

Minwalla, is worthwhile "on a humanitarian basis, but it doesn't help develop an economic infrastructure."

Furthermore, she said, non-governmental organizations are often faced with internal problems — jealousy, competition, limited geographical and statistical information, and a tendency towards applying Western ideals to Middle Eastern conflicts.

Minwalla had her own way of dealing with the often frustrating inside mechanics of the IRC. She kept a low profile, hanging out and drinking green tea with the Afghans, rather than spending her time with other foreign aid people.

Minwalla also avoided the illusion that she could, in any way, provide grand solutions to the problems of the conflict. "I went there to learn," she said. "And I learned things that no book could have taught me . . . I felt as though I learned more from [the Afghans] than they learned from me."

Minwalla still believed that groups like the IRC belonged among the Afghan refugees, but wasn't sure if the country was ready for development.

And there was another question to be considered by foreign aid workers, she added: "Do [the refugees] want you there? There's a negative attitude towards westerners. Too often, development agencies are not culturally sensitive. You have to be culturally sensitive."

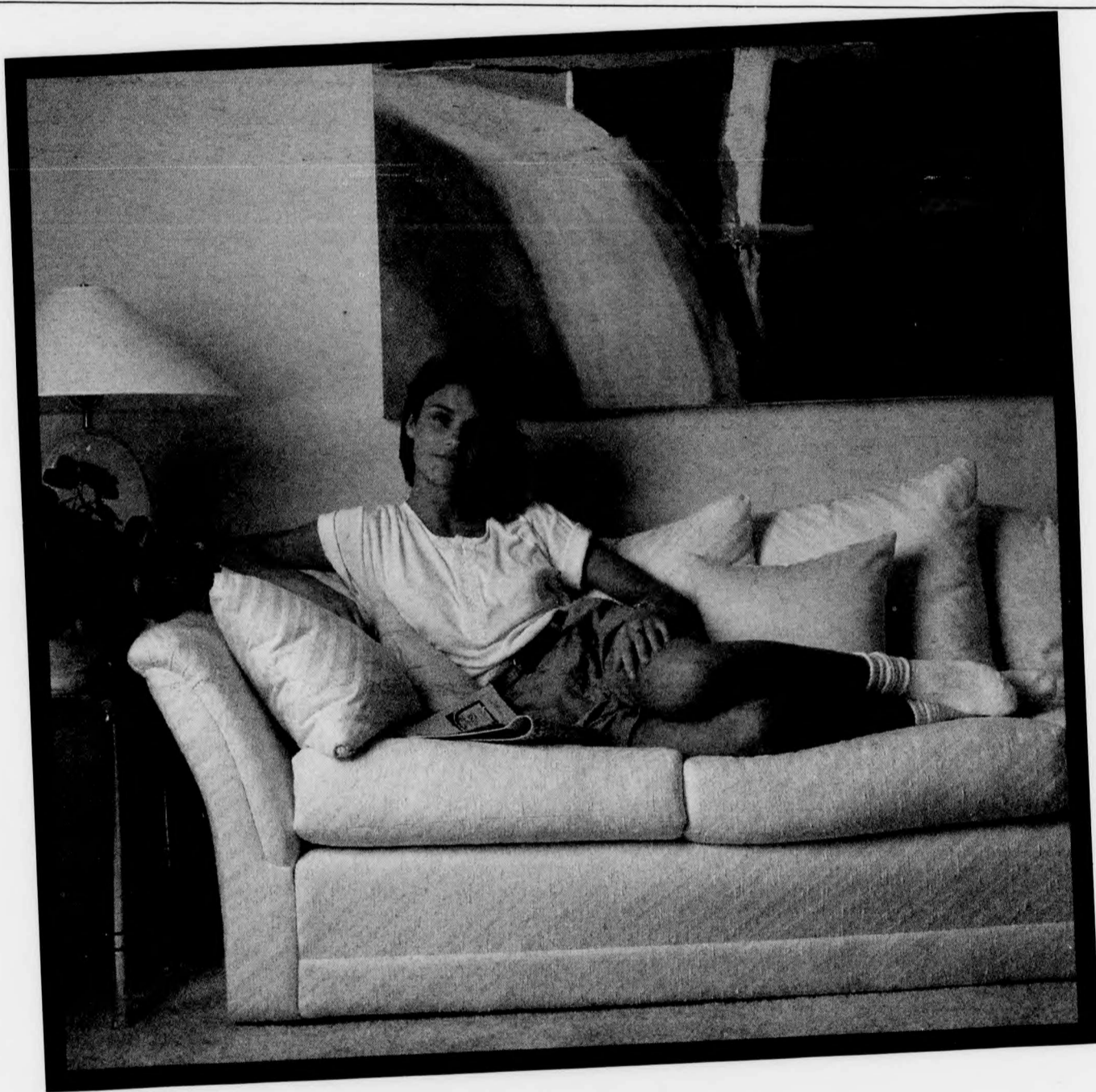
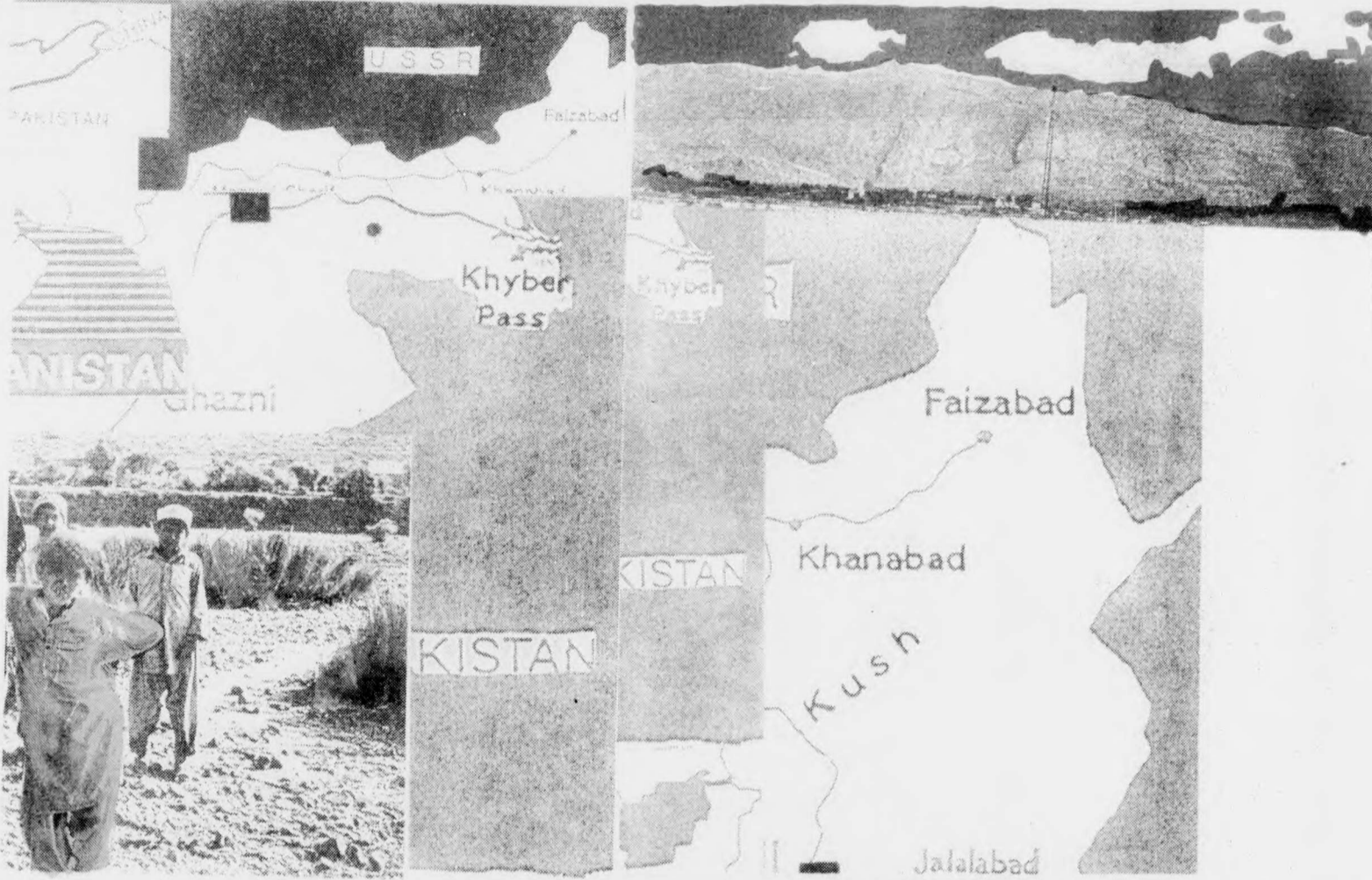
The past summer was not Minwalla's first visit to Pakistan. She worked with the Afghan refugees in the summer of 1988, as well. Each summer was capped with a general conclusion as to what she had just witnessed. In 1988, Minwalla returned to Canada as a sympathizer. This year, she came back a hard-liner.

"I came back a hard-liner in the sense that I had a conversation with some people who'd been working with the Afghan people for a long time, and [there's a feeling that] the aid should stop." The crux of that conversation was that foreign aid groups should limit their efforts to the provision of basic needs such as food and shelter, and simply allow the various Afghan groups to fight among themselves for the country's leadership."

Near the end of the interview, Minwalla shared with me a recollection from one of the Afghan refugee camps she'd visited over the summer. The incident seemed, at first, to speak of a noble and indomitable pride. But later, it seemed to suggest an unavoidable darkness for the future of Afghanistan.

"One lady had a bag of soil," Minwalla remembered, "and every day she made her children walk on this soil—to remind them of their homeland. They're proud people.

"They're never going to give up. They've got too much to lose."



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