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DATE SENT  
April 17, 1971

FROM - KABUL

SUBJECT - Visit of His Majesty Mohammed Zaher Shah  
to the Helmand Valley

REFERENCE -

During the course of a recent tour around the country, the King made a surprise visit of 24 hours to Lashkar Gab. During this period he visited the Marja and Nad-i-All project areas and expressed considerable satisfaction at the progress there since his last visit three years before and, particularly, at the fine stands of high-yielding wheat. He tested the latter observation by requesting to be taken to project areas not on his itinerary, selected by him, and was gratified to find fertilized HYV wheat also in these other sections.

Five members of the USAID staff in the Valley were invited to a reception given by Governor Reza for the King during which he expressed appreciation for U. S. assistance for development in the Helmand-Arghandab Region, noting that these investments had recently begun to show "a profit." His Majesty also inquired if the problems with the Shamalan had been ironed out and was assured that the project was now moving.

During the reception Assistant Director Albert Baron spoke briefly with His Majesty in French and subsequently was invited to a private interview which was also conducted in French. The resulting memorandum of conversation prepared by Mr. Baron is attached.

Attachment NEUMANN  
MemCon dtd 4/8/71, subj:  
Mtg w/HM Mohammed Shah

GROUP 4 - Downgraded at 3-year intervals  
Declassified 12 years after date of origin

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## ATTACHMENT

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION  
USAID/AFGHANISTAN

Date of Meeting: April 8, 1971

**SUBJECT:** Meeting With H. M. Mohammed Zaher Shah**PARTICIPANTS:** H. M. Mohammed Zaher Shah, King of Afghanistan  
H. E. Mir Mohammed Akbar Reza, Governor, Helmand Province  
Albert R. Baron, Assistant Director/Helmand-Arghandab Valley Region

Prior to the meeting I had been informed by note that His Majesty wanted to talk with me for a few minutes. In escorting me to the King's suite in the Bost Hotel, Governor Reza informed me that His Majesty had met with provincial officials and local leaders, had attended a reception and dinner for 50 plus persons at the Governor's residence, had distributed 20 gold medals, and that the visit was going well.

His Majesty began by referring to the development problems of the country. He mentioned the widespread need and desire by the people for schools, for public health. He noted that the country's resources, however, were too limited to meet all demands. There is a problem of budget and financial resources which needs to be understood. He said that he had been briefed on plans for the project (i. e., the HAVA development program). He referred to earlier hopes that the project would provide for large-scale settlement of people and mentioned that hundreds of thousands of people want and need land. He implied that the project would not be able to provide for such settlement in the next few years but noted that it was realizing "un petit profit." In addition to this profit, His Majesty felt that the project could also have a favorable psychological effect on neighboring areas by demonstrating what could be done (a sort of Island of Development theory). He referred again (see MemCon of April 6th meeting) to the proposed highway to Chakhansur as a link with the Gulf which "we hope to start." He mentioned that French advisors had informed him that the highway would place Afghanistan within two days and one night of the sea.

I took the occasion to comment that the project could also be considered of national importance, referring in particular to the potential for the expansion of fruit exports through Kandahar and noting that the achievement of a 15% growth rate--which the Valley had

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realized over the past five years and which it could maintain over the next five years if HAVA's programs were carried out as planned--was a rare one in the developing world, especially for an agricultural area as large as the Valley. I added there were, however, some problems and mentioned the need to insure a fertilizer supply for next fall.

His Majesty nodded his agreement to the potential for fruit exportation and remarked that a similar development could take place in meat exports, citing Kandahar meat prices at \$120 (a ton) and prices in Kuwait of \$800 (a ton).

His Majesty then discussed the experiment in democracy. He said he did not know if this experiment was well regarded by others but that "we" had decided to adopt a democratic approach recognizing that in so doing some loss in economic growth might be felt. He remarked nearly parenthetically that Afghanistan had been poor for a long time and perhaps could stand it for awhile longer. He mentioned problems of lack of mutual understanding and cooperation between the Government and Parliament. He remarked that his role was that of an objective "arbitre" over the two. He said that the Government needs to make a greater effort to explain its programs to Parliament and to enlist Parliamentary support. He mentioned the need for a Parliamentary majority for the Government but seemed to exclude for the time being at least the idea of established political parties (with a passing reference to recent events in Pakistan).

He noted the limited education and understanding of many M. P. s, a lack of experience in dealing with budgets, graphs and the like. At this point he groped for an expression and asked Reza to translate from Farsi "unity of thought." He said yes, this was required as a means to get the Parliamentary system working. In particular, he said that "we" were working to enlist the support of a majority of M. P. s to support RGA programs. (Governor Reza did not follow this conversation too well, and the next day, having explained it to him, Reza said that the King was under the impression that the M. P. s would listen to the Government or to him as the Governor. Reza, however, said that the deputies definitely are not responsive to Government officials. On the other hand, if the King talks to them they will listen and cooperate... at least according to Reza.)

His Majesty then turned to the current split in Pakistan. He remarked at first that he sees no hope for a peaceful solution. He seemed to consider that Yahya Khan had mishandled the situation and that he should have settled for some sort of peaceful compromise. He talked at some length about the Army in the cities and in garrisons and mentioned that there would be no way to dam ("endiguer") the flow of arms from India. I asked if the King knew what had happened to Sheikh Mujib Rahman. His Majesty alluded to President Podgorny's letter and said he thought Mujib was in custody.

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This brought His Majesty to recollections of Ayub Khan. He mentioned that Ayub's wife was Afghan and I believe he stated that Ayub Khan (or his family) was originally from an area in Afghanistan. He mentioned Ayub's Basic Democracy program and said he himself had always considered it too artificial a scheme to work (and, I had the impression, not that democratic). Commenting on Pakistan-Afghan relations, he said that when "India attacked Pakistan" the Pakistani Ambassador called on him for assurances regarding the border. The King said he had not hesitated a moment to assure the Ambassador that Pakistan need not worry about the border...there would be no stabbing in the back. He said that the Parliament had endorsed this position immediately. He went on to say that the two countries share the same need. "Pakistan needs stability in Afghanistan and Afghanistan needs stability in Pakistan." Alluding to the Pushtun question (without mentioning the word) the King said that it was a problem "between us."

The King then mentioned Ayub Khan's memoirs and a reference therein that Pakistan must always be on guard against a stab in the back by Afghanistan. The King was indignant that Ayub wrote this, the more so since it was written only five months after Afghanistan had shown its good faith during the Pakistan-Indian conflict. He said that Ayub Khan's daughter had told him that the statement had not been cleared by her father who had not reviewed the manuscript before publication. He asked how could statesmen publish their memoirs without checking them, mentioning DeGaulle.

The King moved on to a discussion of waves of unrest in the world, noting that "we" are aware of these trends and how they propagate. He mentioned in particular the problem of unrest among University youth, citing problems in Paris, the U.S. to illustrate his point that these movements tend to move around the world. He noted that the problem becomes acute when the unrest spreads to violence in the street supported by the mass of people, and alluded again to Pakistan. Returning to Afghanistan, he said that the RGA had refrained from the use of power to suppress revolutionary groups. As a result, no martyrs or causes celebres had been created and such groups have become "ridicule" in the eyes of the people. He noted that the unrest in Kabul University does not spread to the streets. Referring again to Pakistan, he noted that the Government there had exercised power to suppress dissent, leading to Ayub's ouster, a second military Government, then election. Returning again to the split in Pakistan he said the people in the East Wing want freedom, and given the failure to compromise (?) the split may well be inevitable now.

Back again to Afghanistan, the King said that Afghanistan was a poor country. He mentioned the disturbances in the 19th century. He pointed out that although they had not suffered from colonization they also had not enjoyed some of its benefits. He pointed out that Pakistan had benefitted considerably from an infrastructure built up, not only a civil service but transportation, communications and many other things. He suggested that aid donors need to

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understand the problem the country faces and in particular the need for such an understanding during the period of the next five-year plan.

He went on to say that the country has been making progress and cited a number of examples. He seemed to be making the point that by the end of the next five-year plan he would expect the situation to have improved a good deal. I gathered he was referring to the availability of local resources to fund development efforts.

The King went on to discuss projects in the North referring at some length to the development of the natural gas deposits and the exportation of this gas which was enabling Afghanistan to service its debt with Russia. (The point of this discussion was not clear to me. Later Governor Reza opined that the King was by indirection suggesting that Western donors should help find and develop mineral resources in SW Afghanistan just as the Russians did in the North. The Governor said there must be some resources in such a large area, and such development would be a boon to the country, enabling it to generate foreign exchange and local revenues. The Governor's interpretation seems to be supported by the fact that the Minister of Mines and Industry was included in the King's party.)

The King then shifted back to the project. He said that he had visited the Nad-i-Alli area that morning. The changes since his last visit three years ago were impressive. One could see that the people were happy. Progress in wheat was very evident. He concluded that he agreed with me continued progress could be expected on the basis now laid. I noted that it is greatly to the Government's credit that, against much advice to the contrary, it had had the courage and determination back in 1966 to decide to continue the effort in Nad-i-Alli and make it work. The results were there now for all to see. The King also said he expected that the Shamalan area would begin showing results in a year or two (and looked to Reza and to me for confirmation). He said he hoped to return for another visit in a year or so.

(The King also visited the Shamalan briefly. A few days after this meeting I discussed his trip to Nad-i-Alli with the local extension agent who remarked that after seeing some good wheat, the King had asked to see another sector not on his tour plan. He was taken to another sector which he himself selected. On finding just as good wheat stands, he remarked: "Now I'm satisfied that progress is really being made.")

The King then remarked that he had the highest regard for our envoy--"a very capable man who has worked hard to develop the friendly relations with the United States." The King said he was satisfied with the good relations between our two countries and said he felt sure that the American presence is based on humanitarian reasons plus, "of course, a view of the U. S. role in the world." He added that the very distance between the two

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countries shows that the U. S. has no political axes to grind (my words, his thought.) He also expressed understanding of and sympathy for the many problems confronting the United States.

**COMMENT:** The King appeared very fit, very relaxed and altogether pleased with his visit. He departed shortly after his audience with me, and was greeted by a crowd of well-wishers at the entrance of the hotel who seemed genuinely warmed by his presence.

From many remarks made during the 45 minutes of conversation, I gained the impression that His Majesty feels quite sure he has a good grasp of what is going on in the country and how things are working.

Most of the discussion consisted of remarks by His Majesty and a few comments by myself. The King's approach is somewhat elliptical, and I was obliged to deduce that the main purpose of the interview was to convey a message that during the next five years or so the Government would be hard put to raise revenues to meet all the demands and all the needs for budget support. This is in part due to the fact that the country started further behind in development than other countries and in part due to the sacrifices in economic gains being incurred in trying to foster a democratic approach to Government. I would expect that His Majesty hopes that some credit would go to the country for its experiment in democracy. He would also hope that aid donors would recognize the budget and foreign exchange problem and try to gear their programs to helping meet these problems. I discussed this latter point with Governor Reza after the meeting and he confirmed that His Majesty was in fact suggesting the need for external assistance which would alleviate the lack of adequate budget resources.

Governor Reza followed only a part of the conversation since his French is quite limited. He asked me if the King had not also suggested that U. S. assistance should be raised. I told him not to my understanding, and he expressed some surprise.

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