history of the *chai-khana-chik* in whose house I was lodging: he was no less a man than the once omnipotent Beg of the whole Darband district, whose official headquarters had been here in Baisun. He was one of the few of the more important Bukharan officials who had not taken flight when the country was bolshevized. He had had the wit to adapt himself to altered circumstances and since—in contrast to most of his colleagues—he enjoyed a measure of popularity amongst the people, he had been left unmolested. With his own hands he had built himself a very handsome little *chai-khana*, which he kept most scrupulously clean. Again with his own hands he brewed tea for his customers, grilled *shishlik*, and prepared *pulau* to the general satisfaction. When one thinks that a few years before this man had had a staff of a hundred servants at his disposal and that his former palace still stood in full view of his modest inn and was now the seat of the local Soviet offices, one cannot help admiring both the physical achievement and the moral courage of the fellow.

I now devoted somewhat more attention to the erstwhile Beg. When he discovered that I was neither a Russian nor a Bolshevik I soon succeeded in gaining his confidence, and I owe to him a lot of extremely interesting information about the ancient political structure of the Amirate of Bukhara, most of which is known only to the initiate.

Each beg was the highest executive and judicial authority in the district assigned to him by the Amir. He had full, independent power to appoint his officials and judges—naturally relations or favourites of his own. On the death or recall of a beg every courtier and official automatically lost his job, since the new beg was in

honour bound to give his own friends and relatives the benefit of whatever offices and dignities were going. The Amir arbitrarily laid down the taxes and payments to be made to him, and it was the beg's business to raise these and pay them in person to the Amir.

To meet these demands the beg had naturally to squeeze the people, and since he received no pay from the Amir and was responsible for the maintenance of the military, the police, the irrigation overseers, and all necessary road repairs, he naturally had to squeeze them further to cover his expenses, besides providing a decent income for himself and his court. Knowing that his term of office depended solely on the caprice of the Amir, each beg devoted all his energies to making hay for himself while the sun shone—at the expense of course of his unhappy subjects.

The oases of Bukhara often lie hundreds of miles apart, so that the various begs enjoyed great independence. So much indeed that they not infrequently waged war against each other in order to increase the area subject to their oppression.

The beg's court was modelled in every detail on the royal Court in Bukhara. Each beg had his own prime minister or *diwan begi*; next in importance ranked the cupbearer and tax collector, then the master of the horse; after him came the commander of the bodyguard, and finally the *mirza-bashi* or private secretary. Each of these major officials maintained, of course, a squad of servants for his own comfort and convenience, while the beg himself had a host of minor retainers: clerks, cooks, grooms, astrologers, policemen, bootboys, drivers, men to saddle his horses, men to carry his tablecloths, eunuchs, jugglers, magicians, dancers, musicians, and others too

numerous to mention. A small province of perhaps only twenty, thirty, or forty thousand inhabitants had to bear the burden of supporting this inflated court and administration. It is not hard to see why the seed of Communism fell on fertile soil amongst the poor of Bukhara.

In Bukhara the hallmark of good breeding is leisurely, dignified movement, which must be maintained even when travelling. The average day's journey considered suitable for a Bukharan dignitary used to be a stage of barely over five miles. These stages were called 'tash' (stone or hill), because the soldiers sent in advance of their master used to erect every five miles or so a small dais of stones about three feet high, on which the beg's tent would be pitched for the night. So it comes about that the five-mile tash is the unit of distance in Bukhara for measuring roads or estimating journeys. Even in the face of danger it would be impossible for a Bukharan aristocrat to contemplate travelling at greater speed.

I was also greatly interested in the method in which the begs paid over their annual tribute to the Amir. My informant, the last Beg of Baisun, had paid over his last tribute on the 16th of April 1920. It consisted of:

70 horses with silver-plated harness and stirrups set with turquoise;

100 robes of honour: 20 each of satin, silk, gold brocade, cashmere, and cotton;

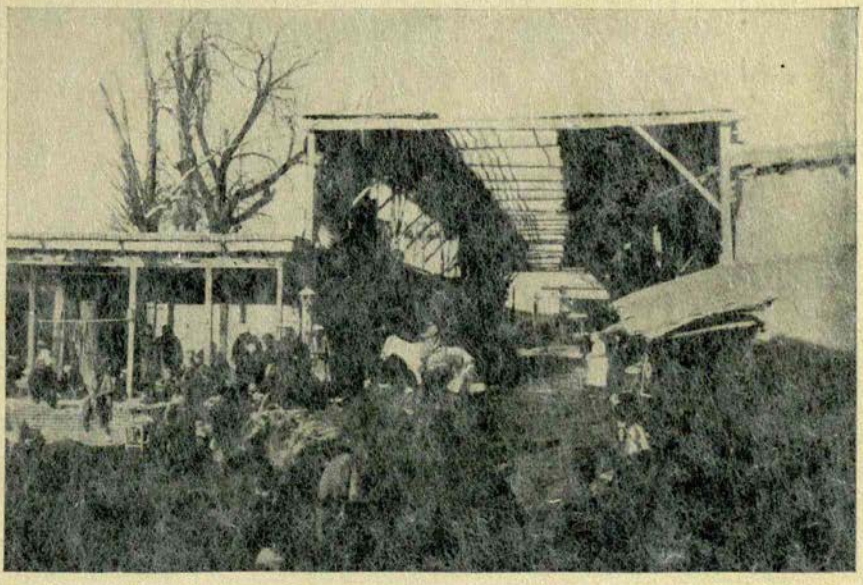
500 pieces of silk material;

5,000 tanga of gold and silver (a tanga equals about 10 kopeks), say 500 roubles;

25 silver girdles set with turquoise;

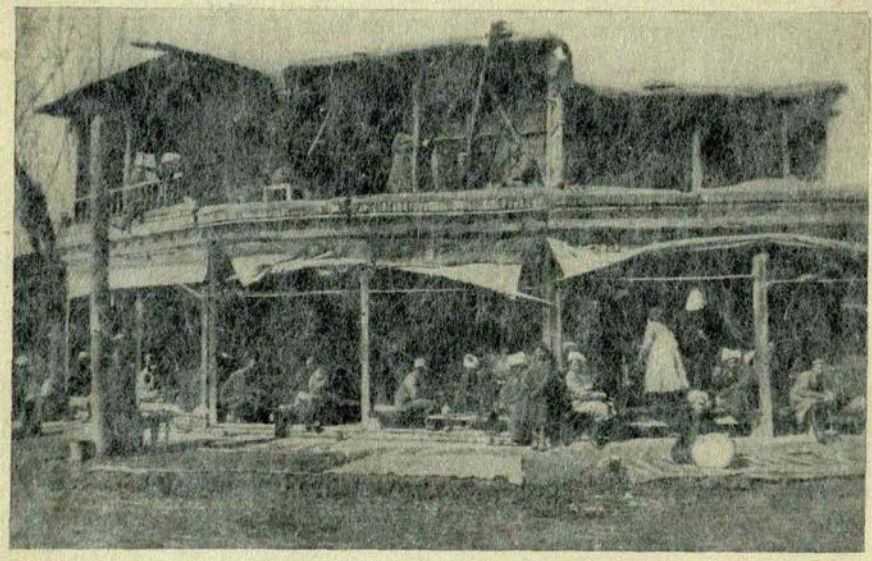
100 batman each of rice, millet, wheat, and barley, say 288 lb. each, avoirdupois;

57. Left: a Bukharan Uzbeg; right: an Afghan kafir

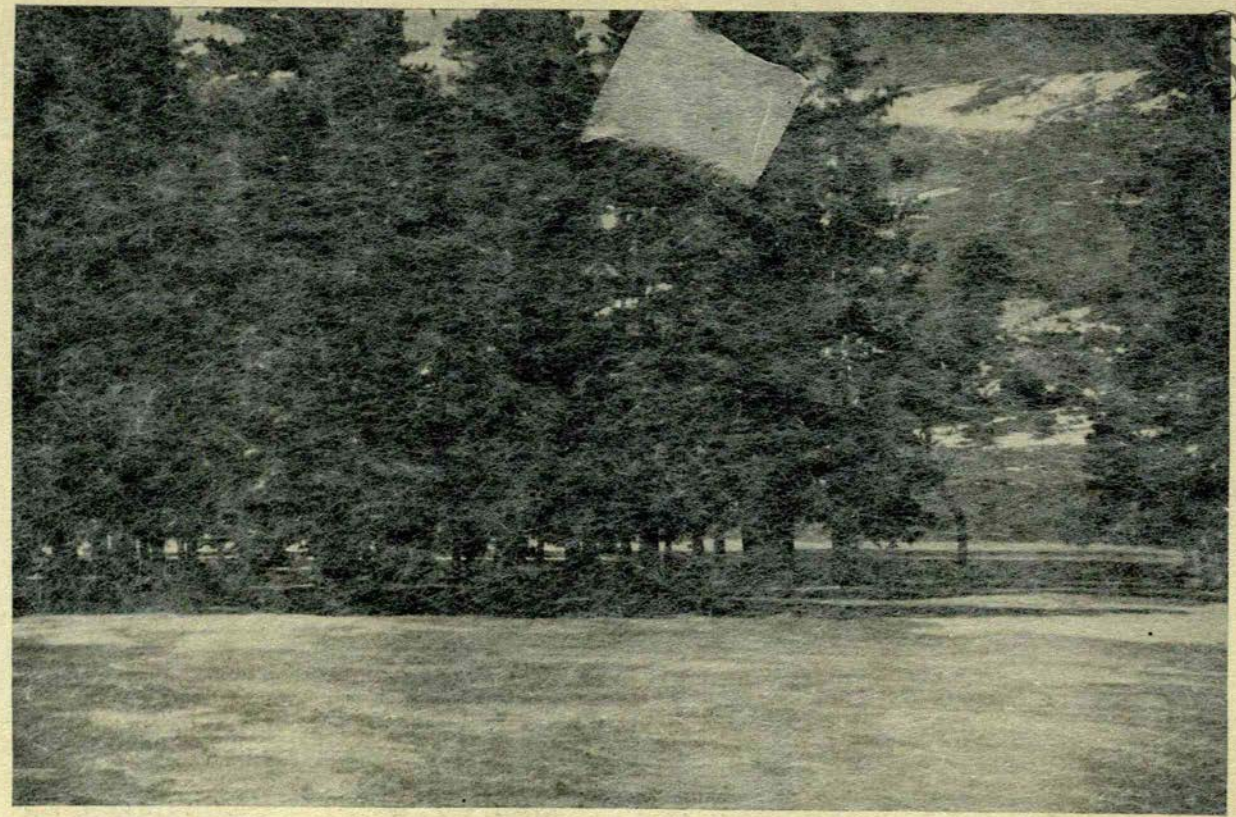


58. Covered bazaar in Dushambah

59. A man grilling '*shishlik*' in Dushambah



60. Tea-shops in the Dushambah bazaar



64. The spot where Enver Pasha was murdered

65. My riding camel 'Schurl', with his new mistress

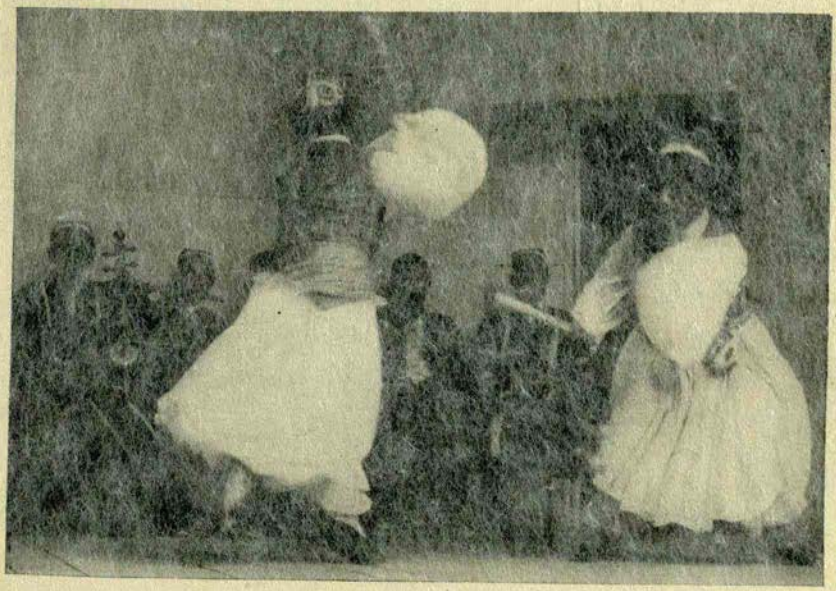
66. Abdullah Turnaiff, a famous camel-breeder, with his finest camel-stallion

61. A dealer in birds of prey with hunting eagle

62. A Qirghiz Bai with Sart officers of Enver's army

63. Damad Enver Pasha, Turkish Minister of War, and son-in-law of the last Sultan of Turkey

67. Camel caravan coming down from the mountains with salt and sulphur



68. A night dance during Ramazan

69. Madame Kuliyeva, chairman of the local Soviet of Kerki

50 transport camels;
2 dasir of unminted gold, say 145 lb. avoirdupois;
5 dasir of unminted silver, say 362 lb. avoirdupois.

The Baisun province has a population of approximately 90,000 souls who had to cough up not only the expenses of their begs, but in addition this stately tribute to the Amir. My Beg assured me that his tribute was not by any means the heaviest in the country.

The Begs naturally dreaded like the very devil these tribute journeys of theirs. Not one of them knew whether he would be allowed to return to his post or not. His very existence hung on the favour of the Amir, the intrigues of his favourites, and the accident of whether the ruler chose to be pleased or not with the quality of the tribute offered. Many a beg set out for Bukhara in the full sunshine of royal favour—and never returned. Either the executioner had received the order 'Off with his head!' or the luckless fellow was slowly rotting in one of the Amir's dungeons, which were never known to relinquish their prey. To try and keep in the Amir's good graces a beg was forced to curry favour with the higher Court officials and the favourites of the day by making princely gifts to them, for a single word from one of them was often sufficient to cause his downfall. The beg's subjects had of course to be further bled in order to supply the necessary bribes.

When the Amir Saiyid Muzaffar ud Din died in 1886 his successor Saiyid Ahad Khan summoned all the begs to Bukhara. Thirty-two of them responded to the command. Eighteen were executed and thirteen imprisoned, so that the new Amir could replace them by his own nominees. Only one was reinstated in his office. All the

property of the ex-begs was, incidentally, confiscated.

When I again took the road I travelled through the lovely mountain country of the Hisar range to Qara Khoval and Tang i Khurram and southwards over the last outliers of the mountains down into the fruitful valley of the Amu Darya to Kelif on the Afghan border. In 1916 I had escaped from the prison camp of Katta Qurghan, but had the bad luck to lose my way south of Guzar, so that instead of making Kelif, as I had intended, I ran straight into the arms of the Bukharan police, who surrendered me to the Russians. I now turned my cart into the caravan road which was then to have led me to freedom. Beside the spring of Kuh i Tang I bivouacked again in the open—for the first time for months. There were some Sarts living in mud huts in the neighbourhood, but the look of their miserable little hovels made me shudder. Late the following night my cart rumbled and clattered over a bridge and across a stream, and half an hour later I was halting at the door of a serai in Kelif.

On the road I had overtaken a lot of carts laden with red rock-salt, bringing the natural wealth of the mountains down to the valley. The southern slopes of the mountains facing the Amu are rich in various kinds of ore. Gold, iron, copper, lead, sulphur, and turquoise have been dug out here for centuries, without there having been any systematic attempt at mining. Whatever cannot easily be lifted from day to day is left to lie, and is thus preserved for future generations. (Plate 67.)

Above Kelif the Amu Darya is broken by great, impassable rapids, so that steamers make Kelif their last port of call. The last steamer of the year happened to come up while I was staying there. After August

river navigation is possible only as far as Kerki, for however shallow their draught, ships are liable to strand on shoals and sandbanks. Despite its great width, the Amu is a shallow river. During the summer season when the melting of the snows is at its maximum, the river brings down from Sari Kul (Lake Victoria), lying high up on the Pamirs at 13,000 feet, hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of sand and mud, with which it clutters up its bed. The banks are thinly populated and the steamer service is a poorly paying business which has only been started in fairly recent times.

The ships plying on the Amu Darya at that time had previously seen service on the Sir Darya, a river where mud-silting is even speedier and more serious. The ships were originally built in Germany to order of the tsarist government, but the specifications sent were incorrect. They drew too much water. Without their being re-measured they were sent down the Sir Darya to the Sea of Aral and up the Amu, and are expected to do the best they can to find a navigable channel for themselves. It often happens that a boat will take a fortnight or more to do the stretch between Kerki and Charjui, which is the most mud-ridden of all. The most moderate horseman can cover the distance in well under one day, so you will not be surprised to learn that the steamers are not much used for passenger traffic. I did this journey myself by boat in 1916 as a prisoner. Our ship, the *Tsar Alexander*, took six days, which the captain considered an unusually favourable record.

On the present occasion I hastened to apply direct to the captain of the *Red Turkmenistan*, and ascertained that his ship was leaving in three days for Petro Alexandrovsk. I asked whether he would be prepared to give a

free passage to a State geologist. He retorted by asking if I played chess. I gladly said 'Yes'. Thereupon he explained that in that case he would be delighted to take me on any terms, even free of charge. Emboldened by this success I suggested that perhaps he would also be kind enough to carry my horse and cart for nothing, to which he also agreed.

So I took my place on the deck of the white-painted, dazzlingly clean little ship, let my feet dangle over the side towards the Afghan shore, and looked across at the farther bank which had once been the goal of so much passionate desire. How different my life would have been had I struck the river here that time instead of seventy-five miles farther west! The captain came and sat beside me, offered me cigarettes, and began to talk. He had been plying for thirty-two years up and down the thousand miles or so of navigable river between Kelif and the Sea of Aral, and had served on each of the four steamers that did the run. He had been captain of the *Tsar Alexander* from 1911 to 1920—this made me prick up my ears—which the Bukharans set fire to when she was at anchor in Ulam. Her charred hull was still lying alongside the bank. When we passed her a few days later I gazed on the wreck with something akin to homesickness. It was the very ship which had carried me back, after my abortive dash for freedom, to the dungeons of Charjui.

In Kerki I bade good-bye to my eccentric friend, the river captain, carrying off an ample supply of cigarettes which I had won from him at chess. My cart and nag were dragged ashore with much difficulty. In 1916 you had had to wade through the marsh to the ship, but now a wooden pier jutted far out into the river, and I

could disembark dryshod. There was a *chai-khana* near the landing-stage, and I confided my horse to the care of its owner, while I myself climbed up the loess hill which led to the former castle of the Beg, later the seat of the Qush Begi.

Great red flags were fluttering in the wind from both towers of the entrance gate. The Amir's arms had been torn down and replaced by the hammer and sickle; only the bare mud walls and a pair of prehistoric muzzle-loading guns stood unchanged since my previous visit. The former fortress now housed the local Soviet of Kerki under the chairmanship of Madame Kuliyeva. (Plate 69.) How the world changes! Madame Kuliyeva had been up till 1920 the veiled slave-woman of one Ali Yusuf, a rice merchant. After the Revolution she had been one of the first women to offer her services to the Soviet, and had shown so much initiative and organizing ability that she had been appointed chairman of the local Soviet—a position equivalent to mayor or burgomaster. I paid a call on the lady, a woman of about forty, and found her a most able and energetic person, not in the least embarrassed in admitting that she had first learnt to read and write three years ago. She knew no other language than Uzbeg, but she was spending three hours a day working hard at Russian so as to be able to converse with Russians. She gave me an order for food on the Soviet co-operative store, which I did not scruple to make use of, the more gratefully that Ramazan began the day after my arrival and without the order I might easily have starved.

Ramazan is the Muslims' month-long fast and it is a nightmare to all the non-Muhammadan inhabitants of Turkistan. Possibly it had its origin in religious and

hygienic ideas, but with the centuries it has become an ineradicable feature of Islamic observance. Communist teaching has been powerless to abolish it. The authorities even close the Government offices during the fast, and only the military can afford to ignore it. In earlier days all fighting ceased during Ramazan, and as late as the summer of 1918 the Amir sent an envoy to the Russians to request them to agree to a truce during the fast, as his soldiers could only fight at night.

During the month of the fast the true Muslim must neither eat nor drink from sunrise to sunset. He must not even wash nor take physic, he may not even smell a flower or smoke a cigarette, for nothing whatever is permitted to enter the body. The Muslim Fast bears no resemblance to our European fasts. It does not consist in merely refraining from meat food or in any such trifling modifications of diet, it imposes complete and unqualified abstinence during the hours of daylight. In the burning heat of Turkistan the ban on water is particularly severe. No sooner has the sun set, however, than eating and drinking begin with a vengeance and the quantities of food consumed seem almost incredible. Singing, dancing, and music continue all night through, and fireworks are let off. (Plate 68.) Towards dawn, when the Ramazan drum sounds through the streets, the orgy reaches its height, for every one hastily stuffs himself with as much as he can possibly hold, the better to endure through the coming day. Naturally the provision shops and eating-places in the bazaar are all closed by day. No Uzbeg nor Sart would cook or even handle food while daylight lasts.

As the co-operative supplied the small garrison of Kerki with food I was able to view the inconveniences

of Ramazan with detachment as long as I stayed in the town. But I could hardly put in a whole month there. So one night, armed with a little ready money which Chairman Kuliyeva had given me from State resources, I made my purchases in the bazaar, fetched my horse out of its stable, and set out on the road to Qarshi. I very soon regretted having brought the cart. The wheels sank deep into the desert sand and most of the wells were dry. It is true that I had brought two sheepskins of water, which I refilled whenever opportunity offered, but the salty water of the desert wells only served to accentuate my thirst instead of relieving it. The shortage of water became so acute that I finally abandoned my cart in the middle of the desert, to save at least myself and my horse by flight.

Qarshi used in olden days to be one of the summer resorts of the Amir. On arrival there I went down with another severe attack of fever. There was a Russian colony of about twenty people in Qarshi, boasting a Russian assistant doctor among them. He succeeded in curing me at least sufficiently to enable me to face the desert ride from Qarshi to Qara Kul—another 'Black Lake', not of course to be confused with the Great Qara Kul on the Pamirs, where I had spent the winter with my Qirghiz hosts. In the course of our conversation I learnt that the doctor had been taken prisoner by the Austrians during the war and had been interned at Knittelfeld in Styria, where he had learnt to talk a little German.

Qarshi is a typical desert town situated at the confluence of several of those little salt streams which unexpectedly spring out of the desert, flow along awhile, and then vanish into the sands again, ending as mys-

seriously as they begin. They flow in a star-shaped pattern round the town. The oasis is therefore not afflicted with the shortage of water that is so frequent in other places in Bukhara. The whole neighbourhood is intersected by irrigation channels bringing ample water everywhere. The fertility and productivity of Qarshi and the quality of its fruits are famous throughout Uzbegistan. Rice, corn, lucerne, cotton, grapes, figs, apricots, pomegranates, and peaches weighing a pound apiece, often rot in the fields and on the trees for lack of sufficient buyers to benefit by the over-luxuriant harvest. Mountains of sweet melons and watermelons, as well as raisins, are piled in the bazaar and can be purchased for a song.

I sold my horse to the *chai-khana-chik* with whom I was putting up, so as to raise enough money to pay for the caravan journey to Qara Kul. I might have had to put in three weeks in Qarshi if I had had to wait till Ramazan was over and some goods caravan would be starting. By great good luck, however, a military column of mounted camelry were setting out in the Karnap Chöl direction to relieve the Desert Police. At my request the commandant agreed to take me with them as far as Chandir, which lies on the railway between Charjui and Bukhara. This arrangement would save me many inconveniences, not least the long delay.

Strangely enough, the commandant was a Russian —an ex-tsarist officer no less—who had served in Qaghan during the War. On the march I chatted with him about politics and economics. His Uzbeg men knew no Russian, so he felt it safe to discuss even the most dangerous topics with considerable freedom. His was the typical story of the Russian intelligence officer overtaken by the

Revolution. Whether he felt in sympathy with Communist ideals or not, the instinct of self-preservation prompted him to offer allegiance to the new régime. He had tried to earn a living as interpreter, shoemaker, and even coolie, but had finally reverted to his original profession of soldier. He was in possession of authentic facts and could take a detached view of the activities of the new rulers. I learnt many interesting things from him.

Turkistan has no industries and consequently no proletariat, and Bolshevism caused therefore an even greater upheaval than in Russia.

The Bolsheviks were forced artificially to create the prerequisites for their propaganda. They first flooded the country with regulations, proclamations, and rallying cries. They formed a staff of professional agitators. Next, factories, co-operatives, peasant organizations, and workshops had to be created in the deserts and oases of Turkistan so as to conjure up class-consciousness where none had been before. The most grotesque attempts were made in fact to call the non-existent proletariat into being.

Up till 1920 Bukhara had been the most peaceful country in the world; shut in by its illimitable deserts of sand it had preserved its age-old traditions unaltered. Untainted by contact with European civilization, it was the empire of a despotic amir, who ruled in his citadel of Bukhara undisturbed by rebellions or governmental crises.

Sole and unquestioned autocrat of this great land, the Amir lived in his fortress on its dominating hill and ruled after the time-honoured custom of his predecessors. All day long officials, courtiers, officers, and dig-

nitaries mixed with the people in the magic circle round the palace, awaiting the commands of their master. No man dared to pass the entrance gate without thrice prostrating himself to the ground.

Suddenly, in a night, all was changed. The people of Bukhara were roused from sleep by the thunder of their own and the Russian guns, and when they ventured out of their mud houses they learned that their Amir was no more and that another force had seized the reins—the Young Bukharans. The allies who had lent a hand against the despot soon showed their hand. The Young Bukharans, enemies of tradition, friends of progress and of Western culture, had only been temporary tools. They were soon brushed aside to make way for Russians, selected, hard-boiled Communists, who were installed in all offices and positions of authority. Madrasahs and mosques were taken out of their hands and converted into assembly halls and centres of agitation, in which skilled orators preached the glories of Communism. New and mysterious words: organization, manufacture, redistribution of land, equality of rights, flew from mouth to mouth like magic spells, at the sound of which men shook and trembled. Great caravans, piled high with sheets of propaganda and revolutionary slogans, travelled in the charge of agitators from oasis to oasis and spread the new gospel—or at least strove to spread it. Laws were promulgated forbidding the veiling of women. The black cap, the widow's badge of shame, was abolished by decree, and agricultural machines which the Communists had for years been promising to the peasants of Russia, were packed off first into Central Asia to create an impression.

The whole Moscow programme, drawn up on so gran-

diose a scale and at such great expense, was wrecked on the *chimat*, the women's horse-hair veil. The menfolk of Bukhara were ready to adapt themselves to any changes: but the unveiling of their women was unthinkable. This law knocked the bottom out of the Soviet boat. Bukhara refused to be intimidated by the soldiers of the Red Army, by their machine-guns, by their quick-firing artillery. Rebellion flamed forth, from north to south, from east to west. Oasis after oasis arrested the Russian Commissars and the battle-cry: 'Bukhara for the Uzbegs!' spread through the mud towns with the speed of a prairie fire. Enver Pasha, supported by the powerful secret society of the Ishana, seized his opportunity and fanned the flames with great astuteness. He did not live to reap the harvest he had sown, but a mighty wave of rebellion swept Turkistan from end to end, and Moscow was compelled, with good grace or bad, to make concessions; for a Central Asia in perpetual revolt and kept in hand only by force would have shattered the whole constructive programme of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. And so, during the very months that I had been touring Persia and purchasing carpets for Qannadi, the various 'independent' republics of Uzbegistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Qirghizistan had come to birth, while the former Khanate of Khiwa was once more endowed with its historic title of Khwarizm (the Chorasmia of Herodotus). With gnashing of teeth Moscow proclaimed these states autonomous and for the future treated them to some extent as such. Their independence is of course controlled and politically influenced from Moscow.

The first legislative act of the new Asian republics was to revoke the law relating to women's veils, and to

restore many original place-names which the Russians in the first intoxication of imagined victory had called after famous characters of the Revolution. Many of these stank in the nostrils of Turkistan, and were duly blotted off the map. Freedom of religion was restored, and the law of Islam was in part incorporated in the law of the land.

These, and many other things, my Russian informant told me as we rode from Qarshi to Kasan, Mashhad, and Khadi Mubor towards Chandir. The old, well-trodden caravan road seemed dead. We met only a few caravans bringing ironware and petroleum from Bukhara to the south. The desert we were riding through is in no way different from the great desert of the Qara Qum—sand and nothing but sand as far as eye can see. When the low mud towers of a well are sighted, man and beast rejoice at the thought of water, though the wells in this region contain more salt than anywhere else in Asia. But the water is at least cool and a draught of it gives the momentary illusion of quenching thirst. No sooner have you mounted again, however, and begun to sweat than thirst returns worse than before. At such moments a drink of sweet water or a piece of clean ice seems the highest attainable earthly bliss.

It is amazing on how little the people of the desert contrive to live. There is here not a sign of the rich flocks and herds you see in the oases; a few bony, half-starved sheep and an occasional skinny cow are the only cattle owned by some hundreds of people—apart, of course, from their indispensable camels. There is no fruit; there are no melons. Millet and barley are the only crops and yet these folk love their bit of ground and would not leave it.

After Khadi Mubor the road runs through a completely waterless stretch of eighty-five miles or so, and water must be carried. Fortunately the wells of Khadi Mubor are less salty than the others, but the water from them must be purchased. The water-tax of twenty kopeks (about 4½*d.*) per waterskin is the only source of revenue the oasis possesses. The assistant doctor who was attached to our column had a thermometer with him which he set in the shade of a wall. It registered 125.6 degrees F. in the shade. The hot air flickered in the intolerable heat and there was not a breath of wind stirring. The inhabitants of Mashhad bemoaned the fact that the heat had been so great that their stocks of dung-fuel had spontaneously caught fire and they would now be left fireless all the winter and would freeze to death. Our commandant promised to report the case to the Soviet in Bukhara and have some fuel sent to them before the winter if he could.

To evade this terrific heat the commandant decided that we should only march at night. We started off as darkness fell, the thermometer then reading 95 degrees F. The worst day of all was our halt on the 4th of August. The soldiers had fixed their bayonets and plunged them in the ground, spreading the tent canvas over the stocks of their inverted rifles in order to get a little shade. If by chance you touched any metal object you dropped it at once with a cry—it blistered the hand. The rifles had to be unloaded. Cartridge belts and the ammunition for our three machine-guns were buried in the sand at some distance from the camp for fear of their exploding of themselves. We also buried our waterskins, lest they should burst and waste our priceless water. Weary and worn out as we were, none

of us could sleep. Soldiers and animals alike rolled restlessly about, groaning. If robbers or rebels had surprised us, not a soul would have had strength to offer resistance. At last the merciless sun went down and within a quarter of an hour the night was pitch dark. Cursing and swearing the men loaded up their animals, a ration of water was issued for each, and the camels were urged to speed so that we might reach the gold-laden Zaraf-shan by dawn. (Plate 70.)

It was an interminable night. I refrained from asking the doctor fellow what his thermometer said. What was the use? With or without a thermometer the heat was equally intolerable. No one spoke a word the whole night through. I doubt if anyone was capable of formulating a coherent thought, so dog-tired were we all.

It was getting towards morning when, without any encouragement from their riders, the camels suddenly quickened their pace and presently broke into a crazy gallop. Half an hour's march—five miles away—they had scented the river and there was no holding them. Joyously we gave them their head, not sorry ourselves to have escaped from hell. In vain the commandant warned us about snakes. Each man tore off his clothes, leapt into the shallow river, and drank till he could drink no more. Then we merrily splashed each other like little children and shouted for sheer joy.

In Chandir I bade a warm farewell to the commandant, who, poor chap, had to lead his men out again into the red-hot desert, while I was heading for the gardens and pools of Bukhara. Again and again he said what a pleasure it had been to meet another European. It would certainly be many months before he could get away to Samarqand or Bukhara and mix with his own

kind again. As a parting gift he presented me with a box of cigarettes.

Chandir possesses no railway station. It used to be an optional halt and trains could be stopped on request, but now that there was only one train a day it had been cut out. I had spotted an old trolley lying in a ruined railway shed. I opened my box of cigarettes in the hopes of bribing the railway man into compliance with my plans. Imagine my amazement to find a twenty-rouble note on top! It wasn't likely that the Russian cigarette makers had taken to packing twenty-rouble notes into each box of cigarettes; I could only conclude that the money was a gift from the thoughtful donor, who had thus chosen unobtrusively to help my finances. With this and the hundred and ten roubles I had got for my horse in Qarshi, I was now free of money anxieties for some time to come. I spent ten roubles on acquiring the right to ride on the trolley as far as Qara Kul, where there was a station at which the trains stopped.

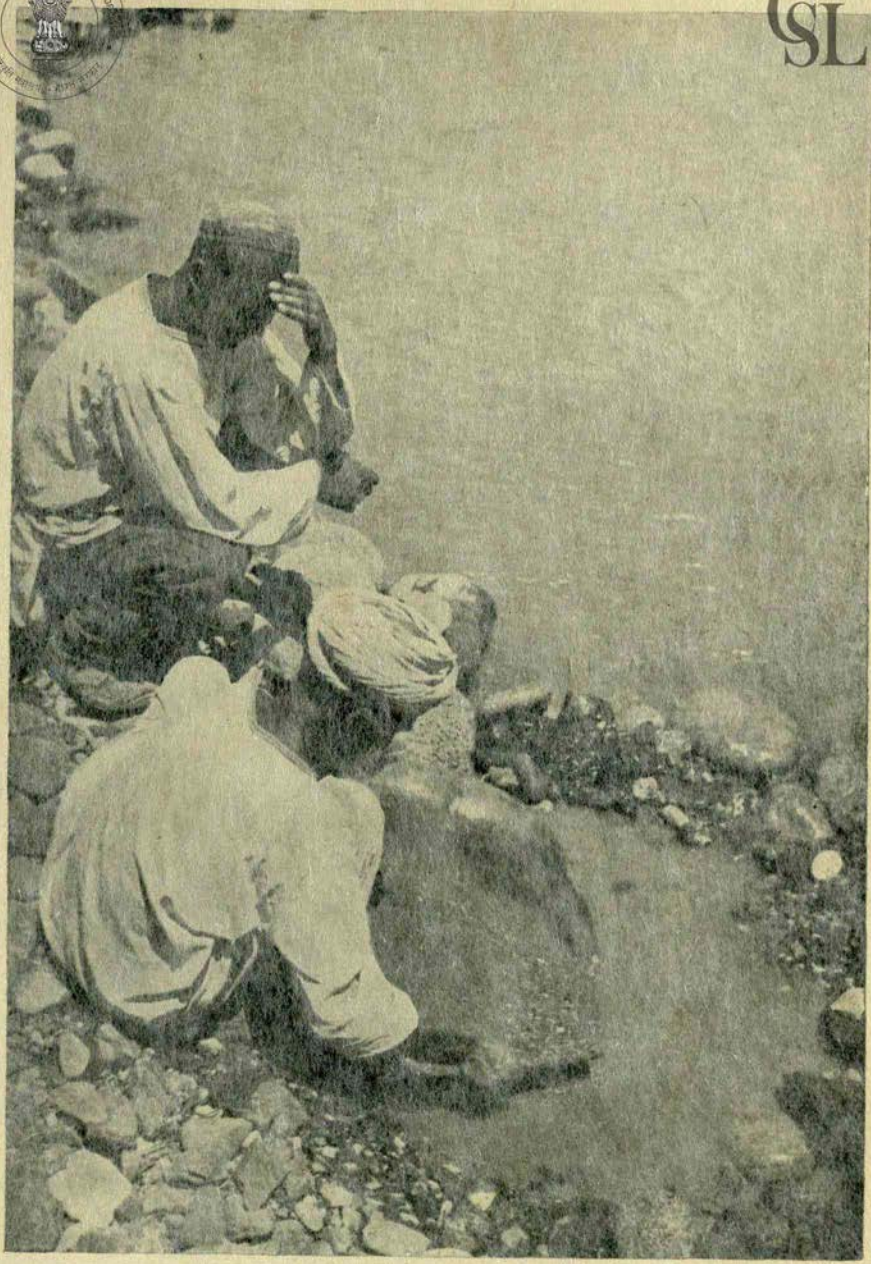
As soon as it was dark, I placed my scanty kit on the trolley, seized the lever, and began to work it to and fro with all my might. Whatever sins I have committed I must have expiated the bulk of them that night. I was out of training and I groaned and coughed under the exertion necessary to keep the wretched trolley moving. I often stopped and ran down to the Zarafshan to have a drink and souse my body with the cool water. At long last I spied the dark outline of an unlit railway station in front of me. I had arrived in Qara Kul, the oasis which has given its name to the valuable lambskins. (Plates 71, 72, 73, and 74.)

Almost all travellers in Turkistan have let themselves be tempted into retailing terrible horrors connected

with the process of procuring these skins. Even the Viennese Jacques Jäger, whose book appeared in 1903, writes: 'The method of extracting the unborn-lamb skins from the mother sheep is so cruel that I dare not harrow the reader's feelings by describing it.'

Similar statements are frequent. It is noteworthy, however, that no two of these eye- and ear-witnesses—for such they pretend to be—describe these alleged cruelties in the same way. Each appears to have witnessed a different method, or else they are silent about details and record only that terrible cruelty is practised.

I have been three times in Bukhara myself and I have lived for seven years in Turkistan, amongst other places in the Katta Qurghan district, which, next to Qara Kul itself, is the most important breeding centre for Qara Kul sheep, and never once have I seen any process entailing the slightest cruelty to animals. The pelt of the Qara Kul sheep—wrongly called Persian, or Astrakhan, or Fat-Tail in Europe—appears to reach its best condition in the two oases of Qara Kul and Katta Qurghan. All attempts to breed these sheep successfully in Persia or China have conspicuously failed, though the breeders even tried to transplant the animals' favourite food, a kind of wild corn. The breeders of Qara Kul attribute the delicate, tight curls of the pelt, which give it its peculiar value, to the fact that their sheep eat this wild corn, which grows only in these two places in Turkistan and refuses to thrive elsewhere. As soon as the sheep are transferred to another place the pelts lose all their characteristic qualities. The lambskins are mostly exported via Persia or Astrakhan, a fact which no doubt accounts for the inaccurate names given them in Europe.



70. Washing gold on the Zarafshan. The grains of gold are laboriously washed free of sand by means of a tray

71. Qarakul lambs, four days old, being taken off for slaughter

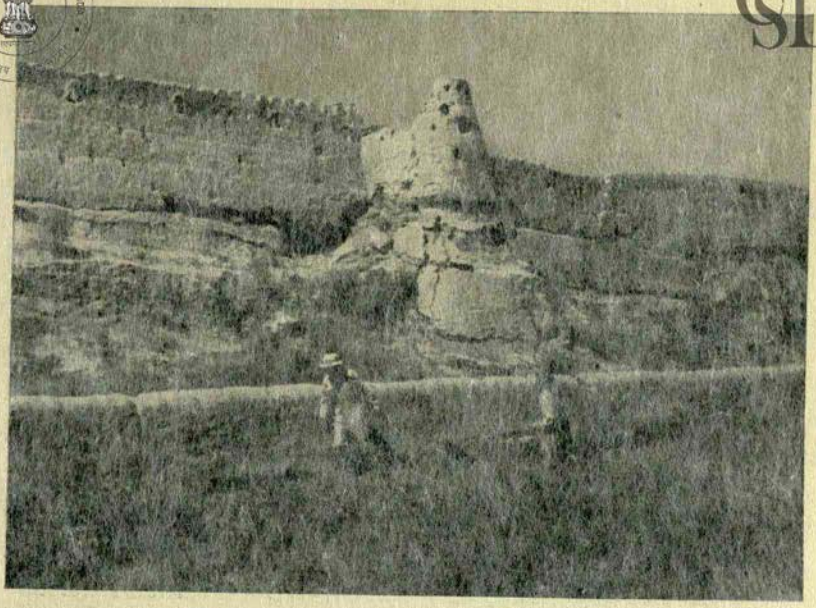
72. The Qarakul ewes are shorn in spring

73. Market for skins in the Oasis of Qarakul

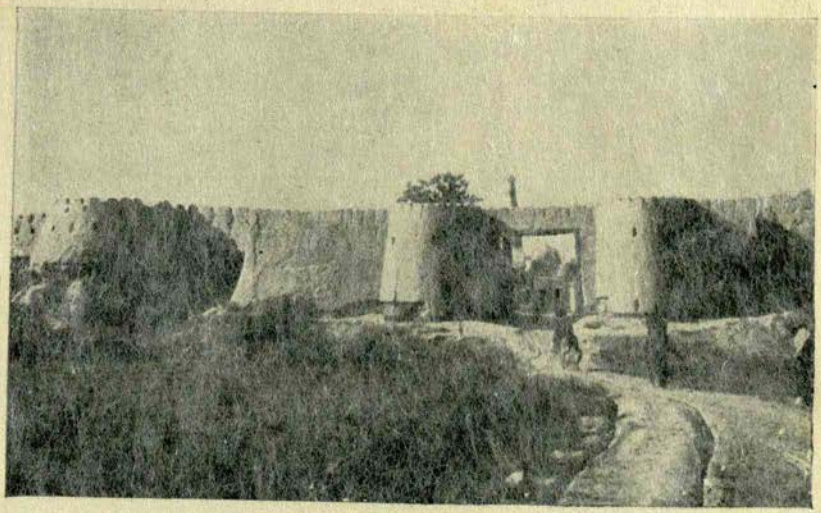
74. Spreading the lambskins out to dry

75. A night-watchman of Bukhara with his cudgel

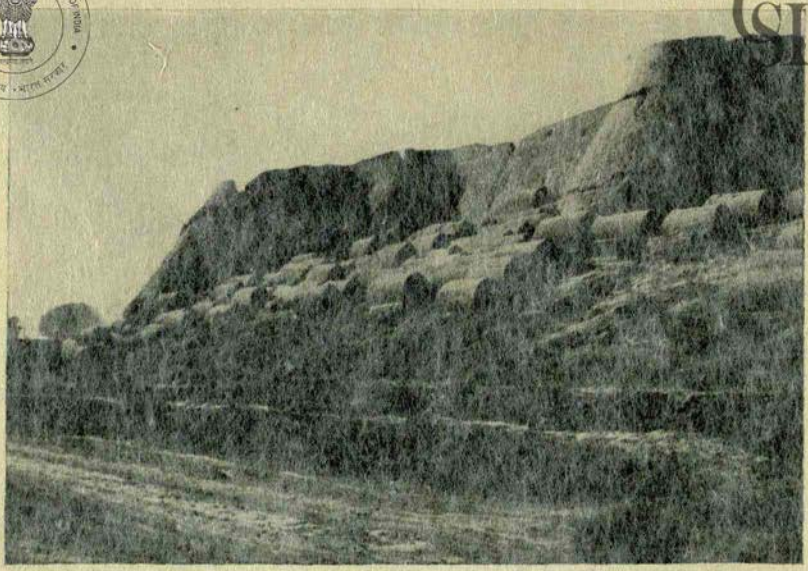
76. Bukharan women wearing the *paranja*. Right: a woman with the *chimat*, or horsehair veil



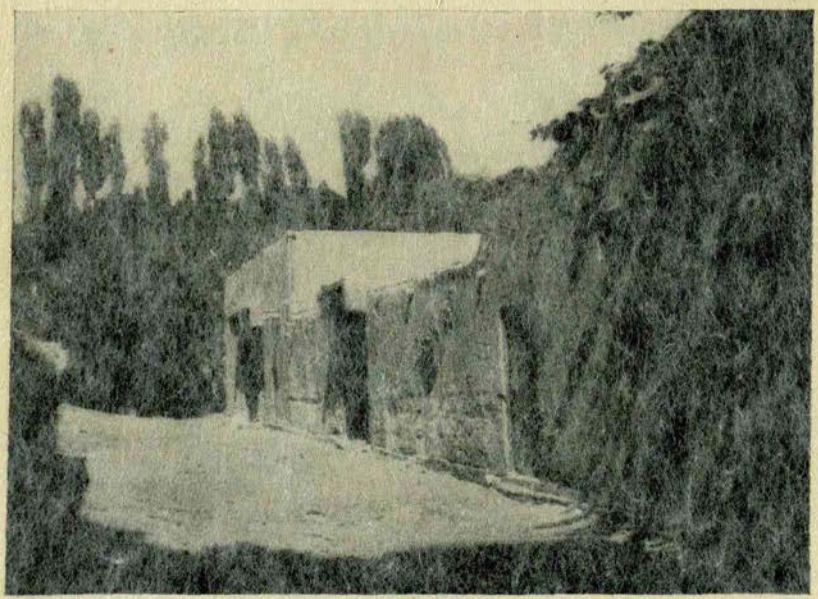
77. City wall of Bukhara, with fortress tower



78. The city gate of Bukhara nearest the Citadel

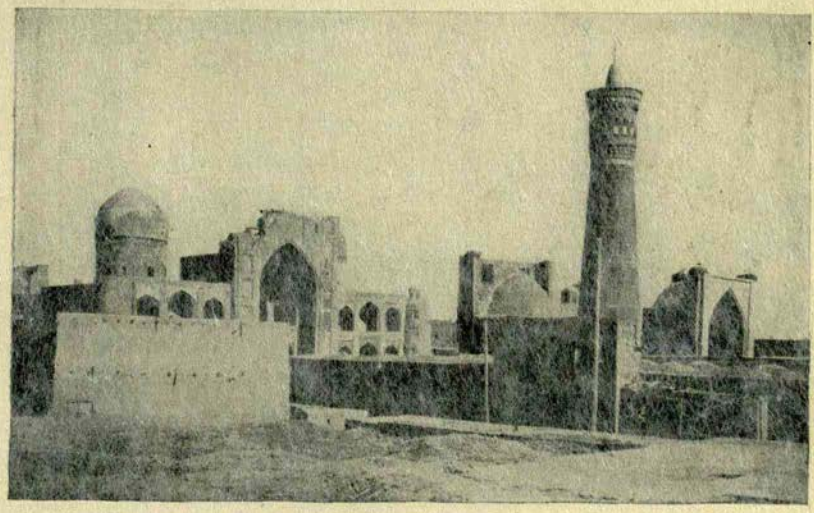


79. Bukhara's only cemetery outside the city wall. The others are within

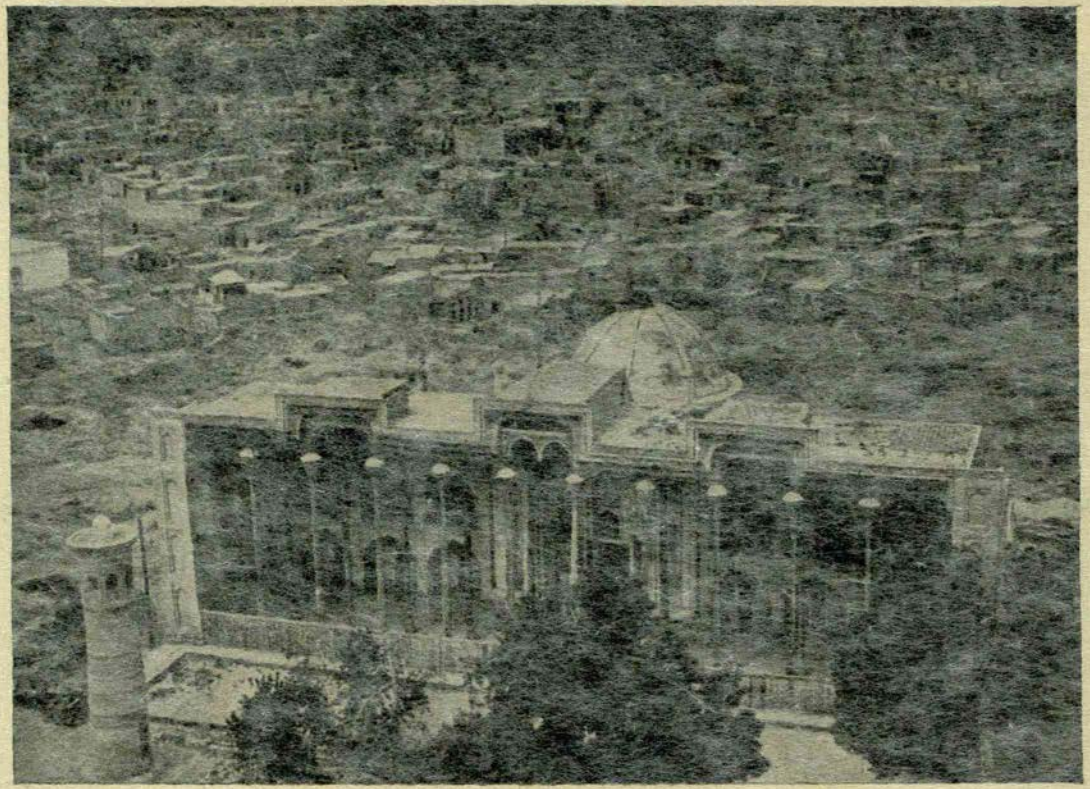


80. Exterior of Bukharan houses. The night-watchman knocks on the doors

81. The covered bazaars of Bukhara, seen from above. In the centre: the cupola of the Goldsmiths' Bazaar



82. Bukhara. Left: the Mir Arab Madrasah; right: the Kalan Masjid; between them the Tower of Death



83. Bukhara. The Baha ud Din Masjid, in which the Amir used to worship. Seen from the Tower of Death

While I was staying in Qara Kul I took time and trouble to investigate this question and see for myself the method by which the skins are procured. Contrary to the prevailing rumour, the pregnant ewes are treated with the greatest care and tenderness, especially in the last days before the lambs are born. And the infant lambs are likewise handled with affectionate attention. They are killed on the fourth to eighth day. The mother sheep are far too valuable to be sacrificed or maltreated in any way. The accompanying photograph (Plate 71) makes it quite obvious that the lamb which the boy is carrying to his father for slaughtering is several days old. The little pelt is at once wrapped in salt and barley flour to preserve the curls. It is therefore an absolute myth that the ewe's belly is cut open while she is still alive and that the lamb must be slaughtered while still warm in its mother's womb in order to preserve the beauty of the skin.

XII

Bukhara the Noble

From Qara Kul I proceeded some fifty miles by rail to Bukhara. The railway runs in an absolutely straight line through richly cultivated country to the small *qishlaq* of Qaghan, which is the junction for the branch line to Bukhara. The last time I had stayed in Qaghan it was a modest little spot which, apart from the barracks which belonged to the Russian Frontier Force, boasted only two European buildings, the residence of the District Commandant and the mail livery stables, which were in private hands. The concessionaire in those days was a German named Schmid, whose neighbour, the apothecary Reinhard—also a German—proved a great benefactor to the prisoners of war in Katta Qurghan and Samarqand.

Just as in my old prisoner-of-war days, there were carriages standing in front of the railway station, waiting to be hired. But reasons of economy led me to prefer travelling to Bukhara by rail. In olden days the railway was never used and it had been destroyed by the Bukharans, but since 1922 it has again been in action. Two trains a day ran to the station in front of the main city gate of Bukhara. The little train consisted of one engine and two coaches and it proceeded at a very leisurely and

comfortable pace, finally coming to a halt just under the city wall. (Plates 77 and 78.)

Bukhara was once the largest and most powerful empire in Trans-Oxiana and centralized all its wealth and glory in its capital city, which was known until 1920 as 'Bukhara the Holy'. The Russians were reluctant to rob it completely of an impressive epithet and it is now entitled 'Bukhara the Noble'.

The city is extremely ancient. A considerable settlement is known to have existed here more than three thousand years ago. In the course of her history Bukhara has been repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt. Under the rule of the Arabs she attained to immense wealth.

Two hundred and fifteen years after the Hijra (A.D. 622) Abd ul Abbas built the city wall, which is standing to this day. He raised it as a protection against the ever-present threat of Turkoman attacks, for the wealth of the city acted as a constant lure to raiders. Then the Arabs became masters, and they laid out the greater part of the huge system of artificial irrigation channels between the Amu Darya and the Zarafshan which still serve the city and its environs.

Some conception of the immense wealth of the city can be formed from the ancient writings, which tell that it paid an annual tribute of 200,000 dirhems to the Khalif of Baghdad. Under the Samanids Bukhara paid taxes to the tune of over a million dirhems.

Bukhara was also the centre of Islamic culture and oriental handicrafts. The silks and clothing materials which were there produced were accounted the most valuable and the most beautiful in all Asia, and their fame extended to Arabia, Persia, and Egypt, and even as far as Greece. In those days only three dyes were

known in Bukhara, white, red, and green. Only vegetable dyes were employed, for animal and, of course, artificial chemical dyes were unknown. Next to her costly materials, her carpets carried the fame of Bukhara far and wide through the Islamic world. The Bukharan carpets of those days were so valuable that the town could remit its tribute of 200,000 dirhems to Baghdad in the form of one single carpet.

Under the successors of the Arabs Bukhara fell on evil days, until Timur the Lame brought a new era of glory. At his court in Samarqand he assembled artists from every quarter of the known world, and with their assistance he erected buildings the like of which had never before been dreamed of. The last of the great Timurids, the royal astronomer Ulugh Beg, also devoted himself to Bukhara and built a large number of magnificent mosques and madrasahs.

It was assuredly neither mere vanity nor self-conceit which prompted the people of Bukhara to ask the traveller Vambéry: 'Haji, you have seen many lands. Now tell us, is there in all the world any city so beautiful as Bukhara?' The unspoiled beauty of the city had indeed no rival.

Until the Bolshevik conquest, Bukhara was the only isolated oasis which was the home of oriental culture and the spirit of Islam. The ancient city walls with their watch-towers and loopholes would have been small protection against the tide of Western influence; a more potent guardian of Bukhara's integrity was the historic rivalry of England and Russia, both of whom cast jealous eyes on the hub of Central Asia. The Amirs of Bukhara were masters in the art of playing the one off against the other for their own advantage, so that

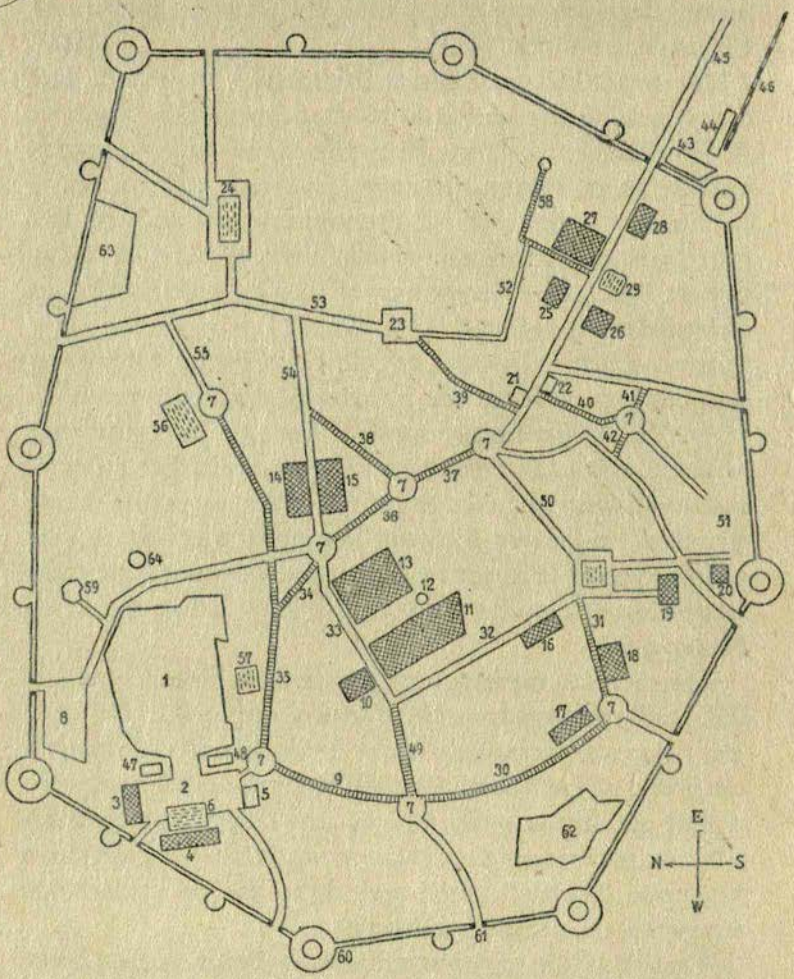
Bukhara's independence and individuality were thus more effectively protected than the Middle Empire of China by its Great Wall.

The available space inside the town is restricted, and every inch of it is turned to good account. This has kept foreign intruders at bay. Even the excess native population is forced to quit the town and seek new means of livelihood in the outskirts. Probably no oriental city has ever been so completely in the hands of religious fanatics as Bukhara. The power of mullas and muftis was unlimited. As late as 1919, when I was in the city, officers of the faith used regularly to patrol the streets and bazaars, hold up the passers-by, and cross-question them about any chance *surah* of the Qurān or the laws of the Shariah. If the luckless Believer could give no satisfactory answer the officer would order his police escort to arrest and carry him off, issuing a warning to any others who might prove inadequately versed in their sacred book. Punishment took the form either of a beating or a fine.

The city had eleven gates, which were closed at nightfall, and any movement to and fro within the city after this hour was forbidden under heavy penalty. From the outbreak of the World War till 1920 the city gates were closed all day as well, and no one could pass through without producing a special permit. Nowadays the gates are open day and night and there are no restrictions whatever on people's movements.

The life of the night-watchman in Bukhara has, however, undergone no change. (Plate 75.) Hundreds of them still wander through the streets, as they have always done, protecting the quarter of the city allotted to their care. Each watchman is equipped with a cudgel,

Plan of Bukhara



The most important mosques and madrasahs.

The most important *hauz*.

Covered bazaars.

Towers and city wall, seven and a half miles long.

Plan of Bukhara

1. Ark, Citadel.
2. Rigistan.
3. Madrasah Gusfand.
4. Madrasah Shadibik.
5. Barracks.
6. Hauz of Rigistan.
7. Char Su bazaars.
8. Standing place for carts, and fodder bazaar.
9. Silk and shoe bazaar.
10. Mosque of Harun ar Rashid.
11. Kalan Mosque.
12. Tower of Death.
13. Madrasah Mir Arab.
14. Madrasah Ulugh Beg.
15. Madrasah Abd ul Aziz.
16. Madrasah.
17. Mosque Ismail Khoja.
18. Mosque.
19. Mosque Mir Khoja.
20. Mosque.
21. Serai.
22. Furs, charcoal, and *khilat* bazaar.
23. Books and paper bazaar.
24. *Hauz* and baths.
25. Mosque Khalif Niaz.
26. Mosque Diwan Begi.
27. Madrasah and Mosque Gök Tash.
28. Madrasah Diwan Begi.
29. *Hauz* Diwan Begi.
30. Ironware bazaar.
31. Cotton and rice bazaar.
32. Embroidery, silk, carpets, and cloth bazaar.
33. Qarakul bazaar.
34. Carpet and shoe bazaar.
35. Coppersmiths' and bakers' bazaar.
36. *Khilat* and corn bazaar.
37. Money-changers' and cutlers' bazaar.
38. Goldsmiths' and jewellers' bazaar.
39. Turban bazaar and tea-houses.
40. Butchers', saddlers', and china bazaar.
41. Weapon-smiths' and wheelwrights' bazaar.
42. Doctors' and apothecaries' bazaar.
43. Amir's New Castle.
44. Railway station.
45. Road to Qaghan and frontier.
46. Railway to Qaghan.
47. Barracks of Bodyguard.
48. Artillery Arsenal.
49. Wood and straw bazaar.
50. Sweetmeat, egg, and fowl bazaar.
51. Cemetery.
52. Salt and provisions bazaar.
53. Carpenters' bazaar.
54. Street of dyers and weavers.
55. Street of rope and cord makers.
56. *Hauz*.
57. *Hauz*.
58. Potters' bazaar.
59. New Prison.
60. Fortress tower.
61. City gate.
62. Jews' Quarter.
63. Leper Quarter.
64. Zindan, Old Prison.

which he bangs several times on the gate of every court-yard as he passes by—thus intimidating would-be law-breakers of every kind. The noise of the watchmen's knocking echoes through the streets, and serves the double purpose of reassuring the householders—proving that the watchmen are really awake and that they are earning their pay—and scaring off burglars. I suppose the system works, since it continues. The watchman is, however, bound by the strict general law forbidding any one to enter another person's house.

The system of night-watching in the bazaars is even more peculiar. All the streets in the bazaars are roofed in as a protection against the sun, and every couple of hundred yards they are provided with skylights. Through these you can look down on the booth-like shops below. The nightwatchman walks along the tops of the roofs like an invisible guardian angel, beating his drum without intermission and peering down at intervals through the holes to observe the effect of his procedure.

None of the watchmen carry arms and those posted on the roofs could only get down into the streets by long roundabout ways if they did want to arrest a thief, so the effect of their activities must be moral rather than practical. The desired result, however, is achieved and the fact remains that theft and burglary are the rarest of all crimes in Bukhara.

Next to Samarqand, Bukhara was and still is the largest commercial centre of Central Asia. A great part of the city is taken up by serais and caravanserais. These used formerly to be either the property of the Amir or else pious foundations; they are now under the direction of the Uzbeg Soviet. These serais may perhaps best be compared to our customs houses and warehouses.

They are usually one or two stories high and are built round a large central court. The court and the lower rooms serve as storerooms, the upper ones as offices and shops. An open terrace, like a verandah corridor, runs right round the front of the upper story and all the doors open on to it. Summer and winter alike the individual doors all stand open, for windows are unknown and the door is the only source of light.

Most of Bukhara's bazaars date from her earlier days of glory—the Char Su for instance, under one of the great cupolas, and the somewhat similar Goldsmiths' Bazaar which was built by Abd ul Aziz Khan of the Shaiban dynasty. (Plate 81.) Linked to these are the bazaars for books, padded quilts, shoes, ironware, ornaments, leather, stuffs, felt rugs, silks, and velvets, carpets, pottery, furs, and turbans. In between are ranged the booths of the butchers, dyers, money-changers, tinsmiths, tanners, and smiths; then follow the salt and charcoal dealers, the bakers and fruit-sellers, the waggoners and wheelwrights, whose booths are liberally interspersed with eating-houses and teashops. Dealers in tobacco, raisins, and cotton have a bazaar of their own, so have the traders in wool and camel's hair.

Almost every street in the bazaars terminates in the monumental building of some madrasah or mosque, whose cupola and façade are covered with gold or blue mosaics. The secret of making these coloured mosaics is lost, and they can nowadays be neither copied nor replaced. Even before the War Muslim piety had been unavailing to check a lively trade in these faiences with Russia and Persia; for European tourists will pay fabulous sums for them. The results of this collecting mania have been tragic in the extreme. The walls have been

stripped of their lovely coverings up to the height of a man's outstretched arm and the laying bare of the brown mud which underlies these priceless tiles detracts enormously from the total effect. When you climb up and stand on one of the flat roofs from which the depredations of the vandals cannot be seen, the original effect is restored, and you are then most literally dazzled by the glory of blue and gold on every side. The unspoiled golden cupola of Gur i Shah, framed by the blue-tiled cupola and minarets of Diwan Begi, Khalifa Niaz, Harun ar Rashid, Mirza Ulugh Beg, Khiaban, Khalifa Hussain, Mir Arab, Madir Khan, and many others, constitute a sight which no one, who has had the incalculable privilege of seeing it can ever forget. (Plates 82, 83, 84, 88, and 89.)

The traffic in the streets of the city is indescribable. Caravans with heavily laden camels, high-piled carts, riders on horse and donkey, thrust through the narrow lanes and streets; Persians, Afghans, Indians, Tajiks, Chinese, Bukharan Jews, and representatives of dozens of other Asiatic peoples enliven the scene. Hindus, caste-mark on forehead, are chiefly busy as money-changers and actively compete in this business with the Parsees, who are at once distinguishable by their inky-black felt caps. The Afghans and Armenians are mainly moneylenders and still employ their ancient tally-sticks in preference to more modern methods of book-keeping. Woe to the dilatory debtor! If the day of reckoning passes with his debt still undischarged, the amount of it will infallibly be carved on the doorpost of his house, that every passer-by may know that he has been unable to meet his obligations.

The position of the Jews in Bukhara is unique. In

earlier days they were considered unclean, and so much despised that they could not even be sold as slaves. They were forbidden to acquire land—they can do so less than ever now under the Soviet régime—and they were not allowed then or now to wear the gaily coloured robe or turban of Bukhara. In deference to the religious susceptibilities of their fellow citizens they are still compelled, as they have been for centuries, to wear a cap of felt or fur, to proclaim them unmistakably as Jews. They are forbidden to wear the Muslim sash round their waists and must close their cloaks with a narrow hempen cord. They are compelled to live in a special quarter of the city. Within the four walls of their own houses, however, they fling off coarse cap and cloak and wrap themselves in the magnificent garments and silken robes which are denied them without.

The silk merchants are mainly Afghans. They can at once be recognized by the little tail of cloth issuing from the folds of their turban and hanging coquettishly down over their left ear on to their breast. Amongst them you may occasionally see a modernized Bukharan woman. The ordinary woman's dress is still the loose robe or *paranja*, whose floating sleeves are tied together on the back, but the most vital item of her clothing, the *chimat* or horsehair veil, is nowadays frequently abandoned—not always to her advantage! The veil used mercifully to hide from view all kinds of uglinesses, and faces often devoured and scarred with skin disease, which is the terror of the Bukharan streets.

Bukhara possesses well over a hundred madrasahs (religious schools or universities) and remains still the centre of Islamic learning. You may here see the Red Star of the Soviet or the portraits of Lenin and Khidir-

alieff in queer juxtaposition with the ancient text-books of Shariat Law and commentaries on the Qurān. The Madrasah Mir Arab is a typical example. The narrow cell of the Imam has shelves along the walls, laden with sacred books in Arabic and Kufic script, above which hangs a poster in Uzbeg which screams: 'Proletarians of all Lands Unite!' Few religious teachers in other parts of the world would be able to reconcile two philosophies so diametrically opposed. I ventured in some astonishment to ask how it was possible, and was informed that Bukharan students found no difficulty in keeping the teachings of Lenin and of Muhammad in two separate mental compartments.

Anti-God propaganda has had but little effect on the number of students attending the madrasahs. While I was in Bukhara 21,000 future mullás were receiving instruction in the city; they had journeyed from the remotest corners of Uzbegistan to study the teachings of the prophet of Islam. The teaching system of these schools or universities has not the faintest resemblance to ours. A verandah runs round the large central court, from which innumerable little doors lead into small windowless cells, whose sole furniture consists of a few felt rugs, a padded quilt, a comb, and a brass water-jug. When the hour of instruction comes, two or three pupils from the neighbouring cells gather in one of the tiny rooms and squat round their teacher on the ground, while he reads aloud in a chanting sing-song voice.

The largest building in Bukhara is the Citadel, the fortress of the last amirs, part of which has now been converted into an anti-imperial museum. The valuable sword which used to adorn the right-hand wing of the great entrance gate is no longer to be seen. The victori-

ous Red troops carried it off to Tashkent, whence it disappeared in company with Ossipoff, and no trace of either has since been found. In compensation, as it were, the gigantic scourge, emblem of the might of the amirs, which was formerly fixed on the other wing of the door, is now the chief show-piece of the museum. Chains, neck-rings, instruments of torture, executioners' swords and blocks, collected from all the prisons and dungeons of Bukhara, complete the contents of the museum. The pro-Communist psychological effect of the exhibits on the masses is undeniable.

Not far from the Citadel stands the Amir's summer castle, Shirbudun, with a half-European flavour about it. A tour of the extensive building is highly interesting. The apartments which were set aside for the personal use of the Amir and his multitudinous wives have been preserved in their original state—like the Austrian castles of the Hapsburgs. With few exceptions, the walls of the rooms are simply colour-washed in white or grey. Large, almost modern windows open into the big gardens, once so rigorously secluded. The floors are tiled with stone or covered with mosaic. The lofty entrance door into the throne-room is magnificent. It is of carved rosewood and must be of immense value. The throne itself is only an outsize easy chair, whose broad arms did duty as a tea table. The Amir had about twenty different bedrooms, now to one, now to another of which he constantly migrated in great secrecy as a precaution against assassination, just as his Turkish colleagues the Sultans of Constantinople were wont to do. The specially decorated bedroom in which he used to receive his favourite wife is probably the finest room in the castle. The walls are covered with heavy silken carpets, which nowa-

days, it must be admitted, have a somewhat shabby, threadbare look. The ceiling is of juniper and rosewood, the carving of which is said to have employed several artists over a period of thirty years. The floor is inlaid with beautifully preserved mosaic patterns in blue and gold.

The story goes that the grandfather of the last Amir, when he felt his end approaching, sent in haste for his favourite wife and three of his daughters and had them executed, so that no one else might touch or gaze on them after his death. For his own convenience he had the deed carried out beside his deathbed, so that he might see with his own eyes that his orders were obeyed.

The women's quarters are on the first floor. They show little to justify the wonderful descriptions which are often heard of the luxury of an oriental harem. They are simple and sober to a degree. But for the glorious silken carpets and the silk and damask coverings of the low bedsteads, you might think you were in a prison cell. Only a few rooms designed for special favourites are handsomely adorned; in them a ceiling of mirror glass reflects the few rays of light from a delicate rosewood lattice which are allowed to penetrate the darkness. But many things mysterious and romantic enough are here revealed. The guide stepped up to a large mirror in the wall. A touch on the hidden spring, and it moved aside, disclosing a secret stair. This leads to a large enclosed gallery surrounding a big hall. A number of small peep-holes enable an observer to spy upon the scene below. While the women of his household were amusing themselves with games and dancing, the Amir would watch unseen by them, and make his choice. Another secret stair leads down from the gallery. At the bottom one

passage leads into the hall and one to the Amir's private apartments. A whole magazine of toys was piled in the women's hall: old gramophones, dolls, mechanical figures, boxes of games, puppets like those of our Punch and Judy shows, old French fashion journals, picture books, and sets of building bricks had been collected to minister to the amusement of the ladies.

In the opposite wing the guide opened the doors of a built-in cupboard. A completely furnished railway sleeping-compartment of the end of the nineteenth century came into view. The last Amir's father had a passion for railway journeys and to indulge it often travelled to and fro between Bukhara and Qaghan. The mullas, however, objected, and he had an exact copy made of a sleeping compartment. Behind the window of the compartment there was a tiny room in which his servants used to stand and wave strips of coloured paper past the window panes so that His Majesty might enjoy the complete illusion of a railway journey.

The next room was fitted out as a small private mosque. The six chandeliers with which it was lighted up are of solid gold—or were, up till 1920. Next to this is the ladies' bath. A large tiled basin served as a swimming bath, the water of which was heated by the simple device of lighting a big fire in the cellar below. Individual bath-tubs of copper or zinc were ranged all round the walls; dented and full of holes as they now are, they give the place an air of desolation. About nine feet from the ground there are barred windows of red glass which shed a rosy light into the bathing room. A neighbouring room is provided with peepholes, through which again the Amir could secretly observe his women while they bathed.

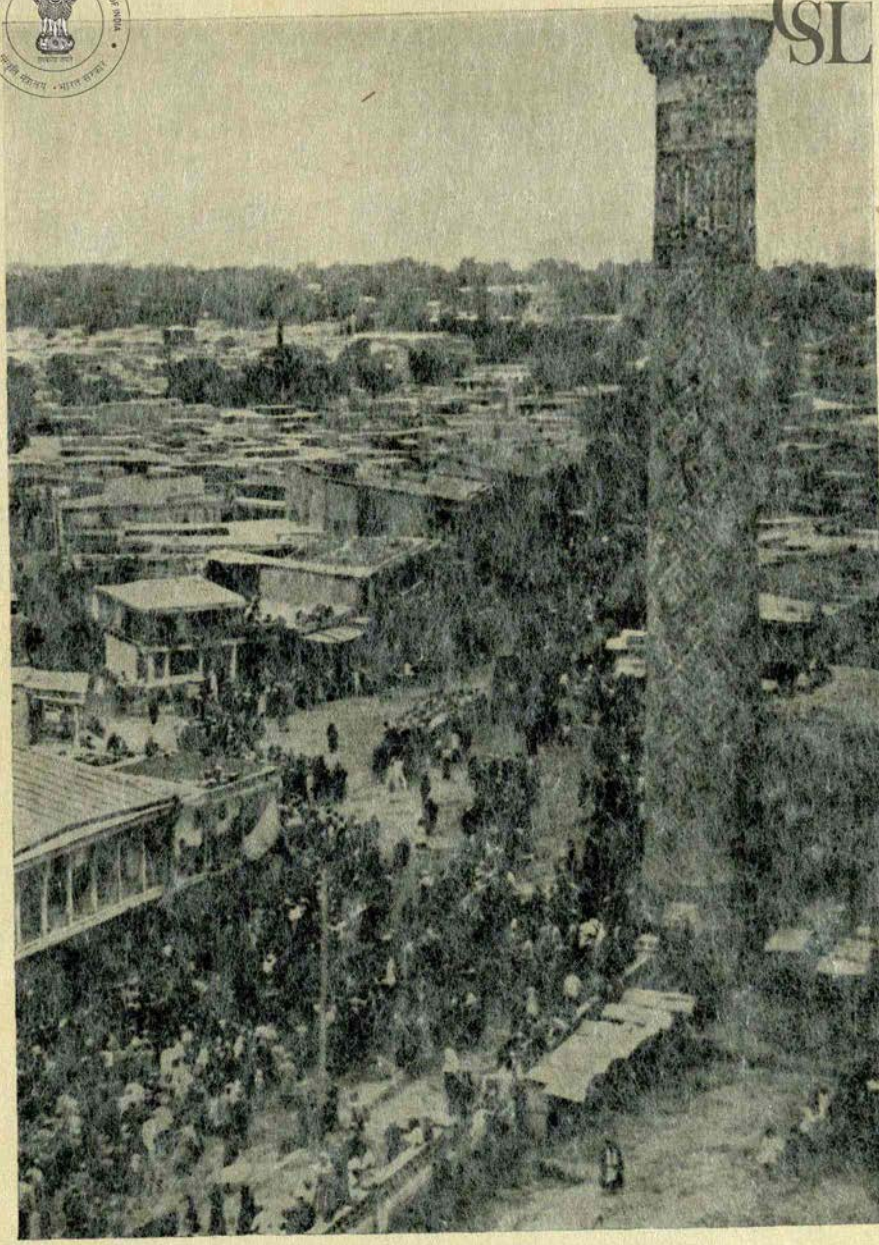
From the bath the guide led me into the so-called Labyrinth, a large octagonal hall which is divided by partitions into the semblance of a maze. Here the Amir used to play at chasing the beauties whom he had selected from the bath. If report speaks true it was the dream of every inmate of the harem to hear the eunuch's summons to the Labyrinth—because every opportunity of intimacy with the Amir spelt jewels and privileges, and might prove the first step towards the coveted position of favourite.

The guide of the museum was the man who had been the last head eunuch of the Court. He had betrayed the secret hiding-places and treasure houses to the Red troops. His knowledge of the castle led to the discovery of the many concealed passages, stairs, and trap-doors, and also of the Amir's secret prison, whose existence had always been denied. When the Red soldiers took possession of the Citadel and opened the secret dungeons they set free eighteen imprisoned men and women, chiefly sons and daughters of the Amir, but also some Court dignitaries who had mysteriously disappeared.

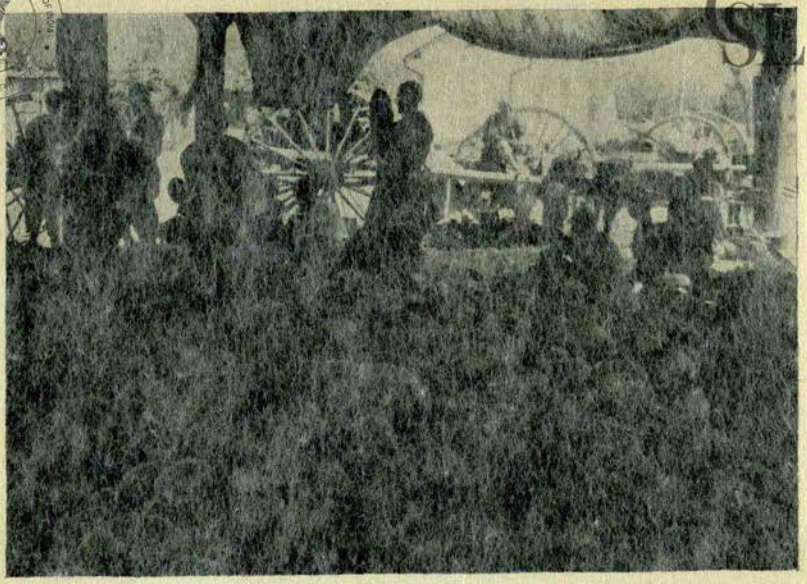
The Russian and Bukharan Bolsheviks naturally made capital out of these revelations. They took the trouble to bring in as many nomads and peasants from the oases as possible, to demonstrate effectively to them the habits and cruelties of their former Amir.

From Shirbudun to the Citadel there runs an underground passage by which the Amir made his escape in 1920.

One must give the Bolsheviks their due. They have reformed and modernized the army—their main support in Bukhara—from top to bottom. I had been twice on a long visit to Bukhara in 1919 and I had had oppor-

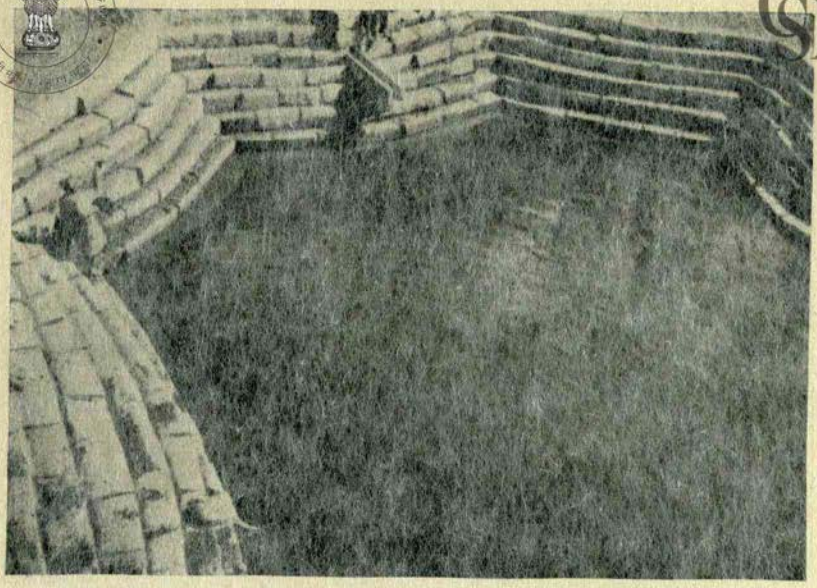


84. Madrasah of Ulugh Beg in Samarqand

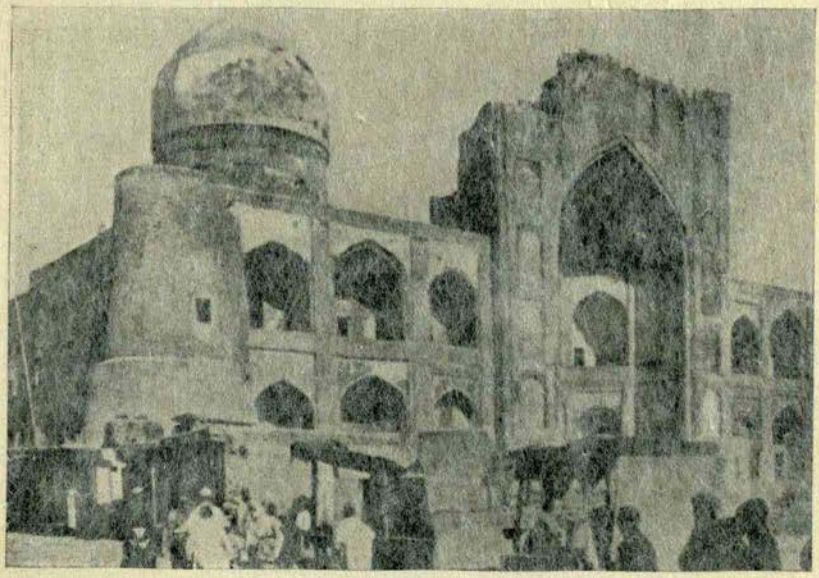


85. Sweet melons in the fruit market at Bukhara

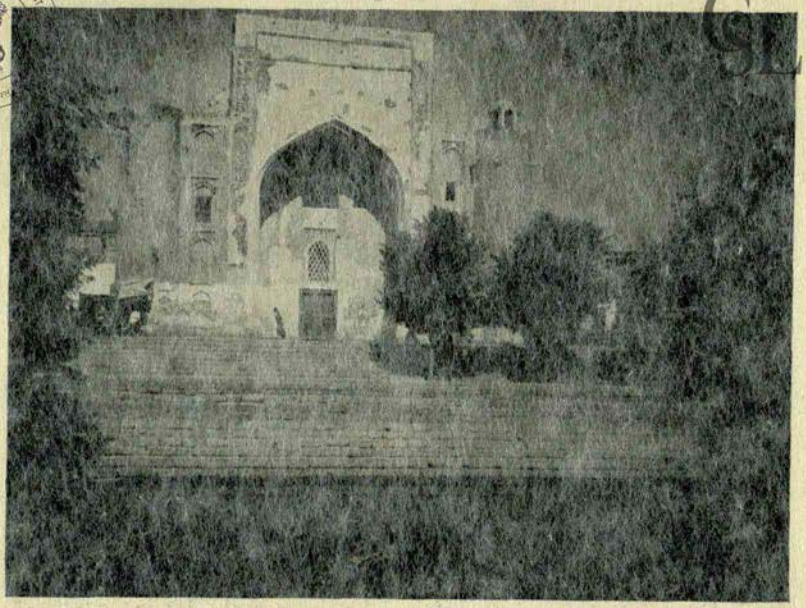
86. Street life in Bukhara



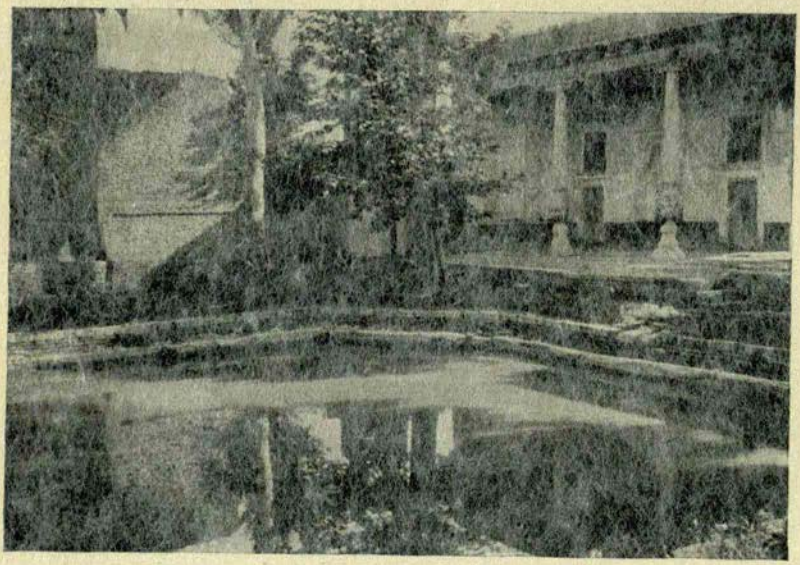
87. Bukhara. The Lab i Hauz (Brink of the Water Tank). While the water-carrier is filling his skin with drinking water, another man is washing his hands in the tank



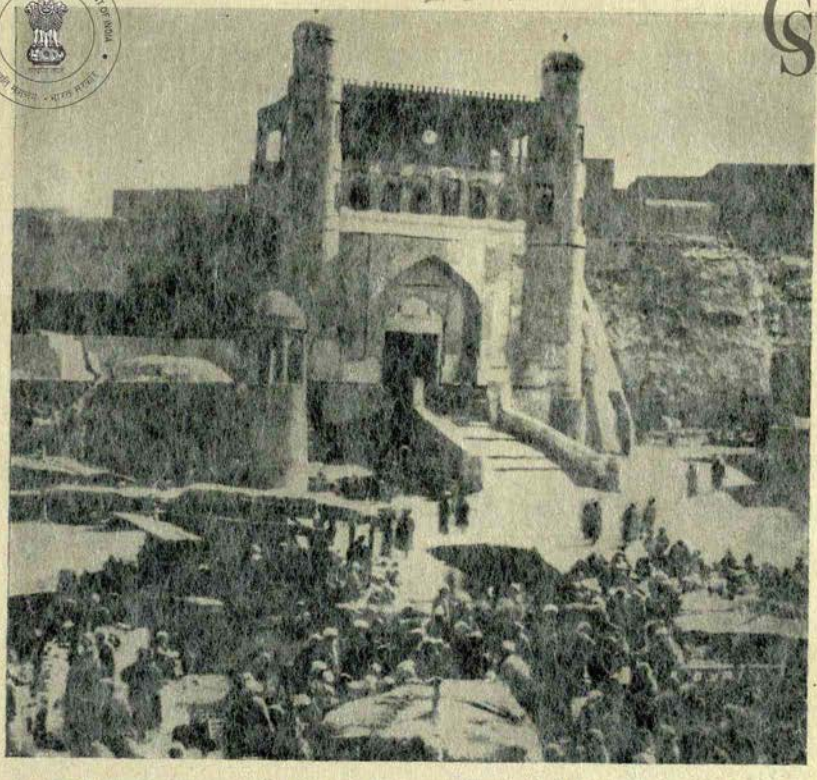
88. Bukhara. Front view of the Mir Arab Madrasah



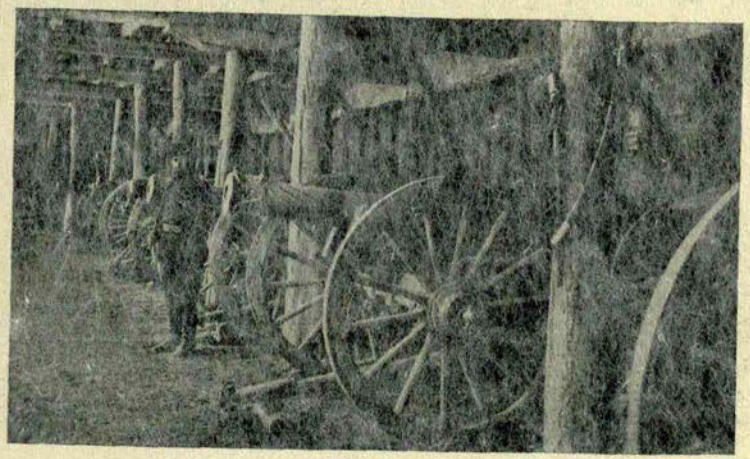
89. The mosque with the largest of Bukhara's water tanks, beside the Citadel



90. Tank in the garden of my dwelling house in Bukhara. Left: back view of the Harun ar Rashid Mosque



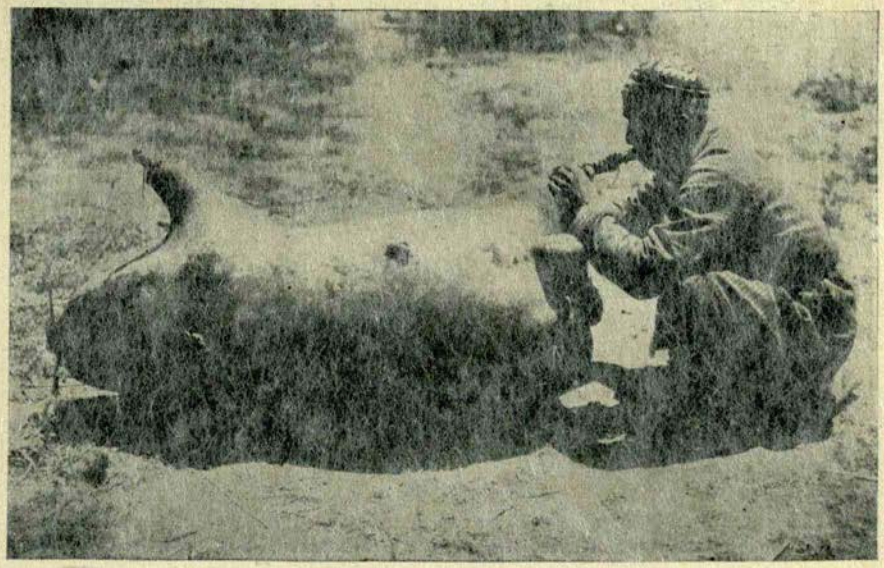
91. Bukhara. Entrance to the Citadel. In the foreground the largest bazaar in the city



92. The Bukharan artillery arsenal, near the Citadel

93. The oldest story-teller in Bukhara. He had been Court singer to three successive Khans of Khiwa, and finally had been in the service of the Amir of Bukhara

94. Bukhara. Musicians, dancers and conjurors assemble in the evening round the various water tanks



95. Inflating a skin for Bukharan 'boat'

96. The fortified villages of the Kupat Dagh strongly resemble the fortresses of Kurdistan and the Caucasus

tunity to inform myself about the equipment and training of the Bukharan Army of those days, and to observe various military manœuvres and exercises outside the city gates. The soldiers' uniform was a dark-blue tunic with enormously wide red trousers which fell in great folds over their battered knee-boots. They wore black lambskin caps on their heads with brass badges displaying the arms of the Amir—a hand with outspread fingers —and the arms of the country, a crescent and a star. Their weapons were a curved sabre, often innocent of scabbard, and an antique Russian gun with incredibly long bayonet. Even the Amir's guard before the palace often went on duty with torn uniforms and in summer often barefoot. Unwashed, unshaven, patched, and ragged, with miscellaneous odds and ends of uniform, they presented the most miserable and neglected appearance. The cavalry on their small shaggy steppeponies looked if possible even worse. The Bukharan Army had a few pieces of artillery, too, such as you may occasionally see in museums at home. (Plate 92.) These muzzle-loaders were cast in brass and inscribed with cabalistic and magic formulae, and their throats terminated in terrifying snakes' and dragons' heads. At the very time of which I write there was in Ab i Garm a great store of machine-guns and modern breech-loaders, not to mention magazine rifles and automatic pistols. If the Amir had armed his men with these weapons in good time, who knows? He might still have been master of the country.

The Soviets have equipped the modern Red Army of Bukhara with the very latest of modern weapons and trained them in their use. Gone are the full beards dyed with henna. Fine, healthy, upstanding figures, dressed

in light brown khaki, drill and exercise with admirable precision. The little ponies of the steppes have been replaced by excellent Turkoman horses, and a corps of camelry is responsible for desert service.

The great bazaar square covers about half a square mile in front of the Citadel. Hundreds of tiny booths surround the open square in the midst of which lies the largest of Bukhara's many *hauz* or open tanks of water, bounded on the north and west by two madrasahs, and on the east by the New Prison. The German, Count Schweinitz, who stayed in Bukhara in 1910—the last European to visit the city before the World War—declared that this prison was most admirable and that all the yarns about the ghastly prison conditions of Bukhara were untrue. The good count was bamboozled by the wily Bukharans; they showed him only the prison reserved for such high officials and dignitaries, relatives, and ex-favourites of the Amir as had begun to prove a trifle inconvenient. This explains how the count could say that he had seen only four cells housing in all some twenty prisoners. They took good care not show him the dungeons of Zindan and Khandan, in which hundreds of poor devils festered away in underground holes, and in which many European prisoners, including the Englishmen Conolly and Stoddart, were incarcerated until their execution. Nowadays the old prisons have been abolished and the comparatively luxurious prison of the big officials is used for ordinary criminals, while political prisoners are dispatched to Moscow or Tashkent.

If you climb up one of the many minarets of Bukhara you see below an almost uniform mud roof, dotted with occasional large or smaller swellings. There are few open

lanes or streets passing through the centre of the town; most of them are roofed over, and it is possible to walk from end to end of the city on the continuous roofs of houses and streets. (Plate 81.)

Between the Mosque of Kalan and the Mir Arab Madrasah rises the tall minaret of the Mir Arab, known as the 'Tower of Death'. Under the rule of the Amirs condemned criminals were sewn up in sacks and flung down from this minaret. They crashed on to the stone pavement, and were left lying there.

A few years before the Great War the Amir, in deference to the wishes of the Tsar, gave up this method of execution and adopted that of cutting people's heads off. After the War had begun, however, and Bukhara's independence was re-established, the slinging of people from the minaret was resumed as a regular part of the legal procedure of the Amirate.

One of the saddest corners of Bukhara is the Lepers' Quarter. It has nothing on the outside to distinguish it, nor is it barred from the inside. Here in some hundreds of wretched mud huts these unfortunates live and beget children, doomed all their lives to see nothing of the world but the miserable hovels of the lepers. Every inhabitant of Bukhara has the right to slay at sight any leper whom he sees outside the quarter. Now, under the rule of the Soviets, these unhappy people are cared for by the State, whereas they were formerly abandoned to the charity of their relations or of any chance benefactor. Many of those interned in the Lepers' Quarter are not suffering from leprosy at all; but medical knowledge being very elementary, any one unlucky enough to develop a white patch on any visible portion of the skin is immediately banished there. Artists in cosmetics who

have skill enough to restore such white patches to a normal appearance are therefore in great demand and earn enormous fees.

The cemeteries of Bukhara are curiously laid out. The majority of them are most unhygienically situated inside the city walls. (Plate 79.) At first, for strategic reasons, houses used to be built at some distance from the city wall, but during the last twenty years less thought was given to strategy and a great number of mud houses have been built right up against the inner side of it, interspersed with frequent graveyards. The inhabitants of Central Asia, including Bukhara, bury their dead differently from us. The corpse is not sunk underground, but a mud platform is built up, twelve or fifteen inches high, and a barrel-shaped wall is vaulted over it. The back is closed in first, leaving the front open. Then the corpse is pushed into the low vault and the front built up, leaving open a small square hole. A burial usually takes place within twelve or fifteen hours of death, while according to the people's religious belief the soul requires at least three days to extricate itself from the body. The hole is therefore necessary to let the soul escape and make its way to Paradise, and every grave is conscientiously supplied with this outlet. A little oil-lamp is placed in the hole, and must be lighted on the third, seventh, and fourteenth day. At the same time flaps of bread cooked in fat are also placed in the hole to provide the soul with food for its journey. Not the soul alone, but all the gases of decomposition issue from this opening, while cats and dogs creep in and drag out pieces of the decaying flesh, which are left lying about. No Believer would venture to touch any part of a dead body, for fear of preventing its owner from reaching Paradise.

The space available for burial grounds in Bukhara is very restricted, so the grave-mounds are not ranged side by side or one behind the other, but built up over each other many stories high, so that the graveyard ultimately looks like a gigantic honeycomb. The pressure of the upper graves and the weathering of the mud vaults often break down the vaults of the lower graves, which naturally causes the collapse of the top ones and the release of skeletons and decaying bodies. The winter rains help the work of destruction, and it is not at all rare to see skeletons and half-rotted corpses lying about amongst the crumbling graves.

In spite of all this, health conditions in Bukhara are not so unfavourable as might be expected. Apart from the *rishta*, or guinea-worm, which I have described in the first chapter of this book, the most frequently occurring illness is the *pendinka*, a kind of septic ulcer which usually attacks face, neck, and hands, and leaves the most unsightly scars behind. Another very prevalent disease is the so-called 'Blue Sickness'. The skin of the sufferer becomes dry and brittle and comes away from the body in tatters, but without falling off completely. This disease resembles an extremely severe attack of sunburn, except that it attacks the entire skin and causes the most intense pain, while the skin turns almost blue. The unfortunate victims have to go without clothing for months and can neither lie nor sit, since the slightest pressure is agony. The cause of the Blue Sickness is unknown, and there is no known treatment for it. In addition to these complaints, leprosy and venereal disease have their victims.

In spite of the vileness of the water-supply, typhus and typhoid are of rare occurrence. The water-supply consists of some eighty large *hauz* or ponds situated in differ-

ent parts of the city, from which the different quarters are supplied by open canals or *ariqs*. Thousands and thousands of frogs and toads flourish in these *hauz* and *ariqs*, dead dogs and cats float about in them, and every earthly kind of refuse is thrown into them. Milliards of worms and water fleas also populate the water reservoirs and canals, from which all cooking and washing water is drawn. Dogs, donkeys, and horses bathe in them; sick and well alike wash face, feet, and hands in them. I once saw a man with a *pendinka* washing his face, which was covered with suppurating boils, in one of these *hauz*, and for days after I could not bring myself to drink tea or eat any food cooked in water.

And yet those ponds of Bukhara are wonderfully beautiful. (Plates 87, 89, and 90.) In the evening, after the muezzin has sounded from the minaret the Call to Prayer, the men of the city gather round the ponds, which are bordered by tall silver poplars and magnificent black elms, to enjoy a period of ease and leisure. Carpets are spread, the ever-burning *chilim* is passed from mouth to mouth, the samovar steams away, and lightfooted boys hand round the shallow bowls of green tea. Here the *meddahs*, or story-tellers, the musicians, and the dancing boys assemble to display their craft. (Plates 93 and 94.) And perhaps a conjuror or a juggler comes, performing the most amazing and incredible feats of skill. An Indian snake-charmer joins the throng and sets his poisonous snakes to dance, while over all reigns the peace of a Bukharan evening. No loud speech breaks the spell; items of scandal and the news of the day are exchanged in discreet whispers. So it was centuries ago in Bukhara; so it is to-day. There are things which not even the Soviets can alter.

XIII

The Domain of the Amu Darya

I travelled southwards by train in the direction of Charjui, alighted at Farab, and waited there for a caravan which was starting for Patta Kasar, and accompanied it as far as Burdaliq. The caravan road runs through the broad green belt of the Amu Darya to the south-west of Bukhara. The thick jungle of reeds is broken by miserable little *qishlaqs*. These villages ingeniously use the marshy stretches of land for the cultivation of rice. At times the road follows the raised line of a lofty shifting sand-dune, which permits an extensive view over the great desert that stretches on both sides of the river. Though the land near the river is extremely fertile it is sparsely inhabited, a fact which is probably to be explained by the high mortality from malaria and marsh fever. The little villages seldom boast even the usual huts. They mainly consist of low, primitive reed hovels, roughly plastered on the outside with mud. As far as Narazim the population is predominantly Turkoman, while between Narazim and Hazrat Bashir it is Qirghiz with a strong admixture of Uzbeg.

We pitched our last camp one night not far from Iska. While the men were busy feeding the animals and cooking the evening meal the caravan-*bashi* called me to come

with him, he had something interesting to show me. He twisted bundles of reeds into rude torches and by their light he led me up a loess hill till we reached a large hole like a door in a mud wall. As long as the torches held out he guided me through a labyrinth of passages and caves which appeared to stretch several miles under the ground. We saw old hearths, broken pots, weapons, and metal utensils eaten by rust, all of which must have been very old, and lots of animal bones, often piled up in layers. As I have already mentioned, there are many such underground cities in Turkistan which have not been inhabited in recent times. Not a single cave had fallen in or become impassable. Loess is such a firm and durable earth that everything was in a perfect state of preservation, as if these caves had been but newly excavated. I was sceptical of the great age he attributed to this city of caves till I talked to a Balti doctor in Charjui who had visited and explored almost all the Turkoman cave-dwellings in the country. He believed the caves to be ancient centres of civilization and was of the opinion that they would be found to contain much valuable archaeological material if they were made accessible to scientists. So far, he deplored, the Russian Government had paid almost no heed to their existence.

When we scrambled back to camp we found that a lot of very smoky fires, fed with reeds and green wood, had been lit round the tents in an attempt to drive off the swarms of mosquitos. It must be confessed that they were entirely useless for the purpose. Whole clouds of these blood-sucking malaria-carriers flung themselves on men and animals. I at once took a double dose of quinine and persevered with this precaution as long as we remained in the Amu Darya neighbourhood. Neither

Europeans nor natives use mosquito nets in Turkistan or take any prophylactic measures against malaria. Whoever is attacked just passively endures and perishes—Insha' Allah, if God will.

I took my bedding and dragged it off some distance into the cave, which none of the mosquitos appeared to have invaded. As soon as I had assured myself of this welcome fact, I returned to camp with the good news, expecting that it would be greeted with joy. The *bashi* assured me that he had known it for years, but that they were all in God's hands and didn't care a fig for mosquito bites. So I left my friends to be bitten to death and duly infected with malaria, while I returned to sleep by myself in the cave.

The land dips between Iska and Narazim and is thus one of the few spots in Bukhara that can be watered directly from the Amu Darya, for the rest of the country lies definitely above the river. Innumerable canals greatly impeded our progress, for according to their depth we had either to wade or swim across. This caravan road along the Amu Darya must be one of the oldest in the world, but it cannot boast a single bridge. Some of the smaller canals were only a couple of yards wide and two feet or so deep, but the large ones ran to a width of five or six yards and a depth of over six feet.

It was fun to watch the Turkomans when it came to crossing these canals: at any time they love water about as much as a cat. Before we came to the first big one we had crossed perhaps a score of smaller. Men and animals had simply plunged into the thick, opaque mud-water and forded through it. This time the matter was not so simple. The stream was a good six yards wide and was rushing downhill with considerable force. The caravan