

1975-1978 -- Unification Church Missionary Activities in Kabul, Afghanistan

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Makoto Shigehiro, Wilhelm Lichner, and Jeff Tallakson arrived in Afghanistan in April and May of 1975. They were part of the worldwide missionary advent, which our suffering world had long awaited, when Rev. Sun Myung Moon sent his emissaries to 120 nations.

Father Moon said that he chose these young men and women from the three nations of Japan, Germany and the United States because 30 years earlier these nations had been enemies deadlocked in the devastating Second World War.

Each of us arrived separately in Kabul. We were young, in our 20s. We were immature; the average time we had been committed to a life of spiritual discipline and service to others was a mere 4 years. Yet we were full of zeal, proud to represent the new spiritual movement, which has continued since to do so much to encourage world peace, inter-religious harmony and the strengthening of nations through healthy families. This was a time of peace in Afghanistan, before the horrible wars, which began when that scourge of the 20th century, Communism, destabilized Afghanistan.

We were certainly inexperienced about teaching in a foreign land, with no experience of working in an undeveloped nation, no experience of Islamic culture. The only thing really that helped and guided us was what Rev. Moon had taught us -- we had absolute faith and love, so we faced it all, new and uncharted, as a daily revealing adventure, guided by our Father/Mother God as Father Moon also began his mission as a young man in the suffering land of Korea. When we arrived we searched for each other. The nation's phone system was primitive.

Phoning outside the country required a special appointment. That spring we took our first steps and wandered in wonderment the dusty streets and alleyways of Kabul. We had no culture shock, because Father Moon had taught us to love that land before we had come, yet it took time to take in what was so very different. Donkeys and camels carried goods on the streets. Private cars were few, old taxis in disrepair were driven by men who dressed just like the camel drivers. No foods were we used to; we had no refrigerator. Yet Afghans were the most wonderful people we had ever met. We felt at home and made many friends. Kabul was the only town in the country with constant electricity. Television had not yet come to the country. In 1976, Young Nam Tallakson, the new bride of Jeff Tallakson, arrived from Korea to help us.

Our purpose was to teach the Unification Principle, and to train Afghans to be leaders in the coming world of peace, to join in Father Moon's worldwide projects for peace, and to protect Afghanistan from

Communism. The Unification Principle, which had inspired us and changed our lives, which had made us teachers of True Love, was taught in the West as a set of profound logical principles which took weeks to teach fully. Only 5% of Afghans then could read, although our friends were literate and most knew either English or German as well. Still there were cultural humps to reach over to communicate our teachings. Our new Afghan friends could not easily comprehend our English lectures, until we ourselves had come to comprehend their mindset; their language, culture, and religion. So we immediately began our study, eventually studying at Kabul University, from which Makoto Shigehiro graduated. From the beginning we were very respectful of Muslim and Afghan customs. We fasted when our friends fasted. We practiced the many native manners, which encouraged social interactions of kindness and hospitality. We respected the attitude toward women which encouraged modesty and purity, so nearly all our contacts were young men, and when our friendships had matured, they introduced us to their mothers and sisters.

We did not think of ourselves as missionaries who came to make Muslims into Christians. Not at all! We were emissaries of True Parents, and we came to share the love of God with fellow believers who already believed deeply in God, and were happy to learn the good news about how God was working on the earth in our time to bring the world of Peace and True Love. From 1975 to 1978 we made steady progress. In 1978 we took a dozen brothers for a retreat in Peshawar. This Divine Principle Seminar was the first time we could discuss Father Moon's vision and plan in its entirety with a so many young Afghan men. In those days of rule by President Daoud there were, of course, many problems with healthcare, corruption, poverty, ethnic conflict in this quite preindustrial nation, but there was less crime than in any American town, very minor problems with alcohol and substance abuse, better family culture than in Russia (this writer would later spend 15 years in Russia). Up until Communism, the Afghan nation had successfully held the countervailing ethnic interests in balance. Communism destroyed that balance irreparably. What the nation needed was Unificationism, and the clear understanding of the falsehoods of Communism which Unification Philosophy provided. One reason for the great pride we took in our band of young brothers was they were from nearly all the main ethnic groups that made up the nation of Afghanistan -- Pashtu, Tajik, Farsiwan, Hazara, Turkomen, Uzbek and they loved each other. They loved God. And they wanted to help Rev and Mrs. Moon bring peace to the world.

During these 3 years there were many challenges. Legally we were not allowed to live in the country, but Heavenly Father always made a way. The policeman in charge of visas became our friend. Unlike the present problems in the world, we never ever felt threatened by any Muslim. Rather we visited mullahs and respectfully asked them questions. We purposely did not associate with non-Afghans, Westerners and the like. We had to be wary of some Westerners, who we understood were secretly Christian missionaries, as we learned the hard way that they would be happy to disrupt our work and try to get us in trouble with the authorities. This was because of the climate of persecution of Rev. Moon during the 1970s, when our increasingly successful movement, with its central head-wing ideology, met with intense persecution in the United States from rightwing fundamentalist Christians and leftwing pro-Communists. We were also threatened by Russian and Afghan Communists, who we could clearly see had completed their infiltration the government and military, readying for the day to stage a violent imperialist (Russian) takeover of the land. Our neighbors were Russians. (A few of them let us know they were secretly against their government.) Afghan communists spied on us.

We realized Russia posed an immediate dire threat. We wished we had a way to warn President Daoud, but before we could, the military and Communist parties attacked in April 1978. From the roof of our house we watched the Russian pilots dive-bomb and strafe the people of Kabul night and day, rocketing the homes of the cabinet members, murdering their leaders. They targeted any person who by their and broad-mindedness had the leadership qualities to unite Afghans against Communism. (This is why the rebel leaders who later did rise up were themselves sectarian with tendencies to fight with each other; ethnic warlords rather than unifiers.) Bullets hit our home and our neighborhood was bombed. The next day fear spread out over Kabul. One by one the young men who were our members visited furtively to sorrowfully inform us that they could no longer safely come to our house. In the days that followed the Communists tightened their death-grip. In those first few weeks there was no sign that the Muslim people would rebel against the Communists. People held out hope the nice words of the new rulers could be believed. But within the year the words promising change and forward progress showed themselves as lies. And valiant Afghan people rebellion began against their Soviet overlords.

Especially because of Mrs. Tallakson we had good friends in the south-Korean embassy. All south-Koreans had to leave, as north-Koreans took over their embassy. Shortly after that Jeff and Young Tallakson returned to the United States and later Wilhelm Lichner returned to Germany. However Makoto Shigehiro stayed for many years in Kabul. His wife joined him. They raised their children in Kabul and took care of the members in secret. Makoto graduated from Kabul University.

Rev. Moon's movement, always in the forefront to stop the evil of atheistic materialist imperialism, did much to free the Afghans from Communism. In 1987 Lee Shapiro was killed by a Soviet Helicopter while making a documentary film of the Afghan people's struggle. We and every missionary who served in Afghanistan mourned for the suffering of her peoples, and went through difficulties as we left. It was impossible for the suffering of the Afghan people to leave hearts and psyches. Impossible. We had a

feeling of unresolved resentment against injustices suffered, a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against Afghans, feelings of acute pain in our guts, because we could not still be in Afghanistan. We nurtured an obstinate yearning to right the wrong.

Russian Communism fell in 1989, and since Rev. Moon had been the central force to cause that downfall, he immediately reached out to President Gorbachev, and a few years later to Kim Il Sung, in order to foster worldwide peace. Rev. Moon sent emissaries to the USSR in 1989, to work with those who had been underground since the 1970s. In 1991 Jeff and Young Tallakson went to Russia as Rev. Moon's emissaries. Upon arriving in Crimea I met Tajiks and spoke with them in their Farsi language in the Afghan idiom. We were near the Afghan border, now Russians in huge multiple workshops and seminars, about unification through True Love, rather than through the Marxist dialectic. Our feelings of the pain of our long unresolved resentment against Communism was lifted as we realized Rev. Moon had moved God's restoration full circle to bring peace to the USSR and eventually the world.