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CIA/ONE/STAFF MEM/69-61

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

13 November 1961

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 69-61 (Internal ONE Working Paper -
CIA Distribution Only)

SUBJECT: The Pak-Afghan Problem

1. The chronically troubled relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been in a particularly acute stage for the past few months. Since the break in diplomatic relations between the two countries in September, US official attention has been focussed primarily on what might be called the international aspects of the situation -- the problems posed by the cutting off of the only satisfactory Free World transit route to Afghanistan and by the consequent disruption of the US aid program in Afghanistan, the likelihood of increased Afghan dependence on the USSR, and the consequences for US relations with both Pakistan and Afghanistan. It was these concerns which largely prompted the US decision to send Ambassador Merchant on a good will mission to the area. However, also involved is a serious and more volatile local aspect of the problem -- that posed by continuing friction along the border.

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The International Aspect

2. As reflected in the difficulties encountered by Ambassador Merchant on his good offices mission, it is clear that neither Pakistan nor Afghanistan is now in a mood to move toward a settlement of their difficulties. Both sides are still acutely sensitive to the matters of prestige and national honor involved in the rupture of diplomatic relations and closure of the border and of their consulates and trade agencies. In addition, each sees its present course as part of a long-term policy which still has a chance of scoring over its opponent. Specifically, Kabul will cling as long as possible to the hope that the US can be induced to bring pressure on Pakistan for concessions; President Ayub of Pakistan probably believes that he can continue for some time at least to pursue his "hard" policy toward Afghanistan without giving into US nudging or suffering any serious consequences for not doing so.

3. Nevertheless, there is some hope that in six months or so, as the lines of the recent confrontation become obscured, the attitudes, if not the basic positions, of both sides will become somewhat more flexible, and negotiations and the exercise of US influence may become more feasible. In addition, the

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danger that Afghanistan will in the meantime become greatly more dependent on the USSR and thus significantly more subject to Soviet pressures is probably less serious than is sometimes assumed. At least so long as the US makes a reasonable effort to continue to provide countervailing support to Afghanistan, it is likely that the present situation could drag on for six months to a year without a basic change in Afghanistan's position vis-a-vis the USSR. If the border remains closed, some important US aid projects will have to be suspended and the difficulties of planning future programs in support of the country's Second Five Year Plan (1961-1966) will be increased. However, other projects can be probably given greater emphasis or redirected, e.g., those which depend on personnel rather than bulk imports. Some increase in imports from and through Iran is possible. There is a good chance that in a few months it will be possible to arrange a one-shot movement of material now trapped in Pakistan -- provided such a movement is not tied to a general settlement.

4. The USSR will naturally be working to take advantage of Afghanistan's isolation. Moscow has long since offered to supply all foreign aid (approximately \$500 million) needed for the Second Five Year Plan. New and favorable terms for use of the

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Soviet transit route are being arranged. Apart from these items, however, the USSR has not moved with particular vigor or directness to intervene in the situation. The Afghans themselves are masters at keeping a line open to all the great powers indefinitely. If they were to undertake to accept the whole \$500 million for the Second Plan from the Soviets and in six months or so it became apparent that the US was willing to continue its efforts in the country, they would probably simply up the Plan figure a few hundred million to include US projects or even replace some of those designated for Soviet sponsorship with others to be supported by the US.

The Local Aspect

5. Meanwhile, up on the Frontier, in what might be called the local aspect of the problem, a situation is developing in which violent clashes are becoming increasingly likely. Pakistan's success in defeating several Afghan-inspired agitations in Pakistani tribal territory in the past year or so, its unique achievement in bringing new areas of tribal territory under administrative control, and the hostility resulting from the break in diplomatic relations will encourage a continuation of the "hard" policy on the ground as well as in the diplomatic

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field. At the same time, Kabul has demonstrated its ability to exercise considerable influence among the tribesmen in Pakistani territory

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6. The most dangerous potential catalyst on the local scene is the denial by Pakistan of access to its territory to the nomad powindahs on their annual migration. In the next month or so, 200,000 or more of these tribesmen are likely to pile up against the border. The Pakistani authorities apparently believe that most of the resulting frustration and anger can be directed against Kabul. In fact, the chances are that the bulk of it will turn toward Pakistan. In one way or another significant numbers of powindahs will almost certainly try to cross the border. Their lives have traditionally depended on wintering their flocks in the plains; and in the absence of large-scale emergency relief, many may perish if they are denied access to winter pastures. Centuries-old instincts convince them that they have the right to cross the borders. If they are to be stopped, considerable force will probably have to be used. Once killing starts on the Frontier, it usually spreads, and the resident

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tribes are likely to become involved. With both Pakistan and Afghanistan having larger than usual troop concentrations in the area, the chances of direct conflict between regular military forces are greater than for many years.

7. Despite these dangers, the local aspect of the problem is old and familiar to both countries. National honor and diplomatic posturing are not so deeply involved as with the international aspect of the problem; and therefore it is probably more susceptible to amelioration. Pakistan could, for example, decide to allow the powindahs in on humanitarian grounds (and in the process avoid international scandal, which would probably result from widespread suffering among the nomads.) Afghanistan could simply refrain from inciting the nomads against Pakistan. If a crisis over the powindahs were averted, both sides, while continuing to seek to expand their influence among the border tribes, would be more likely to refrain from clearly aggressive operations likely to bring regular military forces into action.

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