high-status positions in Afghanistan rather than staying on in Germany, he argues.

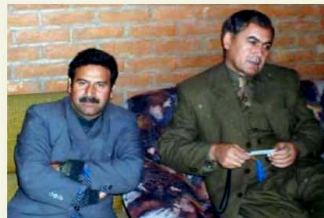
A number of research projects have been initiated at the Centre, for example on "*The Development of Democracy in Afghanistan*", "*Trade relations with Central Asian countries*", "*Rule of Law in Afghanistan*", and "*Disarming militias as a precondition for Peace in Afghanistan*". These projects engage roughly 80–90 lecturers from various faculties of Kabul University. They are engaged for 6 – 12 months on a part time basis. The remaining time they continue to teach at their ordinary departments, where they have their permanent employment.

As the Centre does not expect valid research results in the short run they also plan for in-training of the researchers at Kabul University, teaching methodology and the practice of research. For that purpose seminars will be held in Kabul with German professors coming here. The first one is planned to be held in March 2004, and 80–90 KU lecturers from the three departments who are not properly trained to do research will take part in the seminar.

Meeting with Prof. M. Daud Rawosh, Dean of the Faculty of the Social Sciences

Our third meeting was with Prof. [M. Daud Rawosh](#), Dean of the Faculty of the Social Sciences (*to the right on the photo*) and Mr. [Pohandoie Ahmed Zia Nickben](#), Head of the Philosophy Department in the faculty. Both of them are educated in philosophy.

Prof. Daud Rawash completed his higher studies with a PhD in 1993 at the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow – now renamed the [Peoples' Friendship University of Russia](#) (PFUR).



When he returned to Afghanistan the situation was very volatile in Kabul, so instead he taught for some years at the Balkh University in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif. The [Balkh University](#), the second largest of Afghanistan with faculties in medicine, engineering, economics, journalism, literature, law and science, was mostly unaffected by the long war, and only came into trouble after the Taliban take-over of north Afghanistan. Prof Rawash then fled to Islamabad, Pakistan, and in 1997 he became involved in setting up a college for Afghan refugees. He returned to Afghanistan after the liberation from the Taliban in late 2001, and started to work at Kabul University.

The Faculty consists of several departments; the subjects include sociology, anthropology/ethnology, history, modern history, archaeology and political science. There are however presently not a single teacher in the disciplines of sociology and modern history. All courses run are at an undergraduate level, but the ambition is to be able to start also an MA programme. Prof. Rawash complained that the standard of the faculty right now is deplorable. The faculty staff consists of 35 persons, out of whom ten are professors. Most of these are old – according to Prof. Rawash that means 45 years and above – and besides not really qualified, lacking even Masters degrees. Only four of the professors at the faculty have PhD degrees besides himself; one from Iran, one from USA, one from Bulgaria, and one from Uzbekistan (during the time of the Soviet Union). It means that even the professors should in fact need further education in order to increase the standard of their teaching, but Prof. Rawash sees no prospects for such a possibility, as few foreign universities would accept elderly people for Masters programmes. And even if it became possible it would not be a very good affair for the Kabul University as they could not be expected to work more than few years thereafter. Instead the faculty should invest in sending every year four of its younger teachers, below 30 years, for higher degrees abroad. Prof. Rawash proposes that one of them should be in the field of History, and the other three from philosophy and sociology. No formal collaboration with any foreign university exists so far, but discussions are under way with universities in Italy, and also with the Strassbourg University in France.

Mr. Nickben who heads the Philosophy department was not very conversant in English, but was able to inform us that he had completed a Masters degree in philosophy at Kabul University in 1984, and he then had continued to work at the university during all the troublesome years.

Other teachers however left the country, and Prof Rawash gave us the names of some of his former colleagues, the sociologists Mr. Farid Noory and Mr. Anwar Arman, who now live in Sweden. Besides he mentioned two Kabul University economists, Mr. Omr, and Mr. Sohilla, also now staying in Sweden. We decided to search for them after returning to Sweden.

Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development

In the afternoon we made an attempt to meet Dr. Omar Zakhilwal, at the [Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development](#) (involved in the forthcoming Afghanistan country report from the UNDP). Zakhilwal is an Afghanistan Studies researcher, and a friend of Mr. Ahmed Ghulam at the [Department of Islamology](#) at Lund University. It turned out however that Dr. Zakhilwal was abroad.

Evening with Swedish experts

The Swedish Counsellor and Sida representative in Kabul Mr. Jörgen Persson and his wife Shireen Persson (originally coming from Sri Lanka, working for the Swedish NGO [Save the Children](#)) had invited us for dinner along with:



- Mr. Oscar Schlyter, Political Advisor, Office of Special Representative of the European Union for Afghanistan (*photo, to the right*). A young man who joined the Swedish Foreign Service (the Afghanistan desk) after writing a Masters thesis at the [Dept. of Political Science](#), Stockholm University, in the Spring 2001 on the Taliban movement. The thesis was named "Securitising Afghanistan. Regional security and the rise of the Taliban".

He is now working for one year as an advisor to the EU representative in Afghanistan Vandrell. [More information on EU's relations with Afghanistan.](#)

- Dr. Staffan Darnolf, Election Administration Specialist, [International Foundation for Election Systems](#) (*photo, to the left*). Consultant working for one year to prepare the presidential elections that are scheduled to be held in Afghanistan in the Summer 2004.

- Dr. Björn Odin, the [Institute for Personnel and Corporate Development](#) (IPF), an autonomous academic body working with management training, development programmes, corporate and personnel strategies, future and environment studies, research and assessment studies, wholly owned by Uppsala University, and with staff members all having an academic education within the behavioural and/or social sciences. Björn Odin was now in Afghanistan with a mission to write a curriculum for primary schools in Afghanistan.



Meeting with Nancy Hatch Dupree, Senior Consultant, AKBAR/ARIC (Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief):

Web page:

www.afghanresources.org

Nancy Hatch Dupree (photo to the right) is probably the World's leading authority on the cultural heritage of Afghanistan, having lived and worked most of her life in the area. Together with her late husband, the anthropologist Louis Dupree, she travelled extensively in Afghanistan in the 1960's and 70's and has published numerous books and articles about the country. She is now living in Peshawar, and still actively engaged in AKBAR/ARIC saving whatever there is left to save of the cultural heritage in Afghanistan after 20 years of destruction and looting.



We were lucky that she had been invited to present a paper at the Afghanistan Academy of Sciences, so we could meet this fascinating and enormously vital woman. She came directly from the airport to the head office of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, near Chicken Street (the SCA office was shifted here as recently as January 2003), where we had made an appointment in the morning of Thursday 4 December 2003. Nancy described the **main projects that AKBAR/ARIC is involved with**. They involve strengthening the services for research on Afghanistan, by linking all institutions and libraries in Kabul and the provinces together. It also involves collecting all possible documents from the UN agencies, NGO's working in Afghanistan and multilateral project bodies. These documents should be made easily available in the form of a Documentation Centre to be placed in Kabul.

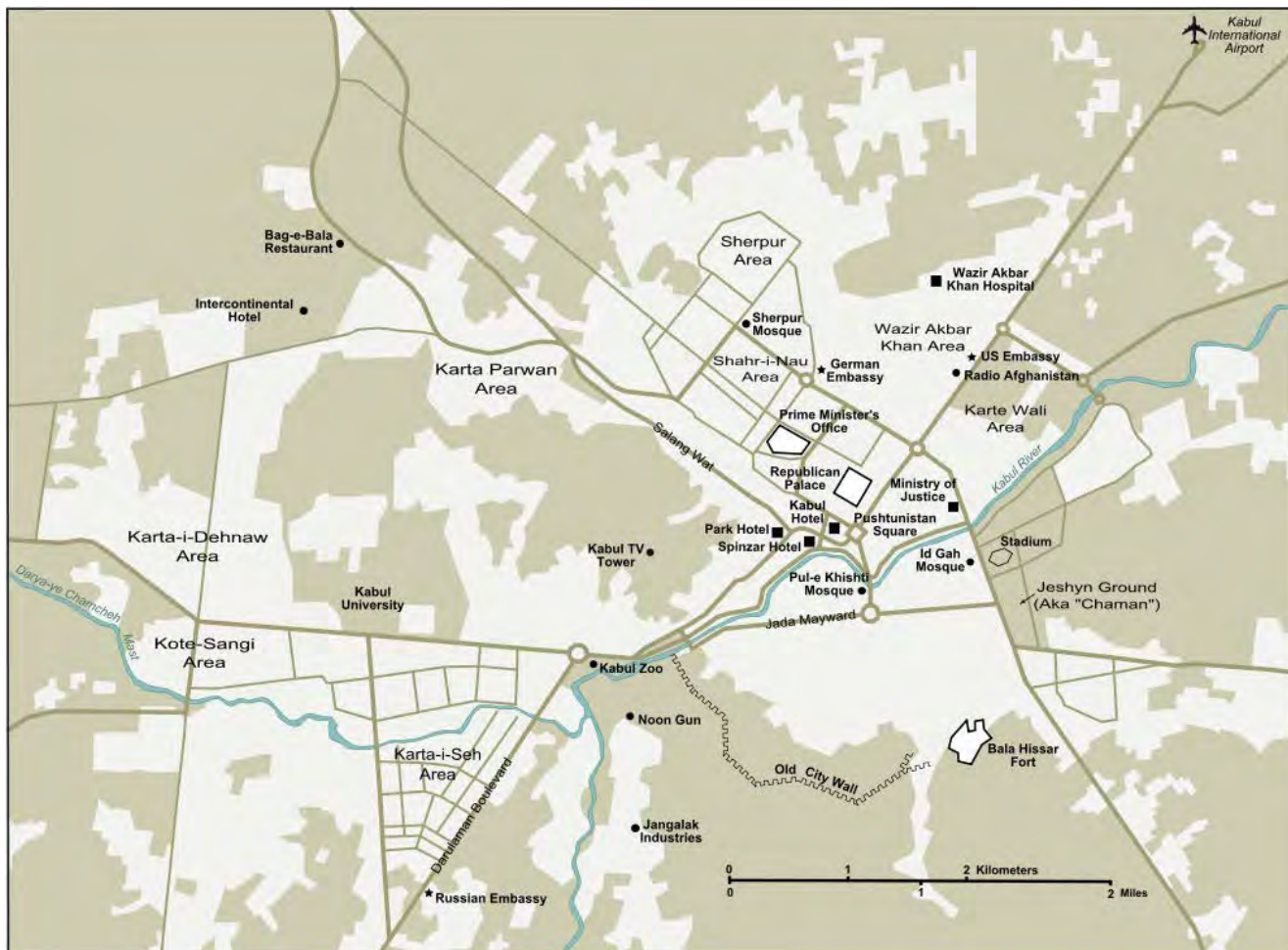
So far 25 000 document have been collected and are now kept in Peshawar, because still the political situation in Kabul is not stable enough for the setting up of such a centre. And besides a building, which should be user-friendly with all facilities available, must be built.

An important benefit such a centre would give is that Afghani researchers and scholars here would find an arena where they can meet with Western researcher and students. Because, as Nancy Dupree strongly points out, it is utmost important that research on Afghanistan is carried out by Afghanis themselves, and not only by foreign scholars. But in order to realize this Afghani researchers must be trained in how to handle research. This knowledge is lacking today.

One institution in Afghanistan where efforts already are under way to implement this philosophy is the [Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development](#), where local staff has contributed to the forthcoming United Nations Development Programme Country Report on Afghanistan, soon to be published. See the [UNDP Afghanistan Office web page](#) for more information.

Otherwise she has no illusions that it may happen very soon, because the standard of research carried out by local researchers today is not up to the mark. She told an illustrating story that she recently got three manuscripts from local researchers to publish. But it turned out to be impossible to print them, as the quality was too bad. Once upon a time there used to be proficient scholars at the universities, but during the 20 years of war and isolation they have grown old and have given up. And for those who see the salvation in getting young Afghanis, trained abroad, back from the Diaspora, this is not a much better lot, because they mostly lack the knowledge necessary about Afghani culture and society. "They know everything about technology but lack the human dimension", Nancy says. This makes them dangerous as they tend to prefer to tear everything old down and put up new buildings.

The second project Nancy Dupree is working hard with is the so-called **ABEL Extension project**. It is about publishing books in the major languages of Afghanistan, Pushtu and Dari, and distributing them to libraries to be set up all over the country. Since the project started in 1995 a total number of 122 titles have been published. Community libraries have been set up at 30 places, and the distribution also goes to 75 high school libraries, and 600 other libraries run by other organisations/agencies. Here the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan is deeply committed in cooperation. Staffan commented that the mission Nancy Dupree and AKBAR/ARIC has taken upon themselves should really be a government affair, as it could be termed setting up a National Archive. Nancy however objected to the term, as it "sounds dusty", and also because the work they perform could not be carried out by the government at present, because no trained staff is available. With training it might however be possible to turn the documentation centre and the libraries over to the government in the future.



Resedagbok

1 december 2003

Gäst hos Swedish Committée i Kabul

Flyg Islamabad – Kabul klockan 13:30 med Ariana Afghan Airlines. Bo på svenska Afghanistan-kommitténs (Swedish Committée – SCA) inhägnade kvarter (på engelska *compound*) där all SCA-personal har bostäder bakom höga murar och beväpade vakter). Här fick vi låna **Håkan Törngårds** lägenhet, då han var på semester.

Hämtades på flygplatsen av SCA-medarbetare. Skön känsla vara tillbaka i Kabul efter 28 år, fast mycket annorlunda med säkerhetsproblem och fullständigt ödelagda stadsdelar.

Efter att ha installerat oss i Håkans lägenhet och satt in ett lånat sim-kort i telefonen, hade vi avtalat möte med **Jörgen Persson**, Sidas ombud i Kabul på hans kontor på svenska ambassaden klockan 15. For med taxi dit, kostade 50 afghanis. Trevligt och givande samtal om det aktuella läget i landet.

Åter till compounden och åt middag klockan 18 tillsammans med de kommittémedarbetare som var plats i Kabul och några tillfälliga besökare. God stämning och intressant höra om deras skilda erfarenheter, däribland journalisten **Börje Almquist** som jag kände väl sedan tidigare då han skrev artiklar om Afghanistan i tidskriften SYDASIEN som jag var redaktör för från 1982 till 2007.

Dessuom träffade vi Afghanistankommitténs **Christer Persson** – som var ombedd vara vår värd under dagarna i Kabul – och barnmorskan **Kerstin Björk**. som berättade om kommitténs omfattande hälsovårdsprojekt i landet.

2 december 2003

Strålände solskensväder i Kabul. Möte klockan 09:00 på AREU – Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. Jörgen Persson körde oss dit. Blev ett lyckat besök, fick träffa folk på olika avdelningar. **Alexia Coke** tog emot och vi träffade bland många andra **Ahmed Joyenda** och svenske jordbruksforskaren **Ian Christoplos**.

Möte med utbildningsministern

Från AREU direkt till utbildningsministeriet – Ministry of Higher Education i hopp om att få träffa utbildningsministern **Sharif Fayez**. Vi for dit utan att ha bokat tid i förväg men blev varmt välkomnade och Dr. Fayez tog sig tid att träffa oss på sitt kontor, medan en delegation av USA-baserade afghanska pedagoger väntade utanför, och så var två personer från ett sydkoreanskt universitet..

Vi råkade dessutom komma precis vid lunchtid, och utan tvekan blev vi med typisk afghansk gästfrihet erbjudna en liten lunch bestående av saffransris och bröd, plus grönt te, som skulle ätas i ministerns väntrum. Vilken svensk minister skulle någonsin bjuda på en oanmäld besökare lunch i sitt väntrum?

Dr. Fayez beskrev den besvärliga situationen i landet. Det finns få institutioner för högre utbildning i landet för tillfället, och kvaliteten på de som finns är inte upp till internationella standarder. Dr Fayez, som verkade lite uppgiven, förklarade att ministeriets främsta prioritet just nu är att förbättra undervisningsstandarden, särskilt inom områdena medicin, datavetenskap och teknik. Forskning får vänta.

Svenska insatser välkomnas

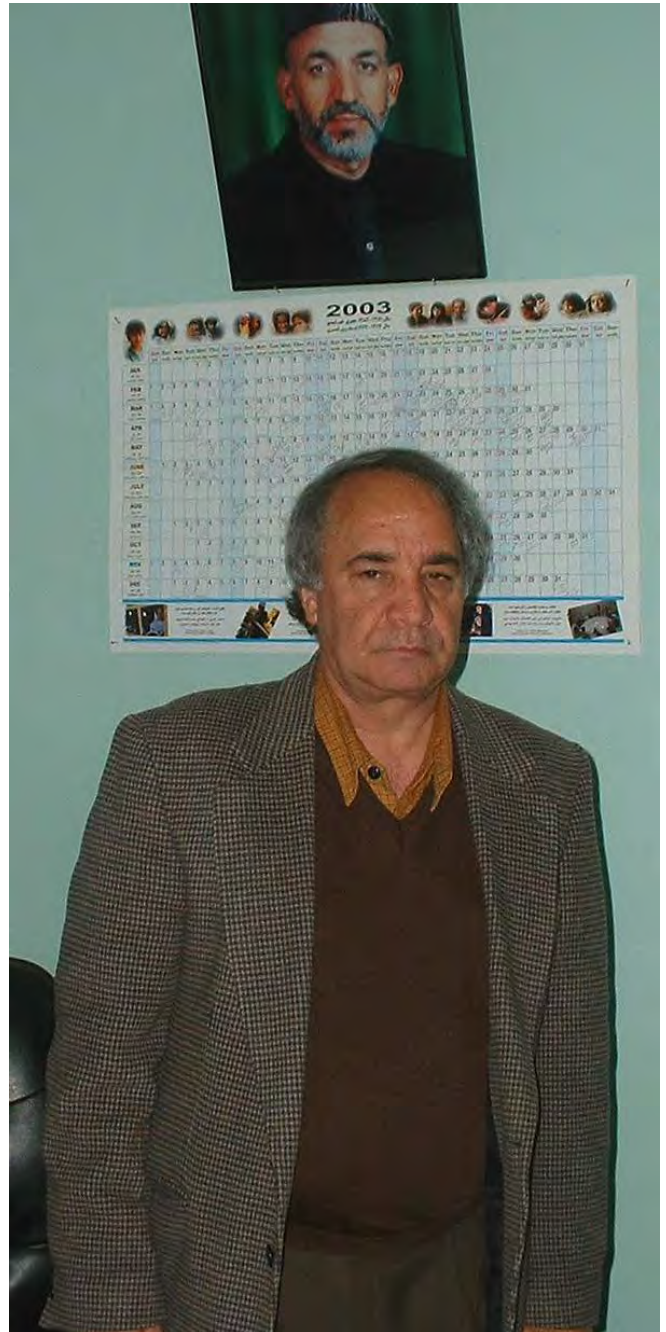
Vi diskuterade möjligheterna att främja kontakter mellan svenska utbildningsskolor med institutioner i Afghanistan och ministern sa att han skulle vara mycket glad om sådana kopplingar kunde etableras. Han berättade om de stora förändringar som redan har skett vid Kabuls universitet. Under talibanregimen var antalet studenter endast 4 000.

Nu finns det 36 000 studenter, varav 8 000 är kvinnor. 2001 fanns det inte en enda dator, nu förses den snabbt med datorer (för närvarande 1 000).



Dagsprogrammet var ingalunda över. Härnäst for vi till Kabul University med en förhoppning att få träffa universitetets Chancellor Professor **M Akbar Popal**, som framgångsrikt leder arbetet att återskapa ett fungerande universitet av hög kvalitet efter talibanregimens fall två år tidigare. Han jobbar också hårt för skapa samarbetsprogram med utländska universitet.

Popal visade sig dock vara strängt upptagen person, vi satte oss att vänta men efter en timme gav vi upp. Han hade då lämnat kontoret. I väntrummet träffade vi i alla fall på ett reportageteam från Times Educa-





tional Supplement i London – en manlig journalist och en kvinnlig fotograf helt klädd i afghanska kläder och vi utbytte erfarenheter.

3 december 2003

Forskare återvänder från diasporan

Muligt och lite småkyligt i Kabul. Enda dagen vi behövde använda våra svenska jackor. Hela dagen ägnade vi oss åt Kabul University. Träffade först professor **Gul Rahman Hakim** på Faculty of Education, en av många afghanska professorer som under den rådande hoppfulla stämningen återvänt från diasporan för att bidra till en återuppbyggnad av de afghanska universiteten. Hakim hade återvänt från Tyskland.

Tyskland är för övrigt det europeiska land som mest bistår Afghanistan och vi besökte ett nystartat tyskfinsierat Centre for Policy Research. Vi vandrade runt på campus och talade med studenter, både manliga och kvinnliga. Däutöver besökte vi före lunch den samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten och träffade dess dekan professor **Daud Rawosh**

Midada med svenskar på uppdrag i Kabul

Tog taxi dit och tillbaka till stan, åt lunch på Hong Kong Chinese Restaurant alldeles nära vårt boende. Därefter besökte vi Ministeriet för landsbygdsutveckling. Svårt att hitta trots att det låg centralt mitt emot utrikesdepartementet. Taxi tillbaka till SCA. Vilade och jobbade sen med rapportskrivande.

På kvällen middag hos Jörgen Persson och hustrun **Shirin** från Sri Lanka. De jobbar för Rädda Barnen. **Oscar Schlyter** också där, han är EU-sändebud i Afghanistan och granne till oss på vårt compound. For med EU-bil. En annan gäst var **Staffan Darnolf** som jobbar för FN med valkommissionen som konsult. Och slutligen **Björn Odin**, konsult från Uppsala. Trevlig kväll fast mycket internt jobbsnack, god middag.

4 december 2003

Fascinerande möte med Nancy Dupree

Flyg Kabul – Islamabad för Staffan kl 14.15. Jag ensam kvar i Kabul. Jag följde med honom till flygplatsen klockan 12. Men dessförinnan hann vi träffa **Nancy Dupree**, och hade ett halvtimmes långt samtal med denna fascinerande kvinna, så engagerad för det afghanska kulturarvet. Mötet ägde rum på svenska kommitténs kontor på vad som kallas Chicken Street, ett arv från 1970-talets hippie-era då de billigaste hotellen låg där. Det är en smal gata i Shahr-e-Nau-distriktet som har varit en ikonisk shoppinggata i staden och populär bland utlänningar, känd för sina mattor, hantverk och antikviteter. Förr fullt med turister, nu ersatta av ISAF-soldater. Vi for dit med taxi.

Strövade runt i staden utan oro

Efter Staffans avfärd promenerade jag från flygplatsen förbi alla sönderskjutna flygplan som påminner om mer än 20 år av krig. Resterande tiden i Kabul promenerade jag. Strövade runt i stan till fots utan oro – människor jag mötte var genomgående vänliga och nyfikna på denne svensk – det vill säga jag – som till skillnad från från flertalet utlänningar inte enbart färdades i sina tjänstebilar, med taxi eller som ISAF-soldaterna i bepansrade stridsvagnar.

Fotograferade flitigt, ingen som gav uttryck för missnöje. Men jag måste tillägga att säkerhetssituationen i december 2003 var relativt god. Några år senare inleddes en våg av självmordsbombningar. Då hade jag inte vågat riskera livet med att vandra ensam i Kabul.

På saudiska ambassadens ödetomt köpte jag Nancy Duprees bok om Kabul från 1971. Köpte den av en ung hazara-kille, gatuförsäljare för 30 afghanis. En äldre hazaraman tiggde om pengar, jag gav honom 40 afghanis.

Letade rätt på alla välkända platser jag besökt vid mina tidigare besök i Kabul 1972 och 1975. Välkända kvarter och ganska oförändrade miljöer trots de många krigsåre. Besökte Kabuls bokmarknad, träffade pengaväxlare på gatan, vandrade runt i Char Chatta-basaren och förbi Pul-e-Khisht-moskén. Besökte busstationen och den underbart vackra Shah-Do Shamshira-moskén, som byggdes under **Amanullah Khans** regeringstid 1919 till 1929.

Till sist taxi åter till Shar-e-Nau. Fixade med bilderna i datorn.

5 december 2003

Sprit att köpa från containerbutik

Skev klart Kabulrapporterna på förmiddagen, nöjd.

På eftermiddagen utflykt med Christer Persson med bil till Supreme taxfree-butik, ett absurt ställe. Ett område utanför Kabul med containrar alldeles intill vägen till Jallalabad där alla utländska expatriates och soldater i ISAF-styrkorna kan köpa öl, vin och sprit till billigt pris, i ett land som för övrigt är helt torrlagt. Träffade Olle och Alexia där.

Därefter for vi till **Baburs** trädgårdar och gravmonument, den första mogulkejsaren. Ett imponerande område utanför Kabul som nu restaurerats, väldigt vackert. En given sevärdhet för turister. Men sådana finns inte längre i landet, så typiskt nog var Christer och jag alldeles ensamma på denna enastående plats.

Palatsruin minner om kung Amanullah

Vi besökte också kungapalatset Darul Aman 16 kilometer sydväst om Kabul uppfördes 1925-1927 på order av kung Amanullah Khan och drottning **Soraya Tarzi** av ett team av västerländska arkitekter. Sedan decennier utgör det en enda ruin.

Vidare till Kabul museum som plundrades under talibantiden, och så till Bag-e-Bala-paviljongen nära Intercontinental Hotel. Så fint där, Nancy Dupree hade lyriskt berättat om den platsen. Ett populärt utflyktsmål för boende i Kabul. Här stötte vi på såväl familjer

som kompisgäng (pojkar), studenter och soldater på permission.

Avslutade dagen med middag på indian Darbar Restaurang med Christer, Börje och en brasilianare som jobbar för kommittén. Hem igen satt jag två timmar vid datorn och kollade mina mail, samt skrev vykort till **Arne** och **Gerd**, **Tomas Löfström**, **Gunnar**, **Katarina** och **Stefan**



6 december 2003

Järnemirens mausoleum

Sista dagen i Kabul. Skrev en artikel om Kabul, så inspirerad. Skickade den på kvällen till Staffan, Katarina och **Boel Billgren**. Tyvärr gick det inte att skicka bilagor.

Promenerade till stan och till Chicken Street. Träffade en trevlig matthandlare och blev bjuden på grönt te. Han talade perfekt tyska. Han var hazara.

Sedan till Pashtunistan-torget och besökte **Abdul Rahmans** mausoleum. Han regerade Afghanistan från 1880 till sin död. Han accepterade Afghanistans roll som buffertstat mellan Ryssland och Storbritannien och tog sig med engelsmännens stöd uppgiften att ena det splittrade stamsamhället till en modern nation med stark centralmakt. För detta använde han mycket hårda metoder och blev kallad Järnemiren.

Vidare till marknaden och basaren kring floden. Hittade ett helt område där man säljer gevär och uniformer. Åter Char Chatta-basaren. Fotograferade en burkhaklädd kvinna vid dörren till en guldaffär. Tillbaka till Chicken street, köpte en burkha för 600 afghanis. Åt kebabspekt plus afghanskt naanbröd och gott grönt te för 50 afghanis på en fantastisk afghansk restaurang.

Åter till SCA med blåsa på höger ringtå, hade promenerat så mycket i två dagar. Håkan, i vars lägenhet vi bodde men som nu var på semester, skulle egentligen kommit hem idag men han kom inte. Skrev klart artikeln på kvällen och kämpade sedan en timme med att för-gäves skicka den som bilaga till hotmail.

7 december 2003

Återförening med familjen i Delhi

Lars flyg Kabul – New Delhi med Ariana Afghan Airlines klockan 12:00 – 14.45, med en timmes tidsskillnad. En airbus med mycket folk ombord. Lång kö till incheckningen.

Det sista jag gjorde innan jag lämna SCA-compounden var att skriva referat om mötet med Nancy Dupree. Vi hade fått bo gratis i Håkans lägenhet hela veckan, men måste betala för maten jag ätit, tre middagar a 200 afghanis plus ersättning till Håkan för att jag lånat ett simkort till mobilen.

Ingen fönsterplats på planet tyvärr. Läste **P C Jersilds** bok *De Ondas Kloster*. Framme i Delhi prepaid taxi från flygplatsen. Skönt att vara i Indien, kunna se ansiktena på kvinnor. Betalade 600 rupies för färden till Kaka Nagar och diplomatfamiljen **Sachdeva** – som varit stationerad vid indiska ambassaden i Stockholm, och som vi blivit vänner med. First Secretary Rajesh Sacheva hade nu generöst erbjudit familjen Eklund att övernatta i deras lägenhet.

Ty min tjänsteresa var nu över och en månads semester skulle inledas med en veckolång resa i Rajasthan. Träffade sålunda familjen: Bubu, Mattias, Marie och Daniel hemma hos Sachdevas. De hade flugit med Aeroflot Köpenhamn – Moskva och sen vidare till Delhi. De ankom lördag den 6 december på natten.

LARS EKLUND

Kabul revisited efter 28 år



Klädmarknad i centrala Kabul december 2003 . Foto: Lars Eklund

Tillbaka i Kabul efter 28 år. En märklig upplevelse att återvända till en älskad stad under så annorlunda betingelser. 1970-talets afghanska huvudstad var en öppen miljö som lockade resenärer både från när och fjärran med sin avslappnat liberala atmosfär, med restauranger som bjöd på dansföreställningar och serverade afghanskt vin, och med biografer där de senaste indiska Bollywoodfilmerna visades. En verklig mötesplats mellan öst och väst, där USA och Sovjetunionen ännu fredligt tävlade om att vinna inflytande i landet genom att skänka mest bistånd.

USA byggde den södra genomfartsleden mellan Kabul och Herat i västra delen av landet, Sovjet bidrog till att bygga vägen norrut till Mazar-i-Sharif, genom Salangpasset/tunneln. Amerikanerna bekostade anläggandet av två nya fakulteter, för lantbruk och ingenjörvetenskap vid Kabul Universitys nya campus 1964, ryssarna svarade med att bygga Tekniska högskolan, Polytechnics, en bit därifrån. Och det mest bestående av dessa konkurrerande projekt är förstås den stadsdel med höghusbebyggelse som Sovjetunionen lät uppföra i nordöstra delen av staden under 1970-talet, kallad Microroyan, och som blev en populär plats att bo på för afghanska statstjänstemän. Dessa hus, fula som stryk, klarade sig relativt bra genom kriget, och när man nu ser husen på avstånd skulle det lika gärna kunnat vara ett bostadsområde i Frankfurt an der Oder, Minsk eller Novosibirsk.

Inte en enda turist kvar

I dag finns det inte en enda turist kvar i Kabul. Kabul Serena Hotel är stängt, liksom klassiska restaurangen Khyber vid Pashtunistan Square och det populära kyrkliknande lustslottscafeet Bagh-e-Bala beläget på en höjd i väster med utsikt över hela staden (alldeles nära

Intercontinental Hotel). I stället har en hel armé av västerländska så kallade expatriates, konsulter och experter av allehanda slag, volontärer och så klart ISAF-styrkorna i form av soldater från hela världen invaderat Kabul. De färdas i sina Land Cruisers och sina pansarfordon snabbt mellan sina kontor, baser och välbevakade compounds där de bor. Ambassaderna, framför allt den amerikanska på vägen mot flygplatsen, liknar veritabla fort med vaktorn, sandsäcksbarriärer och taggtrådshinder.

Skärpt säkerhet råder också i Kabul, som annars betraktats som jämförelsevis säkert, efter det brutala mordet på en fransk biståndsarbetare i staden Ghazni, 120 kilometer härifrån, i mitten av november. Utlänningar uppmanas nu av sina organisationer/ambassader att undvika att frekventera de många restauranger som vuxit upp som svampar i de "vita" stadsdelarna Akbar Wazir Khan och Sherpur (just där för övrigt brittena 1839 anlade sin cantonment under det första av de tre anglo-brittiska krigen). Restauranger med västerländsk meny, öl/spritservering och där gästerna förväntas betala i dollar och inte i den inhemska valutan afghani. Förstörelsen efter kriget, det CIA-finansierade mot de sovjetiska ockupanterna och deras lydregim i Kabul, men framför allt de fruktansvärda interna striderna mellan olika mujahedingrupper under åren 1992-95, är fullständigt sanslös. Redan när man landar på Kabuls internationella flygplats ser man sönderskjutna byggnader; och mängder av flygplansvrak – civila Ariana Afghan Airlines-plan såväl som sovjetiska stridshelikoptrar – kantar landningsbanan.

Palatsruinen symbol för meningslös förstörelse

Av stadsdelarna i sydväst, Karte Char och Karte Se, där fraktionsstriderna och de etniska motsättningarna var som hårdast, återstår inte många oskadade hus. Det liknar de bilder man sett av Dresden efter terrorbombningarna under Andra världskriget. Och fortsätter man ännu längre ut från staden mot sydväst kommer man till Darulaman, det mäktiga palats som **kung Amanullah** (regent under åren 1919-29) lät uppföra på en plats där han avsåg att anlägga en ny huvudstad. Någon sådan blev det dock aldrig, och i dag är palatset fullständigt urblåst. Det står som ett skelett mitt på en öde slätt som en symbol för den meningslösa förstörelse som inbördeskriget förde med sig. Alldeles intill ligger Kabuls en gång världsberömda museum, under kriget nästan helt och hållet plundrat och ödelagt. Här pågår dock, om än långsamt, arbetet med att reparera byggnaden och på sikt försöka rekonstruera samlingarna.

Ändå är Kabul på många sätt ännu sig likt. Kvarteren i centrum med Afghanistan Bank-byggnaden, huvudpostkontoret, husen längs med Kabulfloden och den vackra Shah do Shamshira-moskén finns kvar och skapar normalitet och ger stadga åt stadsbilden. Aktiviteten i de klassiska basarkvarteren kring Puli Khishti-moskén, Char Chatta Bazar, är lika hög i dag som för 28 år sedan. Pengaväxlarna, med sina gigantiska buntar med afghanis, strömmar till när man som ensam utlänning rör sig till fots i dessa välbekanta kvarter. I juvelerbutikerna syns inte ett ansikte på kunderna! Kvinnorna som köper guldsmycken är alla draperade i den traditionella ljusblå burkha-dräkten som täcker också hela ansiktet. Att talibanregimen fallit har inte påverkat bruket av burkha, hur mycket man i Väst än hoppades att just så skulle bli fallet.

Kabul är en stad som består av ett antal dalgångar omgivna av sterilt torra men kanske just därför fascinerande berg och kullar, på vars slutningar lerhusbebyggelse reser sig, och på vars toppar ofta finns gamla fort. Den förste mogulkejsaren **Babur** erövrade staden 1504 och bodde där i 20 år innan han flyttade till mogulrikets nya huvudstad Agra. Kabul och de trädgårdar han lät anlägga invid floden förblev dock det som stod honom närmast i livet, och därför begravdes han också där efter sin död 1530. Och lyckligtvis finns gravmonumentet ännu kvar på Sher Darwaza-bergets västsluttning, och det håller på att renoveras av Aga Khan Foundation, liksom trädgårdsanläggningen. En given attraktion den dag det förhoppningsvis åter blir möjligt att resa som turist till Afghanistan. I dag är det en bisarr känsla att ströva omkring i det vidsträckta området alldeles ensam en fredag i november 2003.

Svenska Afghanistankommittén nu i Kabul

På många håll i Kabul byggs det, bland husruiner syns enstaka nyuppförda hus, och offentliga institutioner återskapas genom stöd från länder och organisationer runt om i världen. Sverige som land märks inte mycket av, men däremot Svenska Afghanistankommittén som har gjort en enorm insats sedan lång tid tillbaka genom att driva skolor och sjukvårdskliniker runt om i landet (oavsett det varit talibaner eller andra som styrt). I dag har man 9 000 anställda och är därmed en av de viktigaste organisationerna som verkar i landet, och våren 2003 flyttade man sympatiskt nog huvudkontoret till Kabul från Peshawar i Pakistan, där man en gång inledde sin verksamhet med att hjälpa flyktingar undan inbördeskriget på 1980-talet.

Kommittén som har ett oerhört gott renommé i Afghanistan håller nu till i byggnader invid den så kallade Chicken Street, gatan där hippiehotellen låg på 70-talet och som då var den stora turistgatan med butiker som sålde mattor, smycken och kläder. Och fakum är att Chicken Street av i dag är sig fullständigt lik, skillnaden är bara att turisterna ersatts med biståndsarbetare och ISAF-trupper som betalar bra för sig i dollar!

Kabul University är en viktig institution som börjar få nytt liv efter 20 förlorade år. Universitetet grundades 1931 på initiativ av kung **Nadir Shah**, och spelade en stor roll av utvecklingen av det moderna Afghanistan som växte fram under 1960- och 70-talen. Det flyttade till sitt nuvarande natursköna område i västra delen av staden 1964. Den kommunistiska Saur-revolutionen 1978 och den påföljande sovjetiska militära inmarschen vid jultid 1979 medförde en drastisk förändring. Många duktiga professorer flydde landet, och de som blev kvar kom att under de närmaste decennierna fullständigt isoleras från omvärlden. Den intellektuella nivån sjönk, och så även standarden på den utbildning som drevs.

Talibanregimen förstörde så till sist det lilla som fanns kvar genom att förvägra flickor att studera och undervisa på universitetet. Studentantalet var nere på 4 000 som lägst.

I dag är situationen en helt annan, om än oerhört besvärlig. Efter störtandet av talibanernas skräckregim för två år sedan har studentantalet vuxit till 36 000, och universitet i hela världen engagerar sig i ansträngningarna att återupprätta fungerande fakulteter och institutioner. Utanför nästan varje byggnad på campus återfinns skyltar med en afghansk flagga och en för det land som är involverat i satsningen just där. Tyskland som haft särskilt vänskapliga relationer med Afghanistan ända sedan 1800-talet är inte oväntat det land som nu bidrar mest av alla till återuppbyggnaden av Kabuls universitet. Bland annat har man, genom Konrad Adenauer-stiftelsen, bekostat upprättandet av ett nytt tvärvetenskapligt centrum för forskning i politik, där man satsar på att långsiktigt träna upp inhemska universitetslärare i forskningsmetodik så att dessa i sin tur kan svara för forskningen kring viktiga framtidsfrågor. Det ska ske genom att skicka studenter till Tyskland på masters- och doktorsutbildningar, men också genom kurser på plats i Kabul. Nästan all forskning om Afghanistan i dag bedrivs av forskare på utländska universitet, eller av inhyrda likaså utländska dyra expert-konsulter som jobbar åt de många NGO:erna.

Forskningssamarbete önskvärt

Det råder dock fortfarande en skriande brist på böcker och kompetenta lärare, men det pågår en lång rad satsningar även på dessa områden. Textböcker importeras från Iran och kan användas utan vidare, eftersom undervisningen på universiteten i Afghanistan sker på dari, som är en dialekt av persiska med gemensamt skriftspråk. Universitetsprofessorer som levit i exil i USA, Europa, Pakistan och Iran återvänder, trots de låga löner som erbjuds, i begränsad omfattning. Det var just för att studera läget inom forskning och högre utbildning som jag och Staffan Lindberg reste till Afghanistan. Vi hade egentligen inga stora förhoppningar på att SASNET, Nätverket för svensk Sydasiensforskning, som vi arbetar med skulle kunna bidra till något särskilt beträffande forskningssamarbete med de ovissa politiska förhållanden som råder i landet. Men det visade sig att vi hade fel. För även om det är självklart att i dagens läge grundutbildning och träning av lärare måste prioriteras till förmån för forskning är det på sikt viktigt att Sverige och svenska universitet följer det tyska exemplet att gå in långsiktigt och stödja utvecklingen av afghanska forskare.

LARS EKLUND





Baburs gravmonument

Bag-e-Bala





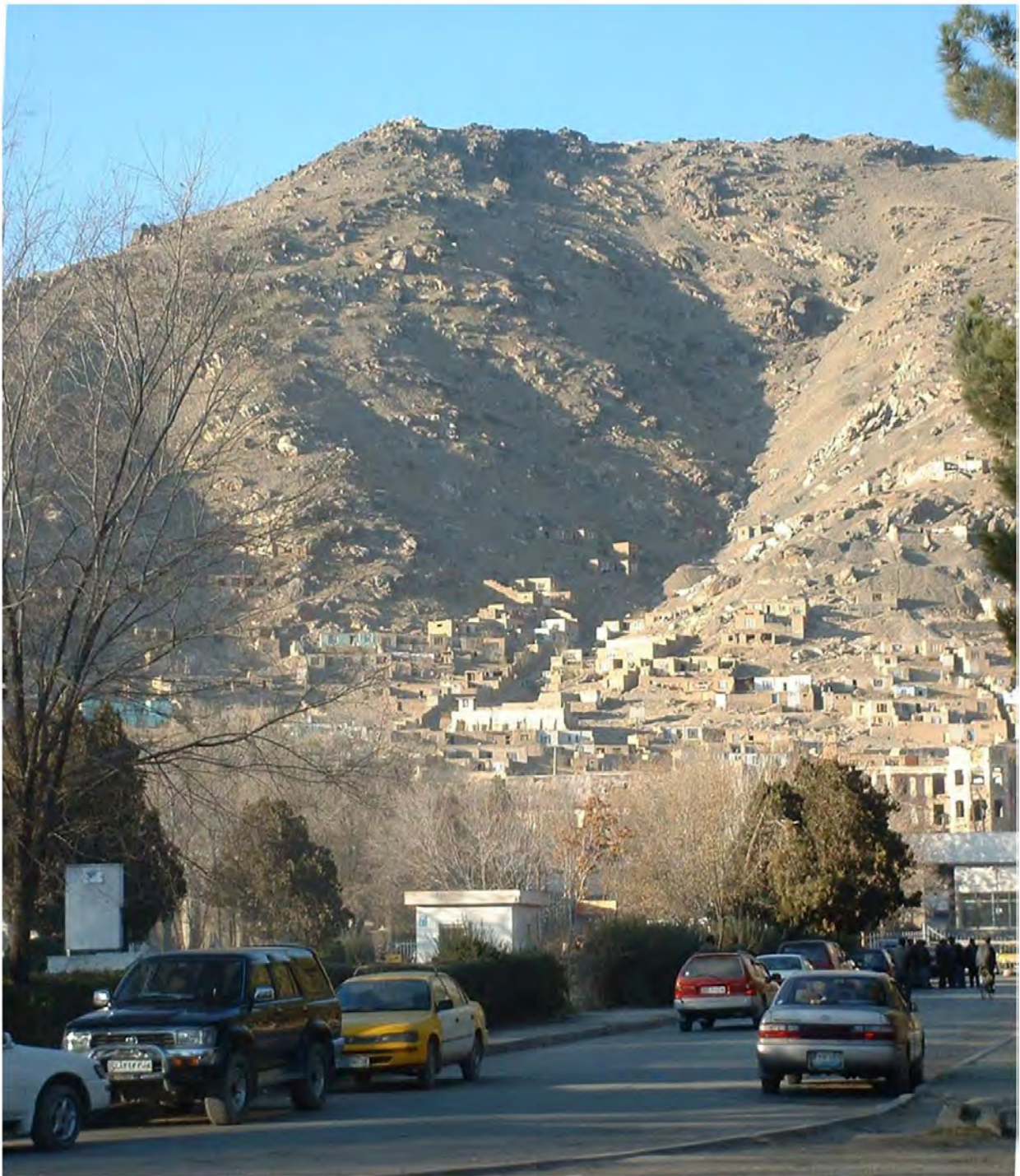
Flygplanskyrkogården



























KABUL





"Systembolaget" i Kabul.





Christer Persson



Jörgen och Shirin Persson



SCA employees