

## The Tap

At the end of 1991, the Soviet Union dissolved. Until the end, it had supplied the Afghan communists, who ruled the city of Kabul and some parts of Afghanistan, with weapons and aid. The situation of the Afghan communists was now hopeless. The Uzbek leader Dostum had previously stood by the communists and helped defend communist strongholds with his militias. In the spring of 1992, Dostum defected to the mujahideen, the enemies of the communists. The communists surrendered. A bitter power struggle between the various mujahideen parties broke out, especially in the capital Kabul. Dostum cheerfully joined in with his warriors. His party called itself Jombush. The power struggles were not as fierce in most parts of the country as in the capital. In particular, large parts of northern Afghanistan were so clearly dominated by Jombush that things remained peaceful there. The city of Mazar-e-Sharif was the capital of Jombush.

The organization Lepco fought quite successfully against leprosy and tuberculosis. It was and still is active mainly in Hazarajat in central Afghanistan. Until then, its headquarters had been in Pakistan. In 1993, after the fall of the communists, Lepco's main office was moved to the quiet Mazar-e-Sharif. A leprosy and tuberculosis clinic was opened there too.

The Lepco clinic was located in the north of Mazar, where the city then bordered the salt steppe. The city has since grown far into the steppe.



There is not much water in the north of Mazar. The top layer of water is salty. Lepco had to drill quite deep to supply fresh water to the office and then to the clinic. Most people who lived near the clinic could not afford that. They came and asked for water at the office. Word got around. More and more

people went there to get the delicious wet. For Lepco's staff, the effort became significant. One person was busy handing out water for most of the day. The head of Lepco, Englishman Jon Gibbs-Smith, made sure that a water pipe was broken through the wall that surrounded the office area. A water tap was installed outside. Now people could fetch their own water. A sign was put up asking that the faucet be shut off tightly after it was tapped.

Less than a week later, the faucet was dismantled in the morning. Finally, it could be sold for a few dollars in the bazaar. A new faucet was installed. Another sign indicated that the faucet was there for the public. If it was stolen, no one would be able to draw water. Most of the people fetching water probably could not read. But the importance of the faucet for the general public was understandable even without a written notice. It did not help. The next tap was also stolen shortly thereafter.