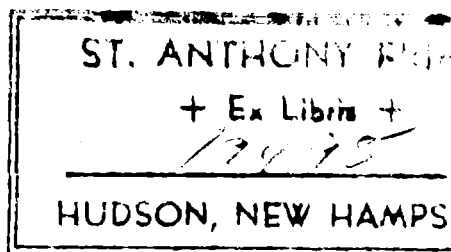


EGON ERWIN KISCH

# CHANGING ASIA

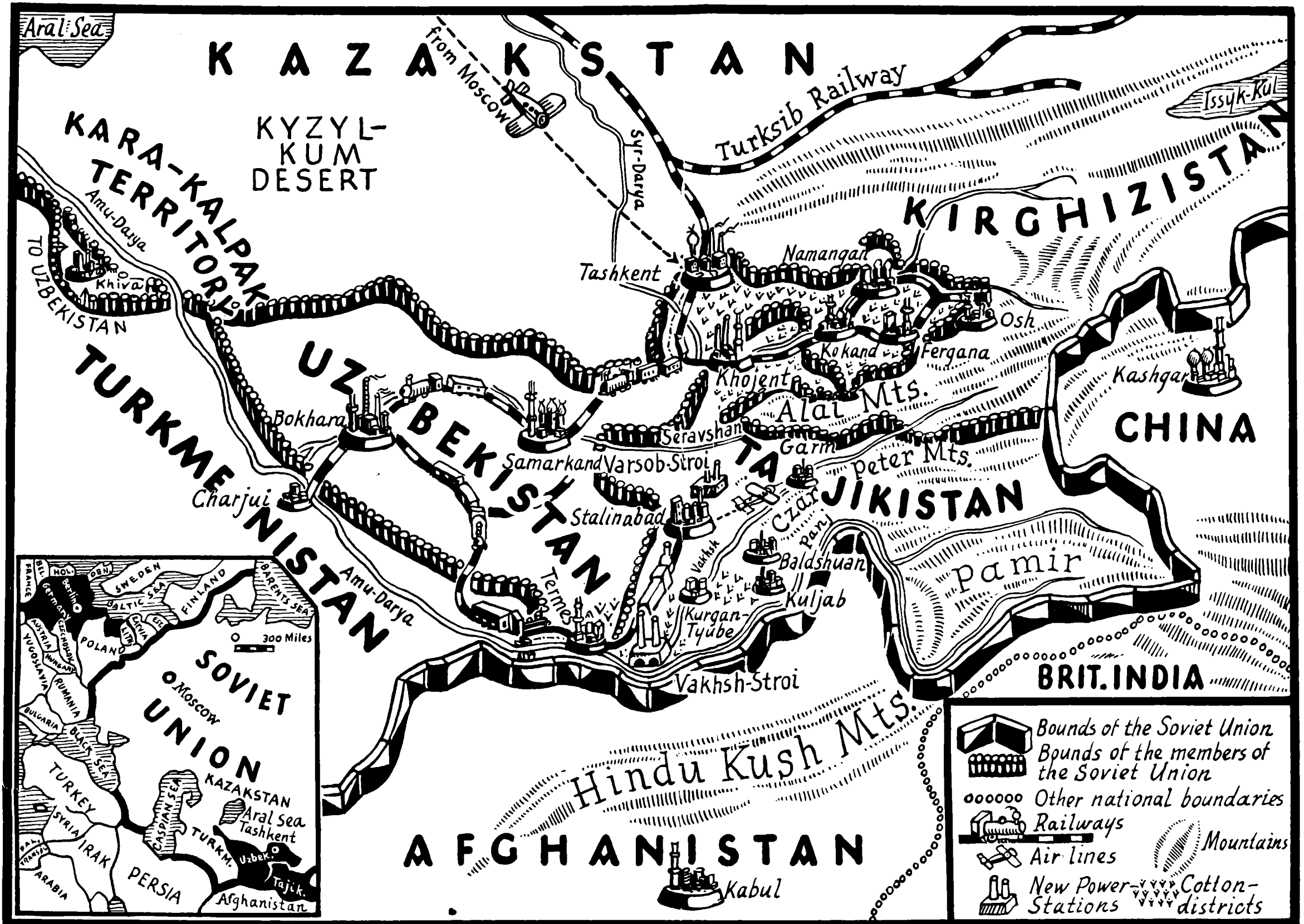


ENGLISH VERSION BY  
*RITA REIL*

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1935



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## CONTENTS



I · <i>Through the Wings of a Propeller</i>	3
II · <i>Two-Colour Print of Tashkent</i>	17
III · <i>By Rail to Samarkand</i>	30
IV · <i>Round About Tamerlane's Grave</i>	41
V · <i>Revolution in Bokhara</i>	52
VI · <i>Border Warfare and World Politics</i>	68
VII · <i>Stalinabad — A Capital in the Making</i>	84
VIII · <i>Following Silk Downstream</i>	103
IX · <i>Robbers Vanquished</i>	125
X · <i>From Tigers to Cotton Collectives</i>	147
XI · <i>A District on the Pamir</i>	167
XII · <i>A Visit to the City of Garm</i>	179
XIII · <i>Khassyad Mirkulan</i>	187
XIV · <i>What are the Changes in Khojent?</i>	201
XV · <i>Irrigation Difficulties</i>	215
XVI · <i>In the Afghan Jungle</i>	226
XVII · <i>Cotton Statistics</i>	240
XVIII · <i>Past, Present, and Future</i>	259





## ILLUSTRATIONS



<i>Peasants witnessing the “ sorcery ” of a doctor in a malarial clinic on the Dekhi-Arba collective farm, Tajikistan</i>	24
<i>A doctor examining a child at a medical consultation for children in Tajikistan</i>	24
<i>The ancient Madrasah on the Registan, Samarkand</i>	46
<i>The cotton-growing collective farm, formerly the Emir’s palace, in Old Bokhara</i>	62
<i>Portico of the mosque of the former Emir of Bokhara, now the Uzbek State Museum, in Old Bokhara</i>	62
<i>The former small village of Dushambe, which has developed into Stalinabad, the capital of Tajikistan</i>	86
<i>A street in Stalinabad</i>	86
<i>An Uzbek woman sorting cocoons on a collective farm in Uzbekistan</i>	110
<i>Unwinding cocoons in a silk-factory in Samarkand</i>	110

## ILLUSTRATIONS

<i>The funeral procession of the president of a collective farm in Tajikistan</i>	154
<i>A comradely production court at the backward Kolchos "10th October," in Tashkent</i>	154
<i>A class in anatomy in Bokhara</i>	176
<i>A class for the liquidation of illiteracy in Tashkent</i>	176
<i>A class in physical culture on the square facing the Women's Pedagogical Institute in Bokhara</i>	198
<i>An Uzbek woman bringing a complaint to the Woman's Section of the Communist Party in Tashkent</i>	198
<i>A champion swimmer blowing up a goatskin with which to ferry himself across the river</i>	230
<i>Crossing a river on a goatskin</i>	230
<i>Testing out an American cotton-picker</i>	244
<i>A shock-brigade worker at a cotton-picking machine in Uzbekistan</i>	244

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# CHANGING ASIA

Y







## THROUGH THE WINGS OF A PROPELLER



A string of rockets whir up toward the dark red moon and scatter hissing across the sky in every direction. They are airplanes which took off promptly at 4.20 a.m., the regular hour of departure, gliding forward in parallel formation, making a long, shallow dive into the moon, and now dispersing.

Having begun as a squadron, we are now independent aircraft bound toward the north of Asia or the south of Europe, each on his own errand. But the dark red moon lights us all dimly on our way through the ether. We are now solitary pilgrims; we are no longer a mere group of tourists, gathered up from our various dwelling-places by the airplane company's auto, who waited together in the Khodynka field, while the ruddy moon made visible silhouettes of the new buildings and hangars, masts and wings.

An engineer who fourteen years ago could not read or write, and five years ago was a humble employee on a work-bench, is waiting for the plane which is to carry him to the great asbestos plant in the Ural. Another

workman-engineer has to reach Dnyeprostroy today. Two German chemists, straight from Berlin, lend us the morning papers; tomorrow they will be in Kuznetsk, Siberia. Three colleagues from the *Pravda* are flying to Rostov, Tiflis, and Kharkov with matrices; from today on, their paper will be printed there from the same matrices used in Moscow for the morning edition; true, the Tiflis edition will not appear until the following day. An engineer from the Ford plant in Detroit, dismissed for having published an article criticizing the management (the Pinkerton Agency furnished the report that he had given *me* the material for the obnoxious "story"), now turns out Ford cars in Nizhni-Novgorod. With a "*Glück ab*" — the flyers' equivalent for "*Bon voyage*" — we flew off on our various ways, and now we are to each other no more than specks in the sky.

While the plane is making its first spirals, a moonlit Moscow dips and rises and dips again, as if to salute us in the old-Russian manner. From every corner of the city cloisters project, like bastions, refuges alike against heathens and rebels; in corners of the crenellated wall of the Kremlin nestle Christian fortresses, the golden sword gleaming from their steeples, then a new entrenchment, then the moat-like Moskva River. But both natural and artificial lines of defence have been erased. Already cupolas of the Church of the Redeemer have been torn down, that cathedral which commemorates the Czar's deliverance from Napoleon; this counterpart of the Dom in the Berlin Lustgarten will soon be razed.

## THROUGH THE WINGS OF A PROPELLER

The workers' suburbs have become exactly the opposite of what that designation elsewhere implies: we look down upon the gigantic new buildings, the parks, the factories, the broad avenues. There is a zone where city and village merge. Wooden houses extend in austere parallel lines until gaps begin to appear — here a house in a grove, there a house on a meadow, now a cluster of cottages, then country homes. The moon has paled before the sun and it is day. Buses are driving into the city as we wing our way countrywards over little truck gardens, suburban stations, fields.

Our shadow glides over the furrows of steam ploughs. Our shadow is an auto racing after us, a speed-boat skimming across rivers. It is an elevator which climbs up the walls of the cotton-mills at Ramenskoye, scurries across the roof and down the other side. It is a tank that can make its way over tractor sheds. Indeed, our shadow is every conceivable kind of vehicle *except* an airplane. For never once has it leapt free into the air, always it remains on the ground.

Our shadow cuts through the radio masts at Lyubertsy and the chimneys of the motor-factories at Kolomna, it slides under the high-tension wires that stretch away toward Shatura. The train that runs along parallel to us seems for a moment to stumble over it.

Everywhere there are signs of construction: bridges, railroad stations, apartment buildings, silos, smokestacks; we are flying over the Five Year Plan.

Our direction lies south-east, we are flying in a side-wind. Thirty-five miles beyond Ryazan we come down

for gasoline on a meadow covered with goose-dirt. Children are playing at ring around the rosy; an old man is seated beside a brook, his back to us. The children do not stop playing, the old man does not even turn around, the geese waddle placidly away. Airplanes land here so often.

The propeller turns again, the motor hums, cigarettes are extinguished, we climb aboard. Beneath us stretches the Soviet domain Bashmakovo, a whole country in itself.

At Pensa we land for the night. We should enjoy stretching our legs in a little promenade before going to bed in the airways hotel, but we are denied a horizontal view of the town. Between the airport and the town lies an immense station yard; freight cars are being shunted about, oil cars, refrigerator cars, McCormick harvesting machines — a babel of shouts and whistles. And so to bed, up again, once more aloft, and the flight goes on.

We look down on a village which two hundred years ago was the famous haunt of bandits, Truyevo, a rendezvous for five thousand criminals who had fled here from every corner of the globe. Not particularly romantic to look at; just another village, like hundreds of others that glide behind us. From morning till night nothing but fields and granaries — battalions of caterpillar-like trammers patiently, unceasingly furrowing their way through the soil of Russia.

The Volga blinds us, reflecting the rays of the sun like a mirror. The smoke from the river steamers remains

## THROUGH THE WINGS OF A PROPELLER

motionless in the June air, like lead-pencil marks on the sky. The river bank can scarcely be called land; it is merely an extension of the river in the form of lakes and dikes. Tree-tops spread over land and water — trees whose roots, born in the water, live in water and never see land.

A short halt at Samara, then we are lifted up over the wheat-lands. Foreign journalists who flew to Tokio in the Graf Zeppelin saw, from a height of twenty-six hundred feet, “hungry Russian peasants dragging themselves unwillingly over their barren fields.” We cannot see that the men beneath us are hungry, nor even that they are unwilling. Nor can we assert that the fields are barren.

What we can assert is this: the flat land has become transformed. One no longer sees the familiar mosaic of many-coloured fields; here one single colour dominates for miles and miles. The acres have become *one* acre, the peasants have become *one* peasant. We see extensive farm buildings, stables with galvanized roofs, sheds for tractors and other machines, parking places, generating plants, all the signs of collective farming and Soviet-managed enterprise, including rows of new one-family houses, each with its own little garden.

No boundaries or fences break the avenues of this endless sea of wheat. This field does not belong to you, and that one to someone else. We are flying over the Five Year Plan.

For miles the furrows wind their way, going on in end-

less curves. These great parabolas made by the tractor, which ploughs for all, accompany us until the moon from Moscow once more rises.

Orenburg: a city measured off with a ruler, all in right angles, with a regiment of houses drawn up in company formation. On the bank of the Ural a stone tower, a cathedral with a gigantic pearl for dome, and a palace, doubtless formerly the seat of the Governor-General, who was more a general than a governor. The administration was carried on by weapons of war. Orenburg was the outpost of Europe, and so its Governor-General was in fact commander of an army prepared against Asia.

Hereabouts there is supposed to be a boundary stone with two arrows: Europe — Asia. We cannot see it, but just outside the city we can see a little fortress with garrets, bastions, and stone walls. The mechanic who sits beside the pilot turns to hand us a slip of paper on which is written “Menovoi Dvor.” So that was the clearing-house: the real boundary stone between Europe and Asia. Here came the caravans from the East, bringing silks and rugs, rice and wool, sheep and goats. Inside of the little fortress they bartered them away to Russian merchants who offered in exchange the products of Europe: money and vodka. Then the Asiatics returned through the door facing east, and the Russians returned through the door facing west.

We cannot see the proverbial abyss separating the East from the West. We can no longer see the clearing-house (which has long since ceased to be one) — we see the

## THROUGH THE WINGS OF A PROPELLER

railroad stretching away to the eastern horizon, we see new stations and grain elevators, and the dark red moon of Moscow coming up over an infinity of public wheatlands.

Over nine hundred miles lie behind us and we are still flying over the Five Year Plan. Europe — Asia? We observe no difference between them. Last winter we were obliged to spend a day in the Ukrainian frontier village Shepetovka, and immediately afterwards a few hours in the Polish frontier village Zdolbunovo, — and there we did notice a distinction. On one side working-men's schools, night courses, new buildings; on the other side priests holding out their hands to be kissed, merchants eager to buy caviar and roubles from the travellers, a tout soliciting customers for a brothel, customs officials and police with silver buckles, polished boots and open hands. But even the far-sighted journalists of the Graf Zeppelin would find it hard to see anything of that sort down below us now.

To be sure, it is dark by this time, and at Aktyubinsk we circle down over the heads of grazing camels, in search of a resting-place for the night. A motionless, immovable metal contraption: our airplane on the steppe. The two rubber-tired wheels which to right and left of us kept revolving for hours as we flew into the wind, although their only purpose is to revolve on the ground, are now on the ground where they belong, but stationary. The indicator is no longer a nervous, breathing organism, but merely a wooden board. The steering levers are no longer limbs, but merely cudgels. The propeller, which



had been a disk of wind, now looks like a stick in the mouth of a retriever. Plane "L 31," in the daytime, for hundreds of miles, a veined, translucent, blithe, and humming dragon-fly — what is it now? A tin box that someone has tipped over.

But: in our ears the propeller is still whirring, in our joints the wheels are revolving, before our eyes dance the needles of the altitude-finder, the oil-pressure gauge, the compasses, the fuel-indicator; in our brain the body and wings of the dragon-fly are still rushing through space — the airplane is at rest, but its dynamic force has been communicated to its passengers.

They are flying, though ostensibly they are but walking, therefore moving their legs in a somewhat exaggerated fashion. A promenade in the Asiatic steppe. Leonid Dmitrievich, an entomologist, flying to exterminate plant vermin in Central Asia, picks up a grey and yellow dotted grasshopper and declares it to be a *Phrinacephalus caudivolvulus*, and informs us that Professor Ramé, in Berlin, has none in his collection. Do we wish to take the animal with us? No, we do not. *Phrin. caud.* leaps into the air: he does not have to go to Berlin!

Now we are in Kazakstan, the Autonomous Kazak Socialist Soviet Republic. The name "Kazak" has nothing to do with "Cossack," but is the historic appellation for the Kirghiz. The mechanic at the airdrome is a dark Kazak; the manager, a lighter one. His wife brings us supper, *byelishiy*; that is: warm meat balls with baked rice and tea. The young Kirghiz who is manager of the airfield is proud in the possession of a bathroom with a

**THROUGH THE WINGS OF A PROPELLER**  
shower. We are only too glad to humour him. After our bath we go to bed. The rooms are spick and span, the linen spotless.

At two a.m. we resume our flight, for we are still eight hundred and seventy miles from Tashkent. The little hero in Neverov's novel walks almost all the way to the "City of Plentiful Bread." A train thunders along, almost as rapidly as we do, for the wind is impeding our flight. But the caravans of swaying camels cannot keep up with us.

In Chelkar the engine is given a drink, and the passengers a smoke. The rest lasts for more than an hour. We stroll across to the Aul. The inhabitants live in loam huts. The youthful Komsomol, who speaks Russian, tells us that he is now ready to go away: he wants to move on to the new coal-fields in Karaganda, which reaches out to the Chinese border. His name is Achmed Muntaj, because his father's name was Muntaj, and the family name of his son will be his own given name: Achmed.

The airport boasts a new building, equipped with radio, telephone, telegraph, and waiting-rooms. On the walls: meteorological maps. We put our watches forward an hour, as we did in Pensa; travelling eastward that must be done after every fifteenth degree of longitude, after every fifteen times one hundred and eleven kilometres.

We are flying into the sun, at a low altitude where there is a tail wind; higher up, the air-streams are less favourable. There would be no difficulty in an emergency in finding a landing-place. Everything is flat. Hardly

more than two hundred yards beneath us is an ethnographic museum. Circular huts dot the landscape. Here is one yurt, there another, farther off a third. Sparse grass surrounds them; an entire meadow seems a mere pen, where a few sheep or goats are grazing. When the little excrescence of grass is used up, the house will be folded up and the inhabitants will wander on. This has been going on for a hundred years. A thousand. The only trace left by former sojourners are the round holes where hay was hidden so the animals would not get at it. Here and there the vague sketch of a former village remains in the earth of the steppe.

Nearer the railroad, close to the huts of the semi-nomads, there are irregular white spots, as if linen were spread out to dry. We decide that these are beds under water — salt-pits or rice-fields? Often these patches are mottled with the dull green of olive clumps. Here and there windmills are perched on high pedestals.

Will the steppe never end? Suddenly a new colour brightens the west. Lake Aral, with a harbour nestling in the bay, and fishing-boats, diminutive steamers, a yacht, a tiny lighthouse. The name of the place is Maly Sary-Tshagan. Our shadow skims over the waves. To right, the shore; to left the land, a wilderness stretching away from the strand. A wilderness on either hand — water and snow, divided by sand.

The snow remains a glittering mass, but the lake fades into the background. Only in spots where it had once flooded the land there are opalescent puddles that look like bits of red chalcedony. Semi-nomadic tribes dwell in

**THROUGH THE WINGS OF A PROPELLER**  
the vicinity, using this water to cultivate their little fields.

The next night we stop at Kyzyl-Orda, where two new passengers await us, bound for the newly discovered lead-mines in Chimkent. The insect-hunter disembarks with us and accompanies us on our excursion into the town. Kara-Agach, the black village, forms the outskirts, with its loam huts, naked children, bearded patriarchs. Despite the late hour, a gigantic brick-factory is working full blast. A picked body of workers with forked beards and almond eyes are rivalling one another as to who can produce the greatest quantity of bricks.

Camels, left to their own devices, stretch their necks high into the branches of the poplar trees that line a broad avenue, and indulge their appetites on the foliage. Teams come our way: Kalmuk cows with horns that turn inward.

The course pursued by a sailor in a strange port is always different, yet always the same. He may know its name without being sure whether it's a fishing village or a metropolis. This time we found ourselves in a town with villas and broad streets and fine new buildings. On plates of black glass, in gilt lettering, were the names of physicians and business firms. Men in white suits and girls in summer dresses sauntered through the park in the shade of poplars and eucalyptus. Before the pavilion of the café a fountain was bubbling; waitresses served the guests, and the proprietress sat behind a cash-register. Flowers that had the look of aquarelles were being offered for sale.

Kyzyl-Orda reminds us of Savannah, which we visited

in 1930. And yet there is a difference. In Savannah the Indians have been exterminated. Here the original inhabitants enjoy their country in the midst of the Europeans.

Formerly the place was called Ak-Mechet, which signifies: White Mosque. The name of its general was Perovski. It was he who conquered this city for the Czar and gave it his own name: Perovsk. In 1925, when the city became the capital of Kazakstan, the name was changed to Kyzyl-Orda, "Red Capital"; and now Alma Ata is the capital of this vast Republic, which comprises over 1,158,000 square miles: six times the size of Germany.

Kazaks tramp ahead of their camels, on which women are mounted: women with long braids and sleeveless jackets of violet or burgundy velvet. But there are other women who wear the jackets of the Young-Communists and whose hair is bobbed; such women take courses in natural sciences in the school of the local committee.

Beyond the ditches of the street named for Friedrich Engels stand the kiosks of cobblers and news-vendors. The newspaper *Syr boi* is printed in Latin letters, but a few odd symbols have got mixed in: an "e" turned around, a "q" upside down, and many letters rejoicing in an arbitrary cedilla. We gather that "kamsomol" means "Komsomol," "iyen" June, and "tiyin" a kopek.

The street corners boast electric clocks. Those in Baku, from which, in 1927, we learned the hour, were made in Berlin, as the letters A. E. G. (Allgemeine Elektrizitäts

THROUGH THE WINGS OF A PROPELLER Gesellschaft) proclaimed. Now everywhere one runs across clocks made at the second Moscow factory, bearing the mark: "Ernst Thälmann." The fact that the street is being sprinkled by means of a thick hose is a source of hilarity for Kyzyl-Orda. The children take shower-baths. Grown-ups shake their heads: what strange ideas these Europeans do hit upon! The "Gosisdat" (the State publishing house) offers books for sale in the Kazak language. Here, as everywhere, you find, under its black-red-and-gold signboard, world literature in translations: books on Marx, Lenin, motors, cotton, rice, and the destruction of locusts, also directions for the work of instruction among the nomads. Posters announce performances by visiting artists — singers and players from Moscow, all apparently former members of the companies of the State Theatre, the Art Theatre, or the Philharmonic Orchestra.

Perched on their driving seats are the "isvoschiks," whose round fur caps are like miniature replicas of the yourts. We ask one of these how much he would charge to drive us to the airport. He examines us appraisingly, then says: fifteen roubles. We offer five. He replies with a derisive laugh: "You mean, for a glass of tea?" We offer six roubles. A passing Russian enlightens us: "If a Kazak has once named the price of fifteen roubles, he will not drive even for fourteen and a half." The walk back to the port does us good after so much flying. And we sleep all the better for it.

Through the morning sky we resume our flight along the valley of the Syr-Darya. To the right the steppe has

given place to the desert of Kyzyl-Kum. Everything southward from Lake Aral is the land of the Kara-Kalpaks, the Black-Caps. Their capital is in the delta of the Amu-Darya River. But when they were given autonomy, they also received the land that belonged with it, the land over which their tribes have been roaming since time out of mind: black caps on the red prairies.

Over this vast wasteland we fly, until suddenly a miracle takes place. The desert turns green, an oasis stands forth: a gigantic park in the centre of which we descry a city proud and handsome. It is there, saluting us courteously as we descend our spiral staircase: Tashkent.



## TWO-COLOUR PRINT OF TASHKENT



GREY: The city of Tashkent was divided by the royal Russian colonists (called "Lords of Tashkent" by the classicist Saltykov-Shchedrin in his novel bearing that title) into an European settlement and the Old City. In the former dwelt the governor, often a retired general, such as Kuropatkin, who had demonstrated his lack of ability in the Japanese war, or Samsonov, who in 1915 lost his soldiers in the Masurian swamps — to mention only two of those who, smarting under military humiliation, relieved their feelings rather harshly at the expense of the Uzbeks. At His Excellency's side, hand in glove with him, functioned the representatives of the Holy Synod, the banks, the civil service, and the cotton mills. But the Old City, the ghetto of the Uzbeks, had to be at a distance of a mile and a quarter, and it was pitifully neglected.

RED: The yawning gap between them was utilized for almost all the new buildings needed for the rapidly growing capital, and these are considered as an exten-



sion of the Old City: factories, workmen's houses, co-operative stores, schools, clubs.

GREY: There are, however, interminable streets in the Old City which might belong to Negro villages of the northern Sahara, or the filthy outskirts of Tunis. One sees the same walls, devoid of windows, made of loam mixed with straw, chaff, and the urine of camels, patted into shape by human hands, baked by the heat of the sun, and gnawed by the tooth of time. The second storey is a mere open space, a sort of veranda, and on the ground floor are niches occupied by smiths, barbers, saddlers, bakers. The mosques monopolized everything in the way of architecture; for secular uses not a single ornament was left, not even a tile.

RED: Only recently has the monotony of the wall been relieved by the appearance of new buildings. Among others: a car-barn; a Woman's Club equipped with a crèche and facilities for the care and instruction of mothers; a huge printing-press; a technical school; a branch of the Moscow Labour Institute; a gynecological clinic; a medical school for the training of nurses, midwives, chemists, and first-aid students. The Anta-Ur Mosque has been turned into a talking-picture studio for the Red Star company — reversing the Hollywood practice of turning studios into mosques. In the garden of the former mosque young Uzbeks are playing tennis, and near the central fountain there is now a tea-house. The National Theatre bears the name of the Uzbek writer and composer Chakimsade Hamsa, who . . .

## TWO-COLOUR PRINT OF TASHKENT

GREY: . . . because of his liberal poems, was killed in 1926 by religious fanatics, in the valley of Fergana.

RED: At the premiere of the play *The First Whistle*, by Mumtas, a young man sat down beside us and translated the events of the drama into Russian for our benefit, as we were the only European in the audience. His manner was critical, which served to increase our surprise when we discovered, in the course of the conversation, that he was himself the author. At the end of the performance he was not called to take a bow, though everyone but himself seemed to like the play. Watching his first production, making his entrance into the history of the Uzbek drama, he was less excited than his audience. The play deals with cotton-growers, and revolves about . . .

GREY: . . . the machinations of kulaks and their parasites who have been taken into the Communist Party under false pretences. (For once, in contradistinction to other plays on a similar theme in the Soviet repertoire, there is no priest to act as ally of the kulaks.) The reactionaries hire bandits to murder the leaders of the workmen's shock-troops and to blow up the cotton-factory.

RED: But the bolt of death is deflected by the G. P. U! The bombs are already smouldering, but the G. P. U. saves the day, and for minutes on end the audience claps and cheers — an audience that is by no means made up entirely of Communists.

GREY (outside the frame of the two-colour print): The visitor from the West finds himself asking: why is

it that no European dramatist would dare show the political police of his country (such as Department I A in Germany, the Siguranza in Rumania, the Defensive in Poland), who in the last analysis all do embody the principles of their governments, playing a sympathetic role on any stage? The visitor from the West finds himself asking why all these official bodies, whose business it is energetically to support the State, should be secret bodies?

RED: . . . whereas the G. P. U. is lustily cheered at public festivals; a picture of its founder, Dzerzhinsky, decorates the wall of almost every house; and schools, factories, and clubs are named for him.

GREY: In the audience of the Hamsa Theatre are many women wearing the *chadshvan*, a veil made of horses' hair.

RED: These women see other women on the stage, women of their own people, speaking their own language, singing their own songs, without this protective shield before their face. And the veiled women applaud their unveiled sisters.

GREY: To appreciate the significance of this, it must be borne in mind that there are districts in Uzbekistan where a woman who showed herself without the *chadshvan* would be stoned to death. Sitting beside one of the veiled ladies in the audience is her daughter.

GREY-RED TRANSITION: Like her mother she is shrouded from head to ankles in the national costume, the *parandsha*, but she is not veiled.

RED: And the girl beside her, friend or sister, has

TWO-COLOUR PRINT OF TASHKENT

bobbed hair and wears European clothes. Many young Uzbek and Tajik women already wear the olive-green uniform of the Komsomols.

GREY: On the main street of the Old City a group of women all wearing the horsehair shield watch . . .

RED: . . . an auto being cranked by another woman. Goggles and the *chadshvan* are both a protection against the terrible dust of Tashkent, but spectacles can be removed when no longer needed.

GREY: The *chadshvan* is never removed, and all your lifetime is spent behind bars through which the world looks black to you, and you look black to the world, and only your lord and master may even open the door to your portable prison-cell.

RED: Like some modern bridge-head rising out of the clay squalor of the ancient city stands the Woman's Club of Tashkent. A few hours spent in the consulting-rooms of this imposing edifice will give you a taste of the Orient in all its horror.

GREY: A girl walks in and lifts her veil.

“How old are you?”

“Fourteen.”

“What do you want?”

“I — nine weeks ago — I — I was married. And I — I should like to leave my husband.”

“Who arranged your marriage?”

“My mother. She is very poor. She got a large *kalim* (price) for me.”

“How much did he pay?”

“Sixteen sheep.”

“ How old is he? ”

“ I don't know. His grandsons are older than me. ”

“ So he has another wife besides you? ”

“ No. He has had three wives. But they are all dead. ”

“ What is his profession? ”

“ He is a pedlar. He is a *lischenez* ” (one who has forfeited his civil rights).

“ Why do you wish to leave him? ”

“ I went to school one year and I should like to learn some more. At least how to read. He won't let me. I had a book, but he burned it and beat me. I once said I wanted to remove my veil. He threatened to kill me if I ever mentioned the subject again. He won't let me go out. But I simply cannot sit on the ground all day long playing with my necklace. So today I ran away. ”

RED: “ All right. You may stay here for the present. ”

“ But I — I am going to have a baby. ”

“ The doctor will examine you. Perhaps he can help you. ”

“ Will my mother have to give back the sheep? ”

“ No. We will send a report of your case to the proper department. ”

GREY: Two women enter, each carrying a child, the smaller with bandaged hands and legs. They have just been treated at the Ambulatorium on a lower floor of the building. The two women remain veiled. They speak confusedly and simultaneously. One is sent out of the room. The other says:

“ We are the wives of the same man. He is seventy-five years old, a *lischenez*. I am the younger and he pre-

## TWO-COLOUR PRINT OF TASHKENT

fers me and my child. Out of jealousy she shoved my baby into the oven. I complained to our husband and he beat her so terribly I had to nurse her eight days . . .

RED: . . . then we both decided to leave him. But we do not know how we should live. Can you give us advice? ”

“ Do you wish to remain here now? ”

“ No. Today we will return home.”

“ Very well. We will lay information against him. In any case he will have to provide for the children.”

“ But then he will know we have denounced him! ”

“ No. You need only tell the truth when you are examined in court.”

GREY: In the pious and conservative Old City of Tashkent prostitution used to flourish. Even now some women feel it more belittling to work than to angle for men from behind the bars of their concealing cage. Usually these are the older wives from some harem where the husband fails to provide for them and their children. And so they walk the streets between the National Theatre and the Circus, while the husband takes his ease in some neighbouring tea-house.

RED: There is a night clinic, three prophylactic stations, three Ambulatoriums at work in the neighbourhood of the bazaar. The brothels are done away with and in their stead are employment agencies, where the prostitutes must remain until they have learned to read, write, and master some trade.

GREY: In the former Domain of Turkestan all Mohammedan women, without exception, were illiterate.

RED: It is still a matter of some difficulty to enforce universal school attendance among the girls. Only women are allowed to teach them, and their classes may not be held in the same building as the boys'. It is true that female students are beginning to go to high school — before the war there was no high school at all for Mohammedans in this district. The Woman's Club has organized day courses and evening courses in its campaign against illiteracy. Consisting entirely of Uzbek, Tajik, and Kirghiz women, the members of the club are divided into committees for sport, drama, music, and "home defence." Religion is honoured in the breach by an atheistic committee which calls itself the "Natural Science Group." Under these auspices biology and history are taught, with the least possible acknowledgment to Allah and His Prophet. A branch of the State Savings Bank is installed in the club-house, where veiled women deposit their own savings in their own name — a great step forward out of bondage. (In Germany and France no married woman may open a bank account without the express permission of her husband.)

GREY: In the waiting-room mothers are given lessons in the care of infants. Pictures and exhibits demonstrate the harmfulness of the methods they are used to. Hitherto the Uzbek baby spent the whole first year of its life bound fast in its *beshnik* — a cradle draped in white — being removed only for the purpose of having its swaddling-clothes changed. The mother bent over the cradle to nurse it. Its urine was allowed to run down between two tiny slanting mattresses into a little pot under the



Peasants witnessing the "sorcery" of a doctor in a malarial clinic on the Dekhi-Arba collective farm, Tajikistan.

A doctor examining a child at a medical consultation for children in Tajikistan.







cradle — an arrangement which resulted in catarrh of the bladder. Moreover, its head became flattened from lying so long in one position. Its circulation was hampered by the binding of its arms, and other ailments were fostered by the custom of using stones in the place of hygienic paper. (In all the toilets of the Old City a stone lies in readiness — one for all, and all for one — and this rite, together with the communistic use of the tea-cup and the *chilim*, or water-pipe, is the main cause of the wide prevalence of syphilis.)

RED: The contrast between these customs and modern hygiene is illustrated by models and prints which the mothers examine as they sit there deeply veiled, calmly baring their breasts to nurse their babies before any man who may happen into the room. They will even submit to gynecological examination, provided their face remains covered. Some of them follow the advice given them and leave their children in the nurseries to be cared for. We wander through the kindergarten, where the foundations are laid for a communistic education. It is lunch-time among the three-year-olds. The infant on duty, terribly proud of his social responsibility, toddles over to the table and lays a spoon before one of his contemporaries, toddles back to the cupboard and brings the next child a spoon. As a waiter he may leave something to be desired. The Board of Health of four-year-old Uzbeks is in session. With passionate earnestness it investigates the nails of its colleagues, to determine whether they are sufficiently short and clean. Out in the garden games are being played. What games do children play in the Soviet

Union? There is one universal favourite: Kolchos — an abbreviation for “collective enterprise”!

GREY: Many of the little ones suffer from worms, due to impurities in the water of the canals and reservoirs. They drink in the infusoria with their mothers' milk. (Children of this race are recognizable during the first months of their lives by a bluish rhomboid on their back, the Mongol birthmark.)

RED: With the exception of the physician, all the functionaries of the Woman's Club are Uzbeks, as are all the officials and managers of the town. A salutary emancipation of woman goes hand in hand with the freeing of the nation, while . . .

GREY: . . . the colonial powers justify their ownership of slaves on the ground that the natives — bearers of old cultures like the Indians and Arabs — are incapable of self-government. It is true that there is still much grey in the two-colour print of Tashkent, and often innovations are misunderstood.

RED OR GREY? Here are youths of the Old City cleaning their teeth and gargling the riled water of the canal where one of their neighbours, also in the grip of hygienic uplift, has been washing his feet.

GREY: In the courtyard of the Uzbek house stands a shallow pool surrounded by a carpet on which one often sees a chequer-board and always some empty tea-cups and bread-crumbs. The host leads us into the *tashkari*, the men's quarters. The rooms are devoid of furniture or stoves. Folded blankets are always at hand to serve as

## TWO-COLOUR PRINT OF TASHKENT

chairs, and rugs take the place of tables. At night these chairs and tables are converted into beds. We express a wish to see the women's quarters, and the host reluctantly grants our request. He walks to the opposite side of the courtyard whence a covered corridor leads toward the *ichkari*. Clapping his hands, he calls out: "*Ey, kotshing-lar!*" (Vanish from sight!). And he goes ahead to make sure that all is clear. The only ornament we find in the women's room is a chest inlaid with metals and mother-of-pearl. On a wall hangs the *susaneh*, an unfinished rug which must remain forever unfinished, because its completion means death to the weaver. Such is the will of Allah. And Allah further wills that women should pass their lives here with eyes for no man other than their rightful consort — "He shall be thy lord and master" — that, at least, Mahomet cribbed from the Bible. The sole purpose of a woman's life is to provide her master with love until he buys himself a younger wife, with whom, from that moment, she must share the same carpet, no matter how she may hate the newcomer nor how badly the latter may treat her. A girl even loses her name when she marries. From the day she bears her first son, she is called "Mother of Achmed" or "Mother of Ibrahim."

RED: The laws of the Soviet prohibit polygamy. A man who already has more than one wife may keep them, but he is not allowed to marry again.

GREY: But what Uzbek, high up in the hills, will obey the law if someone offers him twenty or even sixty sheep

for his daughter? And what government could possibly sift all the secrets of family life as long as the registry does not include all inhabitants? In almost every house where one inquires who lives in the *ichkari*, one receives the answer: "My mother, my wife, and my daughters."

RED: On the edge of the Old City a new city is coming into being. No longer a composition of grey within grey — here is a new note: green. A "red" extension on a green background. Workmen's houses whose roofs display antennæ, along with the sickle and hammer and the five-pointed star. Here are kitchen gardens too, and young orchards. This new district is named Gorodok Selenskovo. Although Uzbeks dwell here, we may enter the house even if the host is not at home. The children show us over it, turn on the electric light, the water-faucets, and the radio — what miracles! A young woman is seated on a rug, like her sisters in the neighbouring grey town; her little daughter is decked out with broad bracelets like her little cousins in the Old City; in a corner stands the *beshnik*, the draped cradle, like those in the grey town — but here the cradle is used only at night. And at our approach no one claps his hands and shouts: "*Ey, kotshinglar!*" The mistress of the house looks at us without embarrassment, though we are men and strangers. She is not veiled, and she answers our questions politely.

"The house costs fifteen roubles a month, and after sixteen years it will belong to us. My *urtak* (comrade) is twenty-eight years old and works for the street-car

**TWO-COLOUR PRINT OF TASHKENT**

company. Yes, I belong to the Woman's Club, but I cannot go there very often, because my daughter is still very small and takes up most of my time. I hardly have any time for study." And she indicates a primer, a copy-book, and a pencil lying at her side.



## BY RAIL TO SAMARKAND



When you have explored every corner of Tashkent, you are aware that it is not quite what it seemed from the sky as you were gliding down upon it. Then the city appeared to be a symmetrical unit — now you know it is a sprawling confusion of old and new, of grey and red, of East and West, of feudalism and socialism, of Mahomet and Marx. . . .

Sixty years ago when czarist generals conquered the country, the first gesture of the victors was to build a great Russian cathedral in Tashkent — just as they had done in Tiflis and Warsaw. On its summit, as a mocking symbol of their triumph, they placed a cross above the crescent. In 1918 the cross was easily turned into a hammer by breaking off a small piece which, when added to the crescent, gave the latter the semblance of a sickle. Today the Sergius Cathedral is a club-house.

Above the palace of the Grand Duke Nikolai Konstantinovich the red star points toward the five continents. Nikolai himself is buried in Tashkent, which, for that matter, had been his living tomb, as he was banished from his cousin's court for stealing a Romanov necklace

## BY RAIL TO SAMARKAND

from his mother. In Tashkent he modestly called himself Prince Iskander, after Alexander the Great. His legitimate wife, who was a daughter of the Governor of Orenburg, may figure in the *Almanac de Gotha* as "Her Imperial Highness," but here, now, walking through the streets of Bolshevik Tashkent, she is just the citizeness Iskander. The palace which she once shared with her husband, with marble stags, and with many living maidens is now a museum of natural history; its park is a kindergarten; and on the terraces children are at play.

The citadel, formerly the last bulwark against the belligerent East, has lost its strategic significance as the Occident has advanced toward the rocky edges of India. For Tashkent is the seat of the Central Asiatic branch of the Communist Party administering the Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, as well as the autonomous republics of Kirghizistan and Kazakstan and the autonomous territory of the Kara-Kalpaks; in other words, all the countries that were formerly under the rule of the Emir of Bokhara and the Khan of Khiva.

The railroad makes a wide detour before arriving at its destination. The airline from Tashkent to Stalinabad is only about 218 miles long, but as the planes cannot fly over mountains higher than four thousand yards, they are obliged to follow a curve of some 580 miles; and the railroad makes a still wider curve of a thousand miles.

For a while our route lies through the oasis of Tashkent, which, as a parting souvenir, fills our compartment



with the perfume of jasmine. Then we roll on, beyond the last of the green poplars, into the desert. Woven fences protect the tracks from the simoon, which periodically sweeps over the grey and destitute infinity of the steppe.

Yourts thrust themselves into sight. Near the stations they huddle closer together, sometimes separated by not more than thirty or forty paces. If they kept farther apart, the nomads would have no cause to fear that the neighbours' sheep would encroach on their sparse tufts of grass. But even these eternal solitaries are lured by the railway. Here they can exchange sheep's milk cheese for tea and cups. Nor are they proof against curiosity. With endless astonishment they stare at the people who alight, then at the mysterious machines. Progress has not yet caught up with the inhabitants of the steppe, so they are obliged to catch up with Progress. In a few years the spaces between the round huts will be streets; and the round huts will be huts no longer, but mansions of stone.

In inverse ratio to the slowness with which everything has happened in the past two thousand years must be the rapidity with which things happen in the next ten. When Alexander of Macedonia rode this way on his steed Bucephalus, this lean old man sat, as he sits today, watching his grey beast cropping the grass, watching the uncouth hordes of Genghis Khan run after their camels which go swaying out of sight with the utmost indifference. Only the railway, with the smoke it belches into the glittering air, is of later date. Men and merchandise rolling from Leningrad to the Pamir, from Amu-

## BY RAIL TO SAMARKAND

Darya to Moscow, from southern Asia to the Arctic. From Moscow to Tashkent in 1927 trains ran four times a week; now they leave twice a day. In 1930 the line was extended, traversing two new republics, and already this has proved insufficient. Additional tracks are planned, as well as branch lines, and an electric service to Stalina-bad and beyond.

The new railway stations are built in the form of mosques. They stand outside the city. No one uses the entrance to get to the platform; the exit is also ignored; instead, everyone walks round the edifice. And the tour is not without interest. Here men sit on their haunches selling fried chicken, eggs, and kvass. The contents of many a basket seems black until the huckster whisks his hand over it, whereupon a black cover rises into the air and breaks up into a thousand component parts: flies, revealing cherries, apples, peaches, and apricots with a metallic sheen. Only an European ridden with hygienic superstitions could disdain them. Fortunately we are not only in the Orient, but also in Russia, where every station provides a bubbling fountain of hot water, the *kip-jatok*, for the samovar, and this affords the superstitious European an opportunity to consume with pleasure and safety as much of the fly-blown fruit as he likes.

The house nearest the station is nearly always an inn. As a matter of course the windows stay open, for the heat and the dust outside are as nothing to the heat and dust within. All four walls are flanked with carpeted settees where beturbaned men and veiled women loll about amidst heaps of hand-sewn luggage and children in

enormous caps. The conversation, the food, the tea, the total disregard of privacy, are reminiscent of life in a Russian railway carriage, except that here, in a tea-room which also does service as a sleeping-chamber, everything is sublimely static.

It is a camping-ground, and the campers seem free of the faintest suspicion that time-tables exist, that tickets can be bought in advance, that trains are expected to connect with other trains. To Allah alone it is given to know when the snorting horse of iron will depart for Bokhara, and Destiny will decree on what particular day the place-card one has finally acquired will be valid. Trains arrive and trains depart; bells are rung and whistles are blown, with no appreciable effect on the nerves of the prospective traveller. Before Allah ten centuries are but a day; why not tarry another week or two?

Whenever our train gets into motion, an Uzbek lad of fifteen clammers upon the platform of our car. He looks too prosperous to be a "Besprisorni." His cap, balanced like an orange on the back of his head, has obviously never spent a night in a hot gutter. Moreover he is wearing real shoes and a whole suit of clothes. He tells us he attends a workman's school in Tashkent, but as the building is being done over, he decided to go home for a few days, without asking for leave and without quite knowing how he will get there. In return for this information he desires to know whether we come from America. No, we come from Germany. Really? Well, he is learning German in school and can prove it. That is a "Sstuhl," he says, pointing to the platform steps, which, in point of

fact, he *is* using as a chair. We gladly vouchsafe our admiration. To impress us even more he recites, slowly and distinctly, the following German verse:

“*Wenn dich die Westertzunge<sup>1</sup> sticht,  
So lass’ dir das zum Trochte<sup>2</sup> sagen:  
Die schlechtesten Frukten<sup>3</sup> sind es nicht  
An denen die Läsper<sup>4</sup> nagen.*”<sup>5</sup>

Surprised and gratified, we offer him a cigarette. He thanks us, but does not smoke. What a contrast to the stowaways who accompanied us in 1927 when we travelled across the Caucasus to the boundaries of Soviet Asia. Then they crowded the platform steps; they rode under the buffers or clung to the roof, and all of them begged for cigarettes and vodka. At that time we saw tens of thousands of dirty ragged Besprisornis in the city streets, in the villages, and in the juvenile courts. Sixty pages of our book *Czars, Priests, and Bolsheviks* had to be devoted to that army of youthful thieves, syphilitics, and drunkards, against whom a veritable war was being waged. Nothing is left of those hordes, though they are sometimes mentioned in anti-Soviet propaganda; the truth being that the Soviet Union must be credited with liquidating that sad inheritance of czarism.

We become acquainted with two more passengers. One is buyer for a leather trust; the other plans to organ-

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<sup>1</sup> Wespenzunge.

<sup>2</sup> Troste.

<sup>5</sup> Paraphrase:

<sup>3</sup> Früchten.

<sup>4</sup> Wespen.

If a wasp should sting your arm,  
Here’s a thought will cure it:  
The eager creature meant no harm,  
And *green* fruit wouldn’t lure it!

ize the production and sale of sheep's milk cheese on the plateau-land of the Pamir and the Alai Mountains.

“What you will see down there,” grumbles the buyer of skins, “is the result of ultra-reactionary opportunism. Since you *are* going down there, you ought to put the facts on record. No one believes what *we* say, but if a foreigner says it, it may have some effect.”

“Where shall we see such conditions?”

Everywhere — according to the buyer. “All that these Uzbeks and Tajiks know about Karl Marx is that streets are named for him; all they know about Lenin is his statue. And people like that are allowed to govern themselves! Letters have reached our trust, signed by the chairman and secretary of a Regional Soviet, that ended with this flourish: ‘May Allah bless the comrades Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, and may He give them strength to guide our revered Communist Party along the paths of glory, to which end we daily bow in prayer!’ In other letters . . .”

His travelling companion interrupts to say that this very naïveté proves the sincerity of the writers.

“Indeed? In many districts the clergy and the kulaks have taken the Soviet apparatus into their own hands. Some of them have even joined the Party and exercise their corrupt reign of terror in the name of the Soviet, extorting registration fees, levying taxes, and coolly pocketing the money. When auditors threaten to appear, they obtain a nominal divorce and put their property in the name of their wives and children to prevent its being divided up. They pretend to sell their land and cattle to

the poor farmers. Sometimes they drive their herds into the mountains or even sell them across the border in Afghanistan, when an inspection is due."

"Why do the small farmers submit to this?"

"For one thing, they can't read, and their exploiters easily persuade them that the Peoples' Commissariat has decreed thus and so. One farmer who threatened to become unruly the kulaks simply crossed out of their list of candidates. They declared him ineligible for re-election, because he had belonged to the local Soviet during the N. E. P. (New Economic Policy); that is, during a period when principles opposed to the present policy were in effect. They told him he was even lucky not to be prosecuted. The propaganda of the kulaks goes so far that students of the Communist University in Tashkent in 1928 protested against the parcelling-out of the big farms, on the ground that the landed proprietors of Central Asia were not so merciless as those in other regions and therefore did not deserve to be 'punished.'"

"Don't the authorities ever find out?"

"When it is noticed higher up that kulaks have fraudulently acquired office, they are of course dismissed. But here is what happened after one such case. The kulaks named eight of their own sheep and registered them at district Soviet headquarters as newly elected members. In the name of two of these quadrupeds they corresponded with the superior courts! Investigate and you will learn that representatives of the farmers have been murdered because they gave information of this sort to the newspapers. You will also learn that 'Konsum' col-

lectives and 'Kolchos' storehouses have been burned to the ground, and that women have been killed for discarding the veil."

The cheese expert contradicts the leather expert, without, however, denying the accuracy of certain allegations. But all these cases, he maintains, are exceptions. Every new system has difficulties to contend with; conditions are steadily improving; collectivization is making rapid progress; the people are learning to read and write; Marx and Lenin are being translated; in every hamlet newspapers are read; and in many districts there are no veiled women to be seen.

Our radical friend is not so easily satisfied. Much time, he feels, is being lost. Before giving the former colonies their freedom, they should have been dealt with all the more firmly because of their very subjection. All the mosques and all the Koran schools should have been closed. All the beys, all the mullahs, all the old functionaries should have been arrested and deported. The wearing of the veil should have been prohibited and every infringement punished without mercy. The soil should have been parcelled out immediately and the planting of cotton made obligatory. Every case of bribery should have been punished with death, and the children, girls and boys alike, should have been driven to school by the police. Ten years of such a régime, and the country would have been so modernized that one could have said to its native sons: "There you are! Now carry on for yourselves."

The cheese expert suggests that in the meantime they

would all have migrated to Afghanistan, or China, or India.

“Let them! Let them! They’d have all come back when they learned that everything was flourishing, better than ever before. As a matter of fact, tens of thousands of Tajiks did emigrate to Afghanistan, but they’ve all come back.”

“Aha! They’ve come back, even though such brutal methods have *not* been used in the transition period. Whereas, if your suggestions had been followed, they would all have turned into bandits.”

“Weren’t there thousands of bandits a few years ago, in any case?”

“Well, and now there are practically none left.”

“There are bandits still. First and foremost, Ibrahim Beg himself. See that mountain chain over there to the left? How can you fight a gang with that for a lair?”

We look out the window of our compartment toward the peaks of Turkestan to ascertain the chances of fighting a gang with “that” for a lair. The range is far away. Some of the mountains are jagged, others are domed; some are grey, others are crowned with eternal snow. It cannot be an easy task to scale them, much less pursue an enemy up the steep slopes.

Our gaze turns from one of inquiry to one of yearning. It must be nice and cool up there, whereas down here sooty, sandy sweat streams over our heated brow.

Just beyond the station at Dshizak a gigantic rock looms up, blocking the valley. We expect a tunnel, but the train plunges into the wall of stone and out again. No



engineers and no dynamite were needed to open up this path. As the inscription, carved into the stone in Arabic, proclaims, this rock, Dshumalitin, clove itself reverently of its own accord what time Tamerlane set out with his hosts against Europe.

After twelve hours, another oasis: that of the river Seravshan. The name of the city we are approaching is known to us from our childhood days: it is a word that clinks and tinkles, its vowels and consonants alternating like black and white pearls on a chain.

But, truth to tell, as we gather up our things, we are not under the spell of the fairy-tale; for we can't get out of our head the German poem of the Uzbek boy.

On alighting from the train we see a public square in which a wooden rostrum is conspicuous. A stone pyramid stands in a bed of flowers. It is surmounted by a bust of Lenin.

We take our place in the queue waiting for the bus, and with that charmingly mispronounced wasp still buzzing through our brain, we jog into Samarkand, city of the magic name.



## ROUND ABOUT TAMERLANE'S GRAVE



“ To hell with all of you! ”

“ Whom do you mean by all of us? ”

“ You Europeans, who come to visit us.”

“ And why to hell with us? ”

“ Why? You come to Samarkand, you Europeans — workmen, economists, Marxists, scholars, writers — and not one of you cares to look at our technical plants, our experimental institutes, our factories, our housing schemes, our water-works in Revat-Khodsha, our clubs, our Farmers' Home, our hospitals and maternity wards. All you come here for is to see something romantic.”

“ Comrade Mustapha . . . ”

“ Oh, I know what you're going to say: new buildings and schools can be seen anywhere. But let me tell you, to convert a city full of blue majolica and gilt mottoes from the Koran into a city full of industry and hygiene, without destroying the relics — that is an achievement you'll go a long way to see. Here before your eyes you have the story of the Thousand and Second Night — no

make-believe Night either, but the real thing.”

“Why do you refer to the Nights, Comrade Mustapha?”

“I don’t know — it just slipped out — because it sounds well — your silly romanticism is contagious. This is a land of tombs, political and religious. In Samarkand you can study ancient Asia and the Mohammedan Middle Ages, from Alexander the Great to the Arab state, Maveranar; just as, over there in Bokhara, you can trace the evolution of modern Asia, from the despotism of the emirs to the triumphs of modern enlightenment, for Bokhara was the point of departure of the middle Asiatic revolution.”

“Very well, Comrade Mustapha, let’s have a glimpse of ancient Asia and the Mohammedan Middle Ages.”

“Go to the devil, all of you. What you really want . . .”

“I thought you had abolished the devil, Comrade Mustapha!”

“There are many things not yet abolished in Samarkand that are abolished elsewhere. Come, you European, whom the abolished devil ought to abolish! I’ll show it to you.”

We ascend the stairs of Shachi-Sinda, a flight of steps whose balustrade is a series of palaces, which stand one above the other, lined with marble, adorned with mosaics, tiled with majolica, festooned with garlands, supported by columns, crowned by capitals. The base is a square, but the walls ascend into an open octagon, which in turn

## ROUND ABOUT TAMERLANE'S GRAVE

unfolds into a vault of sixteen sides, whose ceiling is a concave of brilliant blue studded with gold, like stars in a miniature firmament.

Honeycombs, many-coloured honeycombs, a medley of red and blue and gold, cut off the corners, so that we seem to be standing in a circle. These niches, which look like honeycomb or fancy bonbons, would never in the world make us think of stalactites; yet they are known as stalactite arches.

Each of these palaces has only one inhabitant, and this inhabitant is dead. Here lies Tuglutekim, one of the wives of the Emir Hussein; there lies Shirin-Beka-Aka, a sister of Tamerlane; over there reposes one of his wives, Turkan-Aka; here lies a saint; to right and left sundry prophets.

At the summit we come to the highest prophet of all: Kussam ben Abbas, a cousin of Mahomet. To be exact, he does not lie buried here at all, his tomb being the only apocryphal grave of the Necropolis. Kussam, who sword in hand spread the faith of Islam through Central Asia, was never in Samarkand either before or after his death (which occurred in the year 56 after the Hegira); but facts have little to do with questions of belief. Kussam's grave is the goal of numerous pilgrims. They kneel bare-footed in the mosque which adjoins the crypt. Facing Mecca, which lies south-south-east, they kneel with heads bowed so low that they seem, for very humility, to be burrowing into the sacred stone.

A wooden fence protects the grave of Mahomet's cousin against familiar approach. In the interior of the

mosque we notice a Mongol flag, a yak's tail suspended from a pole, and the contour of a hand cut out of silver foil: mystic symbols. The space reserved for prayer is inaccessible to infidels and women. It is cleaned only once every ten years by the mullah in person. Not even the imagination of an Oriental story-teller has ever ventured to speculate on the fate of any woman bold enough to enter these precincts. Death itself cannot open the doors of a mosque to her. The palaces of the dead beneath us are not divinely dedicated. The Mosque Bubu-Khanum bears the name of Tamerlane's favourite wife, yet even her precious remains are not allowed to dwell here, but repose in a mausoleum across the way.

Women are permitted, however, to approach the grave of Kussam. They come to free themselves of the curse of childlessness. Of course even here these soulless beings are denied the privilege of prayer, but they may touch the copper sphere and the ram's horn, and they may bind a string to the oaken door. Having performed these rites, they enter the house of the temple watchman, Ishan, who smears them with consecrated ointment, and two hundred and seventy-seven days later they present their lord and master with a child.

The men who come to the prophet's empty tomb beseech the favour of Allah now and hereafter. For forty days they have fasted on bread and water and refrained from intercourse with women or boys. In their coloured robes this herd of pilgrims, prostrate in the dust, resembles a great lumpy carpet.

Who are they? Bandit chiefs or members of the col-

## ROUND ABOUT TAMERLANE'S GRAVE

lectives? Landowning beys' or social-uplift leaders? Mullahs or militant atheists? Are they praying for or against . . . ?

We express a desire for a photograph of the prophet's grave.

Comrade Mustapha Machmudov, member of the Party Secretariat, shrugs his shoulders. "We haven't got that far yet. Up there we restore nothing, explore nothing, and photograph nothing. Up there faith — superstition — still reigns."

" ? "

"With the very means preached by Islam we would conquer Islam itself, but why resort to force? The transition from Islam to Socialism is visible enough in the growth of the collectives, the Party, the schools. Even women study now; they consult the bureau for the information of married women, the veil is falling, and in the last year crime has diminished forty per cent."

"Crime? Then you believe there is a direct connection between criminality and religion? "

"Direct or indirect. Statistics recently printed in the *Isvestia* showed that Chicago had built as many churches after the war as had been closed down in Moscow, and Chicago leads the world in the number of its criminals, whereas Moscow has very few thieves, being next in line to Zurich. Look about you, Comrade, and reflect on the quality of the piety symbolized in these houses of the dead. Timur built them for his wives and relatives. That massive pile over there is the Bubu-Khanum, the 'Song of Love in Stone.' Therefore, one would assume, Timur

was a good husband, a good family man, living in the fear of the Lord. Yet he killed by the thousand the inhabitants of the cities he conquered, or buried them alive. His cruelties beggar description. And all in the name of Allah. He buried the Ambassador from Mecca in the mausoleum of his grandson. Later Timur himself was buried there, so that he rests, so to speak, at the feet of Divinity. Come, Comrade, you must see the grave of Timur!”

“But isn’t that rank romanticism, Comrade Mustapha?”

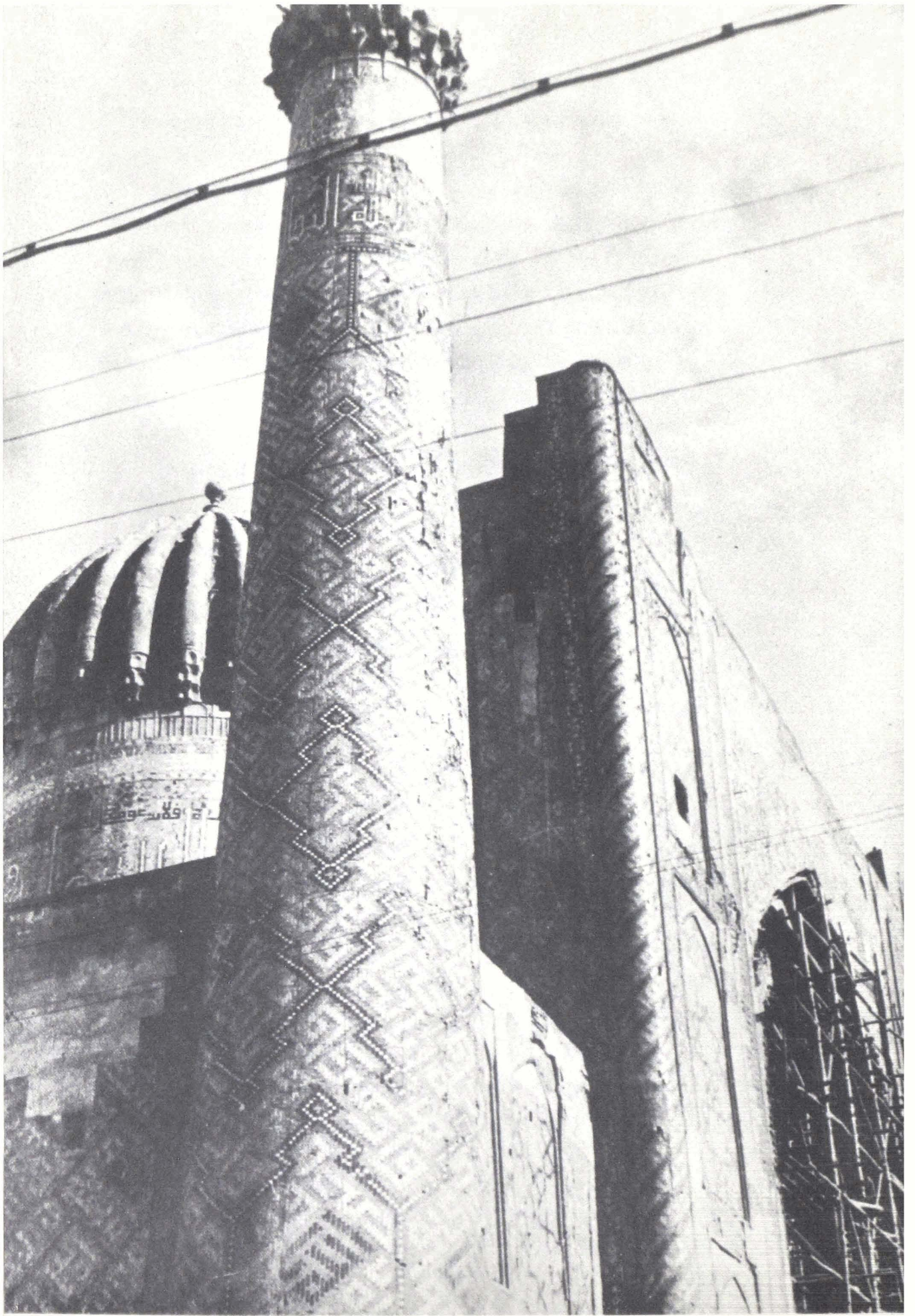
“The abolished devil take you Europeans! But you cannot go without seeing Timur’s grave. Come, Comrade.”

On the way . . .

After all, there is some justification for Comrade Mustapha’s complaint, so we will not describe the “Registan.” We will merely state, as one mentions an axiom, that in no other city have we seen a public square with such beautiful and colourful buildings as the Registan in Samarkand. *Basta.*

Comrade Mustapha, who is a graduate of the Moscow Academy for Eastern Peoples, and wishes all romantic tourists to the devil, points proudly to the scaffolding. “The renovations cost us sixty-five thousand roubles this year, and we are in the midst of the Five Year Plan, for which we need every kopek.”

Old Vassili Lavrentyevich Vyatkin, who has been guardian and augmentor of the relics of Samarkand



The ancient Madrasah on the Registan, Samarkand.





for many years, joins us and spits into the soup of Comrade Mustapha's pride.

"Sixty-five thousand roubles is nothing," he exclaims. "Barely enough to prop up the slanting minarets of Timur's epoch, much less renovate them. Then there are the mosques, the bazaar, the two tombs in the square. The ornamentation is the most expensive item. But we've done it well, don't you think? Ho-yo, you'd never know which parts date from the sixteenth century and which we've added this year."

"Where do you get the colours, Vassili Lavrentyevich?"

"Ho-yo, we use the ancient colours. We found the clay-pits where the old inhabitants of Samarkand obtained their building materials and their ochre. It is only the cobalt that we have to import from the Caucasus. We've even excavated the dyeing kitchens, with their ovens and bricks, and we work, ho-yo, with the same ancient tools."

"That was a piece of luck, Vassili Lavrentyevich."

"Ho-yo, but that isn't the half of it: we even found coals in the ovens, and could tell, by the state they had reached in the process of combustion, what temperatures the ancients used. We didn't even have to experiment, ho-yo."

Our eyes drink in their fill of the Registan, but we will not describe it. Ho-yo, we go on to Tamerlane's grave.

Being far away from events in space produces the same effect as being far away in time — to us all Asiatic

history seems mythical. Yet now, in this monastic crypt, we find, black on white, that this Tamerlane really did live; not in the impermeable mist of some remote era, but in the late Middle Ages, right into the fifteenth century. We spell out his epitaph, which might have been carved but yesterday.

The Mosque-Mausoleum Gur Emir was dedicated by Tamerlane to his grandson, Muchammed Sultan, whom he preferred to all his other descendants; though in point of fact the choice was limited, as those of his sons who did not go insane were killed in battle. Tamerlane, gratified by early signs of cruelty in this grandson, decreed him to be his successor, the Heir Presumptive. But these hopes were dashed when Muchammed Sultan died on the war-path, in 1403. In order to induce people to come and pray for him, Tamerlane exhumed two saints whose graves had been popular shrines, and re-buried them by his grandson's side; Nur-Addin-Bassur, called "the fourteenth saint," and Sheikh Burchan-Addin were to serve as decoys for the dead Muchammed Sultan.

Shortly after the death of his grandson, on February 18, 1405, Tamerlane himself died, as he had lived: fully armed and completely drunk. Although he had decreed that he was to be buried in the city of Kesch beside his father and his sons, his successors, striving to maintain their power, thought it a wiser political move to keep his body in the city in which they desired to reign in his name. But being less given to the building of mausoleums than Tamerlane, they placed him beside his grandson.

As a matter of fact, his name was not Tamerlane, but

## ROUND ABOUT TAMERLANE'S GRAVE

Timur-i-lenk, "the iron cripple." He was lame from childhood, and his right arm was paralysed. From this datum the most amateur psychoanalyst can see why Timur was compelled to subdue Asia. When the disciples of Freud are further informed that two fingers were missing from his right hand, they will see in a flash that the only way for him to compensate this inferiority was to command the inhabitants of localities that resisted him, including the aged, women, and children, to be whipped until they bled. For good measure he used ten thousand captive soldiers as building material for his fortresses, by the simple process of binding them to stakes, then pouring loam and mortar over them.

His origin was lowly. But in contrast to Napoleon, who, when an imaginary pedigree was presented to him, threw it into the fire with the words: "My family tree begins with me," Tamerlane claimed that his father had had the right to the title of Emir. This wish-dream survives in his epitaph, where Tamerlane is stated to have descended not only from a series of pure-bred emirs, but even from Genghis Khan; and, as a crowning distinction, we decipher that his earliest progenitor was born of a virgin immaculately, a sunbeam making its way through a chink in the door having caused Miss Alankuv to conceive.

Tamerlane never learned to read or write, despite which handicap he displayed better taste in matters of art than many a prince tutored in Potsdam. True, those temples of sacred and profane love, and a court swarming with artists and savants, did very little to advance the welfare of his subjects, and the Samarkand that lay hud-

dling in the shadow of resplendent blue cupolas and arabesqued walls was a sorry agglomeration of loam huts and slavery and filth.

At the feet of the warrior Tamerlane lies another of his grandsons, Ulug-Beg, who survived him as ruler for forty years. He was a learned man and built himself an observatory, whose quadrant has recently been excavated. Ulug-Beg was in correspondence with Galileo and other wise men of the West. But the Orient resented this and laid the curse of the heretic upon Ulug-Beg because his astronomical discoveries did not tally with the Koran: for one thing, he denied the existence of a seventh heaven! A conspiracy was formed under the leadership of Ulug-Beg's own son, Abd-al-Latif. He seized his father with the avowed intention of transporting him to the High Court at Mecca, but had him murdered on the way. A month later Abd-al-Latif's own head was dangling from the Seminary founded by Ulug-Beg. His nephew Abdullah ascended the throne and was in turn done away with before a year was out, by the soldiers of his cousin Abu-Said.

Thus it was with the Timurides themselves; how, then, must it have been with their subjects! The rulers at least achieved a handsome burial; ranged about the great ancestor, they sleep peacefully together in coffins of porphyry and nephrite. One can descend into the crypt, where each respective sarcophagus stands at right angles to its allotted plot of ground; while at the encircling balustrade the pious kneel in prayer.

“This was the goal of Enver Pasha, likewise of Ibra-

## ROUND ABOUT TAMERLANE'S GRAVE

him Beg . . . with the grave of the mightiest Mussulman, the greatest chieftain of Asia, as their starting-point, they dreamed of reconstructing his world empire. But now all such Tamerlanean dreams, of Pan-Islamism and a Greater Turkmenistan, are as dead as Tamerlane himself. Visitors come either to pray to the saints or, if they are Europeans, to revel in romanticism — and to hell with them!”



## REVOLUTION IN BOKHARA



If, while vaunting the wealth and vastness of their domains in flowery language, the princes of Central Asia had ever come together in a conclave, each might have boasted that he could lay the head of any of his subjects in his lap.

But no participant of this meeting — whether the Shah of Persia, or the King of Afghanistan, or the Emir of Bokhara, or the Khan of Khiva, or the Commissary of Ak-Pasha, present in his capacity of Governor-General of Turkestan — would have dared, like Uhland's count of legend, to claim that he could, with impunity, lay his head in the lap of any of his subjects.

One need not be an out-and-out *damnator temporis acti* to conclude that these rulers stood in deadly fear of their beloved people; one has only to look at the empty palaces with their elaborate defences, their dungeons and secret exits. Take for example Bokhara. (Bokhara was the capital of Bokhara, a statement which my sainted grandmother would have interpreted as one of my incorrigible flippancies.) The city is protected by a rampart which was closed every night by means of eleven

## REVOLUTION IN BOKHARA

gates with pointed arches, flanked by battlements, towers, and look-outs. This was not a defence against an alien foe, for the neighbouring country belonged to the white Pasha in St. Petersburg, their overlord. Had the Czar felt that the bastions were a challenge to himself, they would have been razed in the twinkling of an eye.

From a rocky hill in the market-place and the "Ark," a stronghold overlooking it, the emirs held sway, emulating the ruthlessness of their maternal ancestor, Genghis Khan, and striving to outdo him. It took seven centuries to get rid of them. Even then they were not overthrown by invaders, but by the enemy within, against whom the army was drilled and the palace fortified. A six-thonged knout with a leathern haft as thick as a sapling used to hang over the gate of the Ark, as a sinister reminder, and under this symbol the despot passed, on all his comings and goings. Today it is exhibited in a museum.

A long spiral ramp ascends from the gateway of the castle to the apartments of His Highness, and it is bordered with windowless dungeons, or, rather, kennels of stone, where conspirators were thrown and left to languish. Tablets placed over the entrance commemorate some of their helpless inmates: here a member of the Jadids, there a liberal, here a sympathizer of the Young Bokhara movement, there a socialist. The royal coach went up and down every day, its occupants oblivious of the occupants of the dens, oblivious of the fact that they were driving inexorably to their doom.

This private jail, cruel as it was, was not the worst in



Bokhara; the most inhuman was the Sindan, which stands on a higher elevation. Its dome has fallen through and the light of day now reveals the horrors of the cellar dungeon, with its damp and filthy floor and a chill of death emanating from its walls. Three hundred and fifty men at a time were crammed into this circular vault. They could not move and were not supposed to do so. Spikes, clamps, and vises imbedded in the walls afforded a variety of methods of securing the prisoners. There were no chains, which to rattle might have been some sort of relief. The only possible relief was to scream, but that had no effect on the jailer who came down now and then to impale a new victim.

In the stone roof of the Sindan stands a bent rod called "bunchuk," with a crossbeam from which some tattered rags are suspended, also the black tail of a yak, and a tin hand: tokens that here a holy man lies buried. On this sanctified site the watchman of the prison mounted guard; from here he could overlook the entire grounds: the big circular jail, the cells hewn into the hill, the tracts separated by moats, and the wall which enclosed the precinct.

Long ago Emir Mustapha Khan closed up this inhuman prison, just as the Emperor Josef II of Austria did with the Spielberg; Olim Khan, the last of the emirs, saw fit to reopen it, just as the Emperor Franz Josef of Austria did with the Spielberg — in both cases only for the incarceration of political prisoners and blasphemers. Olim Khan even cast his uncle, Barat Beg, into the Sindan, and that poor gentleman, because he was either

hungry, or tired of life, or out of his mind, or desperately irked by the iron clamp, proceeded to gnaw off his own left shoulder.

The prisons were filled to overflowing, but, strange to say, that did not accomplish their mission. The spirit of revolt refused to be quenched. It began with the schools. Members of the Jadids founded schools in Bokhara the Holy, schools which fostered doubt and disobedience. Whereupon the Council of the twelve Mufti, of the Achun, and the Head Kasi discovered:

First, that the students and teachers did not sit on the ground, but on benches, an improper European custom;

Second, that natural history was being taught, in defiance of the spirit of the Koran.

And so the schools were closed. And there was an annual increase in imprisonments, bastinadoes, and executions. After the February Revolution, Colonel Miller, representative of the Kerensky Government, came to Bokhara and in a friendly way supported the Emir in his attempt to root out revolutionary elements.

But the masses were protesting more and more against the abuses of despotism. They repudiated arbitrary taxation, slave labour, and religious corruption, and they demanded native schools and a native press. The Jadids grew into the Young Bokharist Party, whose secret ambition was a constitution such as the Sultan had granted his people after the rebellion of the Young Turks.

The Emir had reason to dread various uprisings: of the needy populace; of the farmers, who had lost their

cotton-land as a result of loans at usurious rates of interest; of the farm workers, the karakul workers, the carpet- and silk-weavers, the coachmen, and water-carriers. This proletariat, exploited by a horde of beys, mullahs, functionaries, and middlemen, began to unite, and the Young Bokharist Party supported them.

Under this pressure the Emir, on the 28th Jemadisan 1295 after the Hegira (March 17, 1917), issued a decree granting some of the demands, among them the erection of a printing-press and the release of the prisoners. "Of the prisoners." Without any qualifying adjective. Thus, according to this proclamation, issued in the name of Allah, even thieves and murderers were entitled to their liberty. But they were not liberated. No one was liberated. On the contrary: three days later the jubilant leaders of the Young Bokharist Party, having held a meeting to celebrate the issuing of the decree, were thrown into the Ark. There they received from seventy-five to one hundred and fifty lashes apiece. Among those beaten was the national poet Ajni. Among those who died under the whip was the aged leader Mirza Nasrullah Abdugafur.

And what was the explanation for such severity against men who, after all, were merely expressing their joy over an edict of the ruler?

Unbelievers — Christians and Jews — had, O sacrilege! taken part in the procession in the holy city. That was too gross an abuse of freedom. No Christian was allowed to dwell in Old Bokhara; even Kerensky's representative lived in Kagan, several miles from the city.

## REVOLUTION IN BOKHARA

Jews were obliged to live in the quarter called Machallah, and to wear a cord around their bodies, by which a Mussulman could hang the wearer if he believed himself to have been duped by him. No Jew was allowed to use a vehicle, nor might he sit on a horse. But a donkey could scarcely be denied him, since during the rainy season it is practically impossible to get through the streets of Bokhara on foot. Indeed, in the open country as well as in the cities donkey-riding is really a device to avoid sticking in the mud and wading through the canals. In the same way camels protect man from sinking into the dust and sand of the desert. Donkeys are the rubber boots of the Oriental; camels are his stilts.

Jewish women were forbidden to appear on the streets unveiled. Possibly they fretted more under this prohibition than did their men-folk under the prohibition of horses and the humiliation of the cord. At any rate the Jewesses of modern Bokhara, now that the Emir has fallen, along with the veil, expose not only their faces, but also their legs, and this to a height never dreamed of even during Europe's short-lived craze for short skirts.

Progressives who were lucky enough to escape arrest after that demonstration did well to flee from the Terror which the Emir introduced in place of the reforms he had promised. About six thousand people emigrated from Bokhara to Turkestan and found shelter with the councils of the workers, peasants, and soldiers.

It was not until the October Revolution had pushed its successes as far as Tashkent that the peoples of the southern districts began to shake off the yoke of mediæ-

val feudalism. First the Khan of Khiva was deposed, then the anti-Communist Government of Turkestan, the so-called Kokander Autonomy, and at length the Emir was bound to accept reforms.

The coup organized by the Young Bokharist Party was handicapped by inadequate propaganda, so that many peasants obeyed the command of the landed aristocracy and the mullahs to "resist the new crusade, which has as its object the subjugation of Islam by the Christians."

Before these alleged crusaders had reached the city, the Emir sent his Grand Vizir and assistant ministers to Kollessov, the railway station, to meet the military leader of the movement, and Faissullah Khodshayev, leader of the Young Bokharists. An agreement was drawn up wherein the Emir should pledge himself to form a government out of the Central Committee of the Young Bokharist Party, to grant a constitution, and to disband his army. In exchange the Young Bokharists guaranteed that Olim Khan should remain in authority.

The ministers went off with the written agreement, promising to return with the signature of His Highness. Instead there came a messenger with the request for a delay, and three days passed in negotiations. Meanwhile the peasants, under the leadership of the beys, advanced from thirty villages armed with axes and sickles. So greatly did they outnumber their adversaries that the revolutionaries had to withdraw.

On March 3, 1918, the day following this defeat of the Kollessov coup, the Emir inflicted upon his kingdom a massacre, the like of which had not been known in

## REVOLUTION IN BOKHARA

Central Asia since the days of Tamerlane. From individual records discovered in the Ark it has been deduced that three thousand two hundred persons were executed or tortured or murdered, for the most part men whose only crime was a taste for newspapers or a distaste for the mosques. The spirit of revolt and unbelief was to be forever exterminated. The Emir increased his army to twenty thousand; summoned the bandits of Fergana into the capital; made a treaty with Persia and Afghanistan for delivery of weapons against the unbelievers in the north; and even acquired from them six trained military elephants.

His main support, however, was the English army of intervention and hundreds of White Russian guards, mostly officers; thus he fought unbelief with the help of unbelievers, and Europeanism with European troops. This foreign and unholy alliance entered into by the Emir must be emphasized, because the revolutionaries of Bokhara as well as the Young Bokharist Party, which had in the meantime become Communists, have been accused of calling upon their class-brothers in Russia to help them do away with the tyrant.

Reduced to starvation because they could no longer exchange their cotton for wheat from the north, and further impoverished by the cessation of the rug industry and above all by the expense of the Emir's armaments, having at last learned a great deal from Soviet newspapers, smuggled over the boundary, the Emir's subjects had not the slightest desire to save him again.

Consequently, when the revolutionaries came marching back, toward the end of August or the beginning of September 1920, no one took up arms for Olim Khan but the czarist White Russians, the English adventurers, and the Emir's mercenaries. And the game was up. With his vizirs, his muftis, his wives, his adolescents, and his military elephants he had to flee to East Bokhara, the present Republic of Tajikistan, and ultimately found his Doorn in Afghanistan.

The knout over the gate of the fortress, the prison cells bordering the ramp, the dungeons of the Sindan — all these have become museum objects. The rooms of the Ark serve as dwellings for students; in the holy city of Bokhara women go abroad without veils; Christians are not obliged to live in Kagan nor Jews in Machallah; young boys no longer dread the favour of the Emir or the beys. The harem of the pleasure palace, Sitarah Imach Asa, has been turned into a lunatic asylum; its park is now a fruit and vegetable market; the estates of the Vakuf are collectives; in the schools children sit on benches and study modern science in defiance of the Koran. The new National House stands in the market-place, overlooking a park where sixty years ago Europeans were sold as slaves; and on a site where revolutionaries were beheaded ten years since, a water-tower rises into the air: a "Soviet minaret."

True, this iron water-tower cannot compete in beauty with the real minarets of Bokhara, as, for example, the nearby Minaret of Death. It is told that enemies and slaves were thrown from its battlements, but even were it

not the hero of such grisly legends, the "Toj-Munar" would still command respect.

Its interior staircase was built by Araslan Baba Khan eight hundred years ago; and one can still climb it. The higher one mounts in the heat, the easier grows the ascent, for the climber loses weight step by step, and reaches the summit a sylph.

The death tower itself is less heavy than it seemed from below, where it appeared to be wedged in between the blue-domed Mosque Kok-Gumbash and the Madrasah Shir-Arab, and weighed to earth by cluttered bazaars, babel of auctioneers and bargain-hunters, colourful confusion of ornamental boxes, silver bracelets, brass trays, earthen jars and pialas (tea-cups without handles), little embroidered caps, Asiatic spices and European "second-hand" junk, while the porters of all these treasures, diminutive donkeys, stand impatiently heeing and hawing in the background.

No other minaret is as high as this one: over fifty-six yards. From this height the domes of the mosques look like blue puddles. Grass grows around their edges, and storks stand about as if looking for frogs. But down there, from a real frog's perspective, everything is reversed: from there the dome is not a pond but a firmament, and the storks have their mind on higher things than frog-hunting as they stand on Allah's roof-top, His functionaries, peering down on the Faithful with a zealous eye. Such zeal procures one a reputation for sanctity, and even the Soviets are careful not to trifle with the storks: the work of renovation, so rigorously

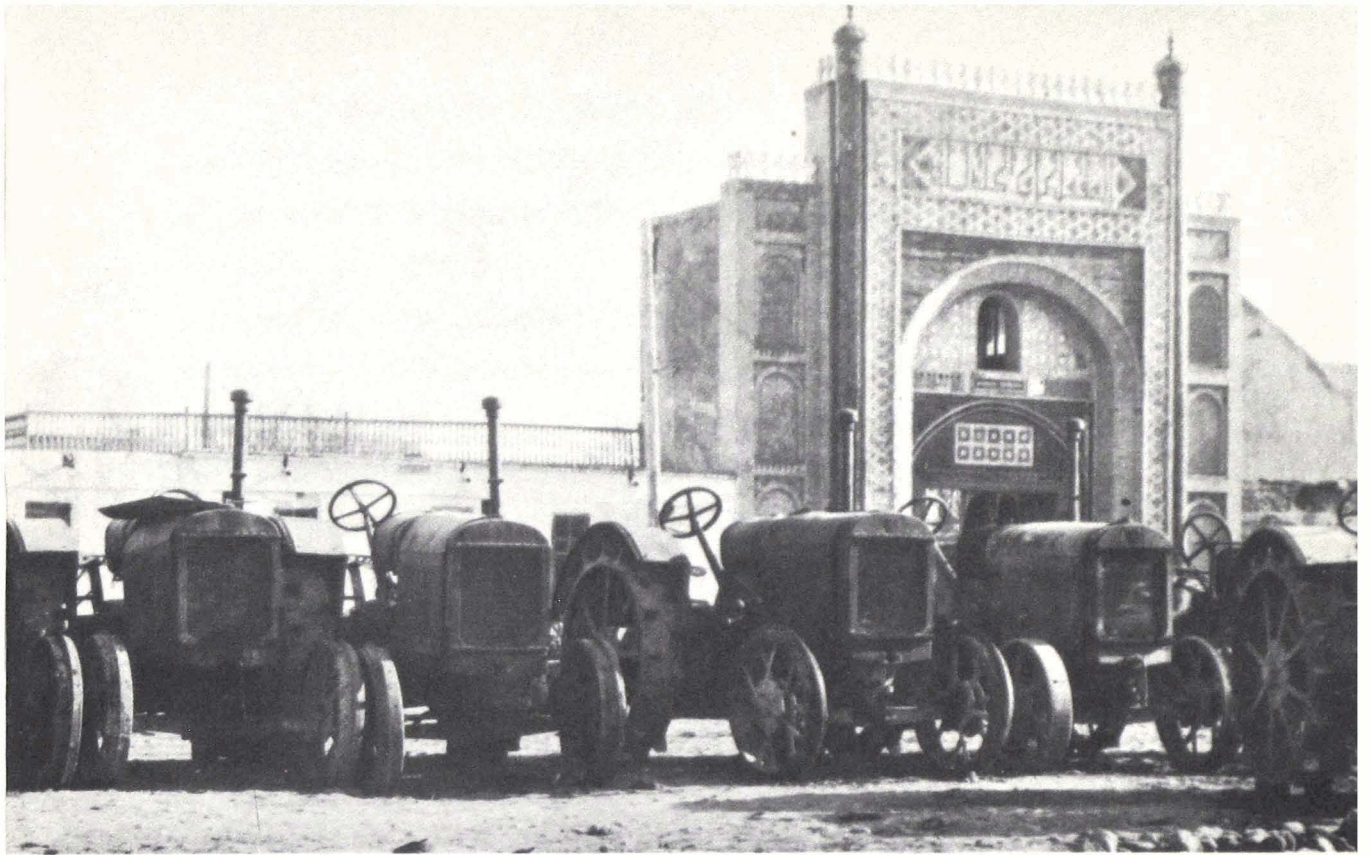


planned in every detail by the Five Year Plan, is not undertaken on those monuments where a stork mother is brooding.

Our gaze roams beyond the storks into the heart of Bokhara, whose angular streets force a narrow passage between the bare exteriors of the houses. We can see into the houses themselves with their barns for the wives: for the outworn old ones, as well as their younger successors. We see glistening ochre, right up to the peak of the Tower of Death — and on every palace of prayer, repeated a hundred times in ornamental Cufic script, the inevitable invocation: “Bismallah rachmanur rachim — In the Name of the Merciful God.”

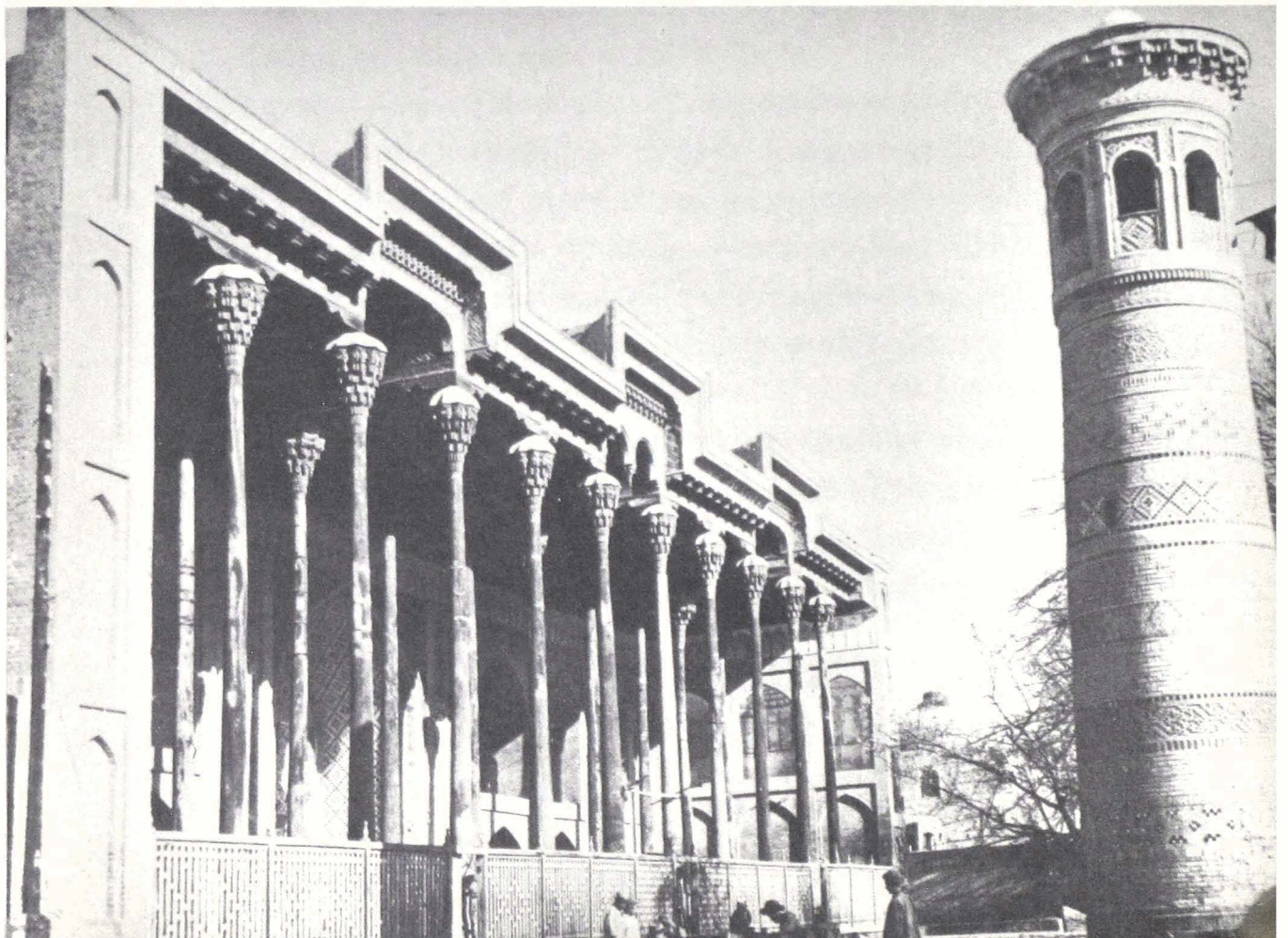
Across the blue-yellow square in the foreground strode the priests and teachers, suppliants and students, and passed under the arcades enclosing the courtyard. After washing the dust from their hands and feet at the Taharat-Chana, they knelt down and droned out verses of the Koran, or studied the doctrines of the Shariat, the canonic law; or the judgments handed down in the Adat, the common law. Warily they glanced up at the storks, who kept an eye out for truants.

Pilgrim students came from distant lands — Arabia, Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, India — to drink of wisdom at its most undefiled source: Bokhara Isherif. And returned to their far-away homes, adorned with the halo of Bokhara Isherif, to extort taxes from the poor and lowly according to the teachings of the Shariat and the Adat, and to impose slavery upon them, and polygamy, and sodomy, and the fear of God. The pilgrimages have



The cotton-growing collective farm, formerly the Emir's palace, in Old Bokhara.

Portico of the mosque of the former Emir of Bokhara, now the Uzbek State Museum, in Old Bokhara.





## REVOLUTION IN BOKHARA

ceased; grass grows between the tiles of the Aula; and the storks look down upon the empty courtyards with an air of disapproval.

Even the official dwelling of the Mudariss, the rector, is empty. This home in the Madrasah Shir-Arab has a charm, even though there is no furniture to adorn it, neither table nor chairs — for His Magnificence received guests, and even wrote, sitting on the floor — and even though the only entrance to the sleeping-room is a hole in the wall less than two feet high. Imagine a wall made of lace: a solid mass of filigree work, carved rosewood, and white enamel pierced in intricate patterns. When you have imagined this, as we did when we saw it, erase the image from your mind. For no keyhole saw was employed here, no wood-carver either; the rosewood is not rosewood and the enamel is not enamel. Everything is chiselled out of alabaster of varied hues. This marble lacework forms the front part of drawers within which manuscripts and books were kept.

For a much cruder work of art belonging to Bokhara, America once bid two million dollars: the grave of Ismail Samanid, founder of the Samanid dynasty. It was not because of the dynasty that the American Mæcenæ proposed to transport the massive and gigantic structure across the Atlantic, but because it was guaranteed to be the oldest monument of Central Asia.

Beneath us is the fortress within whose walls the ruler slept the sleep of the just with his political victims as neighbours. Here the other dungeon, yonder the other palace. In the one case it was the ingenuity of the tortures,

## CHANGING ASIA

in the other the barbarity of a prince's brain that gave us a nightmare when we visited these abodes. In the Summer Palace each oil print is in a cardboard frame upon which the Emir had a continuation of the picture painted. Imagine a "continuation" of Böcklin's "Island of Death," of Kowalski's "Lone Wolf," of "King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba." A similar appreciation of the plastic arts seems to have distinguished the last of the emirs: the hall of mirrors is dominated by the statue of a frog in a high hat.

A third palace which we saw near Kagan is now the Workers' Club "Felix Dzerzhinsky." On the veranda members of the club are doing physical exercises in bathing-shorts. In the park, where the thermometer registers 92 degrees, a ball-game is in progress. Where the summer harem used to be, where the Emir's official wives were fanned by certified eunuchs, evening classes are held. And Lenin has the place of honour in the private mosque.

We stand in the tower of Toj-Munar and let our eyes wander at will. Everywhere we see little lakes, the "chaus," which are the pleasure and plague of Central Asia. In Old Bokhara the chaus fill up the city squares; acacias and mulberry trees shade the steps that lead down to the water-basins; only statues are missing to complete the illusion of the Trevi fountain at Rome. At the water's edge people sit drinking hot tea, smoking hot chilims, breathing hot air. From the puddle the samovar obtains liquid for the tea; from the puddle the water-carrier fills his skins; in the puddle you wash your hands

and feet; and out of the puddle come nasty worms and mosquitoes.

Which reminds me that that brick building over there is the Tropical Institute, where, under the microscope, we saw the perils that rise up out of the chaus. We saw them as slides, and as large paintings in oils that looked like the phantasies of an unhinged brain. The portrait of a cyclops filled us with dread and horror, but the original is a tiny microbe, and the painter magnified the original two thousand times. We were introduced to the "medinal thread," *Filaria medinensis*, a slender young female who carries three million living young in her body, which is only two millimetres wide. If one washes in the chaus or if, being a Mashkar, one fills one's skins there to carry water into the houses, then the painted cyclops, host of the parasitic medinal thread in an earlier stage of its development, finds its way out of the water and into one's person, revealing his presence by all sorts of ulcers.

Herr Peter Reinhart, who came to Bokhara from Germany as an apothecary's apprentice some forty years ago, told us that the last Emir was plagued by the "*Rischta*" and suffered from gangrene. The Tabib (medicine man), although he had treated thousands of such cases, preferred, in this one case which might cost him his head, not to depend on the medical inspiration of Allah, but consulted the "*kafr*," the unbeliever in the European drug-store.

Today there is no emir to cure; the learned Reinhart is head of a laboratory in the Tropical Institute; the

Tabib's prescriptions are forgotten; and the knell of the medial thread has been rung. Many of the chaus — above all, those without drains — were emptied forever, whereupon large fish were found — how did they ever get in? Other basins have been pumped out, the ground cemented, and running water installed. The “Soviet minarets” are not the only source of water; there is also a pumping station with a reservoir where sand from the Seravshan River is deposited to serve as a filter. (N.B. The Seravshan River has no estuary, but near Khiva it flows away into the sands.)

The sand-flea, *Phlebotomus papatasi*, carrier of papataci fever, as well as the malaria mosquito, have now good reason to join the ranks of Soviet adversaries. They are exterminated from the rice-fields with smoke and sulphur anhydrate. The springs where they once performed their antics unhindered are now treated by electrolysis; acres of marshland have been drained, canals have been built, and ponds are sprinkled with petroleum or Paris green. Since 1925 malaria has fallen from 69 per cent to 7.4 per cent in Kuljab and Tajikistan; in Mumin-Abad from 96.1 per cent to 10.1 per cent. And elephantiasis has been exterminated in Tajikistan.

From the Minaret of Death we can see the electric power plant. Before the Revolution not even the Emir boasted electric light, and if he took a fancy to look at his “extended” art collection after dark, he had to use a kerosene lamp. From the Minaret of Death we can see the new theatre, the new hotel, the new parks, the new schools, the new clubs, the new houses, the new

## REVOLUTION IN BOKHARA

life—and the old life as well. From the Minaret of Death we can see all Bokhara up to the ramparts whose gates used to be barred every evening. The Revolution took them by storm in 1920, since when all the gates stand wide.





## BORDER WARFARE AND WORLD POLITICS



At last we have eaten our way through the cakes and ale!

We have left behind us Samarkand and the past; Bokhara and recent history; Tamerlane and the dwindling line of emirs; the azure domes and murky dungeons — the whole hodge-podge of poetry and filth.

However enticing the cakes and ale, we relinquished them to board another train, and here we are, nearing the actual goal of our journey: the last-born land of Reality, the youngest Soviet Republic.

Our engine whistles prosaically; a prosaic rhythm is ground out by our wheels; our train jolts along a sandy embankment; telegraph poles go by us, describing long shallow parabolas. Every ten or twelve miles there is a halt at a station or siding — either a train to wait for, or one to overtake. Mostly freight trains. Those bound “up-stream” are laden with cotton-gins from the Selmarsh (factory for agricultural machinery); balls of wire from the Zwet-Met Import (office for importation of metals); vacuum harvesters from America; sacking from Ivanovo-Vosnessensk for baling cotton. All this modernity rolls

prosaically southward, while in the opposite direction age-old products, cotton-wool and cotton-seeds, are borne in gigantic bales.

Yet incorrigible romanticists can still find food for their vision. Sitting cross-legged, the Orient crouches by the wayside and on the station platforms; heads sprouting flowers of silver and scarlet; bodies draped in shimmering brocades.

Two figures clothed in black are in our compartment. Behind horsehair visors we seem to detect a young woman and an old one. Ghostly travelling companions, eternally watchful, seeing but unseen.

In the diner there is a merry group of men and unveiled women indulging in song. The Western European — possibly the first of his kind to travel this road — rouses their interest. They ply him with questions and he plies in return. They are Tajiks from Rabat-i-Malik and are moving into a Kolchos.

Gladly they comply with their exotic guest's request for the text of the song they were singing, which, with its recurring "John" and "Johnny" had an odd sound of English about it. One of the younger men is putting pencil to paper, when suddenly he strikes his brow:

"But we can't write Russian letters. We learn only Latin script, rafik [Comrade], and you won't be able to read it."

"Oh yes I shall. In Germanistan we also learn Latin script, rafikon."

"Oh? Then you have Soviets in Germanistan?"

We explain to the Tajiks why they do not write their

## CHANGING ASIA

language either in Persian symbols — as do their kin in Persia and Afghanistan — or in Russian symbols. “You write as we do, rafikon, for *our* sakes. Because one day there is to be one world with one universal idea.”

Thus reassured, the young comrade writes the Tajik words in European style:

Abdula dshon dshonimon  
Nuridi tshashmonimon  
Dshon Abdula dshon  
Abdula dshoni.

Chasa gajmogarquardi  
Kasa jak bor nadadi  
Busa voj Abdula dshon  
Abdula dshoni. . . .

The song tells of the bandit Abdula, who sets forth, accompanied by young kulaks, mullahs, and curly-haired epebes to attack some Soviet villages. There are peasants, too, among his numbers, and these revolt: they will not be the murderers of their brothers. Whereupon the bandit leader kills the rebels with his English rifle. His boy-lovers sing a song to the glory of Abdula's “*dshon*” (which means his soul) and to the coming victory. But Abdula, enemy of the proletariat, is defeated by the onslaught of the collective farmers.

We, as naïve Berliners, inquire how it comes about that a man should have a boy for mistress. Our fellow-passengers exchange understanding glances and explain that things like that happened quite frequently. “Women were expensive in the old days. A man would often work for some farmer for years at a stretch, without pay, in

the hope of being rewarded by the hand of his daughter; and one fine day the farmer would give her in marriage to someone who could pay for her. What were the poor fellows to do? They had to make love to each other."

"Did such things never happen among the well-to-do, rafik?"

"Among the rich these things also happened, rafik. They emulated the Emir. Many sent him their sons, and if he took a liking to them, he would decorate the father, who wore his medal proudly on his breast. Have you nothing like that in Germanistan, rafik?"

"At home in Germanistan such luxuries are far more expensive. Our emirs conferred not only medals on their favourites of either sex, but titles and lands as well. And when our emirs took to their heels, the Republic continued to honour all such titles and claims. When the Republic of Germanistan needed some of this property, it paid the complaisant young ladies and gentlemen, or their descendants, many billions therefor, although the common people were exceedingly poor. That was called royal indemnity. . . ."

Naturally we did not say all this aloud. It was hardly fit hearing for quondam subjects of the Emir of Bokhara.

The train jogs on and stops every twelve miles or so. A station called Termes. The city, as the Greek name implies, boasts warm springs. It was indeed laid out by Alexander himself. To the right, beyond the Amu-Darya, lies Afghanistan. Our train is tracing the boundary.

On the platform at Denau, the last station in Uzbekistan, we observe a young man in European dress, sur-

rounded by Orientals, answering all their questions.

We learn that he is Faisullah Khodshayev. This personage is never mentioned in reports issued by the League of Nations. European politicians are not aware of his name or his function. Why should they be? He is at present only the President of Uzbekistan, and representative of this State in the Government of the U.S.S.R. Each of the seven Soviet Republics which constitute the U.S.S.R. sends one representative to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union, and these take turns at being chairman, actually if not nominally the highest office in the world.

But for us, who are fresh from Bokhara and the cakes and ale of romance, Faisullah Khodshayev is interesting for a subsidiary reason: never was so high a price set on the head of any man!

After the ill-starred revolutionary coup of March 1918, the Emir's revenge was active against all the progressive elements of his land. From Turkestan the Soviets protested against the Terror. They were told that severity would relax only when Faisullah Khodshayev was handed over, for it was he who, in the name of the Young Bokharist Party, had signed the ultimatum to the Emir.

Olim Khan interrupted the blood bath and awaited the delivery of Faisullah. When, however, this did not take place, he continued the massacres, three thousand two hundred people being killed under torture.

In 1920 in the city of Charjui, at a convention of the Young Bokharist Party it was decided to try again, and

under the military leadership of Fruns, a native of Central Asia, the Revolution succeeded. The first President of the Peoples' Republic of Bokhara was Faisullah Khodshayev. In 1924 it was united to those districts of Turkmenistan inhabited by Uzbeks; the whole was called the Republic of Uzbekistan and as such became a State in the U.S.S.R. Faisullah Khodshayev was also the first chairman of the Council of Peoples' Commissaries in Uzbekistan, to which the present Tajikistan at that time belonged.

We had imagined him a bearded, reckless, Asiatic Hun, but here before us is a slender, smooth-shaven young man in European dress.

We ask whether we may speak with him.

“Certainly, Comrade.”

We are seated opposite him in his official railway compartment. He offers us cigarettes. (“Deli” cigarettes, which everyone smokes in the Soviet Union. We were expecting something better.) We ask a question as to the object of his journey.

“My journey has a criminalistic as well as an economic purpose. As to the former, we have fought the last war against the bandits, the Bassmachi of the third epoch.”

“What does that mean: ‘Bassmachi of the third epoch’?”

“The first epoch was that before the war. The men who then formed bands in the caves and among the rocks and from there committed assaults were refugees from the feudal system. Only the great landlords made any

money out of cotton-growing. They got the same price that Russia paid for cotton imported from America or Egypt despite the high tariffs. The peasants would have liked to attain the same prices, but in order to buy seed, build irrigation systems, pay the tax on water, and hire labour, capital was necessary. To borrow this was easy enough, but after each harvest they had to pay back 148 roubles for every hundred advanced, which exceeded the profits. Needless to add, the loans were negotiated in the form of mortgages.

“If there was too much rain, part of the crop would be ruined. If the weather was dry, swarms of locusts from Morocco would eat up the seeds and pods. If it wasn't locusts it was weevils, and when you couldn't pay your debt at compound interest, the mortgagee arrived with the sheriff and dispossessed you. This happened to many of the cotton-planters. They retired into the mountains and lived for robbery and revenge. That was the first epoch of the Bassmachi.

“The second phase: the organization of the bands against the Revolution. This also had its economic side, and again it was cotton that was at the base of the trouble. The enmity between the Emir and the new Soviet Russia cut off that market from Bokhara, involving unemployment among the cotton-pickers, of whom there were a hundred thousand idle in Vilayet Fergana alone. Moreover, even if political relations had been of the best, Russia could not have bought cotton from Bokhara, since the White Guardists had destroyed roads, railways, and telegraphic communication with Russia. But the im-

poverished peasants were ready to believe the mullahs who told them that Communism was responsible for the decline of the cotton industry. They let themselves be incited against these enemies of Allah and cotton, and carried on guerrilla warfare against us. Gradually it dawned on the peasants that one of our chief aims was to preserve and build up the cotton industry. Thereupon the beys resorted to another slogan: "Down with cotton! Who can eat cotton? Cultivate rice! The Bolsheviks mean to starve us unless we abandon our faith and hand over our women!" At the first sign of the collectives the beys renewed their agitation. But when these fears proved to be groundless, when the farmer found he could earn more in the Kolchos than he had ever earned independently, this second period of the Bassmachi came to an end."

"And the third?"

"The third. Hm. This is extrinsic in character. It comes from without, and has for its object the prevention of Socialism on the boundaries of the Colonial States, to lessen the danger of contagion. Moreover, it is well known abroad that the Soviet Union is striving to make itself independent of cotton importation, which means the loss of millions to exporters, who are suffering as it is from the crisis in the world cotton market. So banditry is supported from without. But this is a losing game. The outlaws have lost the sympathies of the farmers, who as a matter of fact now hate them for disturbing the peace and are organizing against them. Only the other day — and that was one of the objects of my



journey — they disposed of the last band of marauders on Uzbek territory. In Tajikistan there are still some stragglers.”

“Is it dangerous there?”

“Dangerous? Not from a political point of view, because the Bassmachi can never gain a following among a satisfied peasantry. But they can do harm, especially as long as Ibrahim Beg is at their head. His authority is great. He is feared by many of our friends, and supported by many of our foes.”

The other object of Faisullah Khodshayev's trip was the cotton itself. Uzbekistan is the most important region in the Soviet Union's fight for self-sufficiency in the textile industry. 1,788,200 tons of cotton-pods will be harvested this year in the five Republics of Central Asia, which means 528,800 tons of pure fibre. First in quantity of production is the Uzbek Soviet Republic, which alone was supposed to plant 1,846,000 acres in 1930. But the farmers went beyond the program and planted over two million acres, almost five times as much as before the war. And now, in 1931, the area of planted cotton in Uzbekistan will be 2,767,520 acres. On the other hand, the average yield per hectare is only 60 poods (9.8 hundredweight) as against 16 hundredweight before the war, the reasons for this being shorter working-hours, lack of labourers, delayed sowing because of bandit feuds, and insufficient fertilizer for such vast fields.

Faisullah Khodshayev was to supervise the autumn sowing and intensify collective organization. Sixty-three per cent of Uzbek farmlands are worked on the collective

**BORDER WARFARE AND WORLD POLITICS**  
system; in the district of Sariya-Assya even ninety-five per cent. Where we find ourselves at the moment, not far from the city of Denau, collectivization has only reached fifty-two per cent, and Khodshayev had to do a great deal of negotiating before he could depart with hopes of greater collectivization next year.

We take leave and proceed with our train, which had done us the honour to wait.

At Nyushakhar seven men get aboard. "Bassmachi," whisper our neighbours as they file by. So those are Bassmachi, those men who are calmly installing themselves in a compartment of our carriage? But it develops that only five of them are authentic bandits—the five who carry no weapons! For although they go abroad armed to the teeth in their own mountains where they lie in wait for caravans or members of a village Soviet, or rangers employed by a collective, or Komsomols, or soldiers of the Red Army, the Bassmachi must discard their weapons whenever they come out into the open.

Two of the seven — the man at the head of the column and the man who brings up the rear — carry rifles. This constitutes their only visible distinction from the others, whose sentiments and calling and station are nevertheless so opposed to theirs. The five others, including one old man, are under their escort. Tiny triangular cushions dangle from their silken cloaks: amulets which apparently have not saved them.

"Bassmachi," reply the crowd before the window when asked what they are craning to see. One or the other of those peering into the compartment with curiosity or

spite may at one time have been a bandit himself, or an ally of the Bassmachi. Perhaps even the elder of the two armed men, who is now leading the quintet to judgment before the court of the people, was once a member of their band.

That the peasants of Central Asia were caught up in the torrent of counter-revolution is not hard to understand when one considers to what extent the Colonial Powers fomented agitation among their colonials after the October Revolution. The Powers themselves know they are threatened.

There is a spectre stalking over Asia: the spectre of Communism.

Those in high places are all atremble and huddle together for safety.

The Voice of London groans: "How are we to continue holding in subjection the yellow and the brown races, with the statement that they are inferiors and that the white race more nearly resembles God, when just beyond their own frontier they see their blood relatives governing themselves?"

The Voice of Paris complains: "How can our economic blockade against the Soviets be successful if they cultivate rice down there and have the cheek to grow cotton . . . ?"

The Voice of Washington indignantly chimes in: "Did you say cotton! Why, if Russia makes herself independent of our export, we shall have to destroy a third of our crop, or else . . ." the Voice is drowned in sobs, "or else we shall have to reduce our prices."

The Voice of Amsterdam: "And what will become of my Royal Shell if Russia takes over the sale of her own oil?"

The Voice of St. Petersburg, speaking from Nice: "My palaces in the Crimea will be turned by these vandals into crèches and sanatoriums for the lower classes!"

"Oh dear!" moan the voices in chorus, "oh dear, oh dear!"

But when the first panic is allayed: "We must settle this spectre. We have money and power."

Chorus: "We have money. We have power."

And both are enlisted.

Here congregate all the adventurers, agitators, and secret agents who have been dispatched for counter-propaganda in the Near East. Here the Anglican Church conspires with Indian members of the Pan-Indian League under the auspices of the living god, the Aga Khan. Here Islam joins hands with the Church of Armenia; the all-Mohammedan party Ulema, with the Armenian movement Dashnak-Zutjun, completely forgetting the massacre of millions of Armenians by the Turks. Here orthodox generals of the Czar abet the Social Revolution.

Russian emigrants constitute the military executive organ. In 1848, at the Slav Congress in Prague, Russian nationalists cried out: "Rather the Russian knout than a Germanic freedom!" Now, seventy years later, this slogan loses its force as an antithesis, inasmuch as they prefer the Emir's knout to the freedom of the Russian worker. Apparently it is the knout that is the constant and determining factor in their mentality.

## CHANGING ASIA

The banker and organizer is England. In Ashkabad, England finances the trans-Caspian government of Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. The Islamic "Kokander Autonomy" is run by English puppets. The official British Mission which arrived in Tashkent on August 17, 1918, via India and China, supports the "Turkestan Military Organization" commanded by General Sajzev and a brother of General Kornilov, himself a general. It also supports the Ataman Dutov, operating near Orenburg, and the Czechoslovaks advancing from the Volga. The British General Malmson, stationed in Meshed, Persia, staged an armed rebellion as a pretext to march into Turkmenistan with his Indian Gurkas and Scottish Highlanders and proclaim a military dictatorship. George MacCartney, British Consul in Kashgar (Chinese East Turkestan), provided caravans with weapons. Reginald Tig-Jones, a captain in the service of His Majesty the King of England, ordered the execution in Annau of nine Communists from Ashkabad and twenty-six from Baku — all of them commissaries — and fourteen district representatives from Tashkent. He organized the coup d'état of the traitorous War Commissary Ossipov, and subsidized twenty-five thousand Bassmachi from Fergana to go to Tashkent to support him.

In the memoirs written by English participants in this game, it is unanimously emphasized that it was only after the dictated peace of Brest-Litovsk that England's position as a World Power was threatened. The German army of occupation could have left the Ukraine and ad-

vanced eastward to join forces with the Turks coming from Baku and with the hundred thousand Germans and Austro-Hungarians who had been held as prisoners; and these united forces — perhaps even in conjunction with the Bolsheviks — could have marched on to the boundaries of India. England would have been forced to withdraw troops from Europe to stem the tide of nationalistic uprisings in India. Seventy years earlier, Karl Marx, in his article “The New Year 1849,” pointed out that any European war in which England took part would inevitably spread as far as India. But the German Chief of Staff held to Schlieffen’s plan, concentrating all efforts on the capture of Paris, the capital of the hereditary enemy. Thus, with a minimum of troops and without fuss, England was able to protect her India, by simply stirring up in Central Asia a religious war, a class war, and a nationalistic war.

At a word from the Emir of Bokhara the clergy inflamed the masses; Captain Baly, an Englishman, whipped the Emir’s army into shape; Enver Pasha and Ibrahim Beg recruited into their bands those who came to visit the mosques — the crescent defying the five-pointed star.

And now?

“Bassmachi,” whisper the idlers on the station platform. Children are lifted up to the window so they can look at the bad men. If ten years ago one had told them: there are five men in that train who are *not* Bassmachi, their eyes would have opened in similar astonishment.

No. That is not quite accurate. For ten years ago there

was no train. The train represents the Present.

And we are travelling through the Present: the Soviet Republic of Tajikistan. In the past this was East Bokhara, a colony of the colony Bokhara, a land without rights. The emirs left their beys to govern this province, and it was only the last of the emirs who came here himself, in 1920, as an exile.

The eastern and least fertile part of this province was Russian. Why had the Czar picked out this barren and rocky bit to withhold from his vassal? This grey plateau is the Pamir. On the north it slopes away toward Russia; on the south toward India. Here two empires once met. Now it is the meeting-point of two worlds.

There is but a narrow corridor between the southern boundary of the Tajik Pamir (Gorno-Badashanskaya Oblast) and the northern boundary of India. To the east the province of Pamir touches China, to the north Kirghizistan, where lies the city of Osh, the starting-point for expeditions up the Pamir, which do not pass through Tajikistan itself.

We see very little of the land which has lured us so far from home: sterile fields in the foreground, high mountains in the distance. We rumble over a bridge; the river below us is called the Kafirnigan.

We know very little about this land we have travelled so far to see. Our geographical information is confined to a few facts: Tajikistan covers 54,750 square miles, which means it is as big as Czechoslovakia. The inhabitants number nearly a million and a half souls, if we may count as souls Communists, who deny the existence of the

soul, and women, to whom the Koran denies it. The Tajiks are an old Iranian people; more than half a million of their race live scattered throughout Uzbekistan and other countries of Soviet Central Asia; there are four million of them in the kingdom of Afghanistan, one million in northern India, and half a million in China. Their language is the original Persian, called Farsian. Seventy-nine per cent of the population is Tajik; eighteen per cent Uzbeks, who are of Turko-Mongolian descent; the rest of the inhabitants comprise Kirghiz, Russians, Turkmenians, and Afghans.

That is all. But soon we shall know more.

For we have arrived at Stalinabad, 4,078 miles from Berlin, as the crow flies.





## STALINABAD—A CAPITAL IN THE MAKING



“Look here! — Look over there! . . . Do you see that house . . . ?”

The exclamations of enthusiasm with which the inhabitants of Stalinabad called our attention now to the right and now to the left, on the drive from the station, were a severe tax on our friendly indulgence.

“Look — see the Courthouse over there? . . . That is the power plant. . . . Our Normal School. . . . Chauffeur,” (we had a seat in an ordinary bus, crowded with native passengers), “turn in to the left, we want to show the foreigner the new Central Committee.”

And when there was nothing better to be seen than some dilapidated hut, our fellow-passengers would ecstatically cry: “Look over there! Look over there! That’s the kind of houses we *used* to have in Stalinabad!”

Formerly there was a village on this site called Dushambe, which means Monday. On Mondays there was a market; on other days nothing in particular. Sixteen versts from here dwelt the Khan of Gissar, who collected a tribute of taxes and virgins.

## STALINABAD—A CAPITAL IN THE MAKING

“Look over there: that is the hospital, the only plastered house in existence before the Revolution. The Emir lived there in 1920.”

Olim Khan was being pursued by the Young Bokhara revolutionaries and the soldiers led by Fruns. A Wilhelm II of the dynasty of the Mangites, he sought refuge in the nearest foreign country.

Enver Pasha became his plenipotentiary. He had been leader of the Young Turks before the World War, had been Turkish Minister of War during the war, and after the war had been dropped by Kemal Pasha. Enver had sought assistance from Moscow for his adventurous schemes against England's control of Mesopotamia, and had later appeared as official visitor in Bokhara, where he sought to organize the military of the new republic. Frustrated in his design of converting the Young Bokhara Party to Pan-Islamism, he betook himself to Kurgan-Tyube, on the Afghan border. It was not generally known that he was conspiring with Usman Khodshayev, chairman of the Central Executive Committee. Enver sent Usman a report to the effect that the Great Powers had decreed the imminent doom of the Soviets. Whereupon Usman followed Enver, together with Ali Riza, chief of militia, two hundred cavalry, and four hundred infantrymen.

Enver Pasha occupied Kuljab, the largest city in the south of Tajikistan, and sent regular reports to the Emir, who in his answering letters styled him “Commander in Chief of all the armies of Islam, son-in-law to the Calif, and Successor to Mahomet.” Enver had dreams of restor-

ing the Arab kingdom of Maveranar, the country on the other side of the River Amu-Darya (Oxus), and tried to unite the gangs of Bassmachi under his leadership. But Ibrahim Beg, who also enjoyed the confidence of the exiled Emir and looked upon the foreigner with jealousy, had meanwhile occupied Dushambe, and one fine day decided to arrest his rival. Five days he kept the "Commander in Chief and Successor to Mahomet" under lock and key.

"Do you see that house over there? That's where Enver Pasha drew up his proclamations to the Mussulmans."

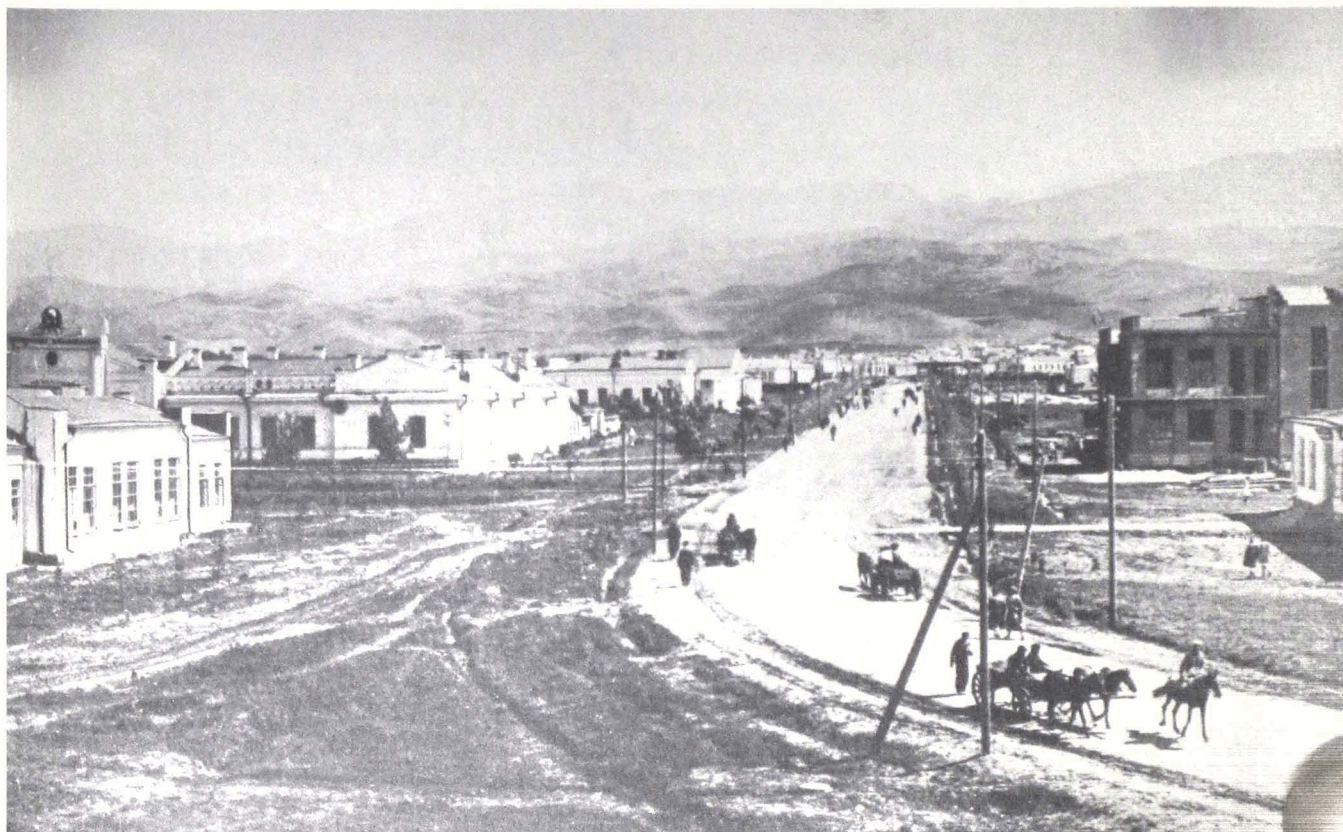
We see the house and we remember the proclamations. To the north, where the teachings of Marx were making more and more converts, he was careful to address no anti-socialistic or pro-religious word. For local consumption he proclaimed that Communism had been designed only for industrial states; that Marx, Lenin, and Engels had evolved this system in Germany, England, and Switzerland; that it did not apply to countries where industrial wage-slavery and the evils of capitalism were unknown, but must of necessity die out there within a few months. (So, for Asiatic purposes, he reversed the slogan which was simultaneously being used in Europe by the Independents and later by the "left" Social Democrats, who said that it might be possible for Communism to thrive in the backward Orient, but never among the more highly developed nations of the West.)

In his proclamations for the southern districts of Central Asia, Enver Pasha sang another tune. He entreated



The former small village of Dushambe, which has developed into the capital of Tajikistan — Stalinabad — with a population of forty thousand. Very few of the narrow, obscure streets now remain. Stalinabad lies amid high mountains ridged with everlasting snow. Builders working on contract, irrigation experts, technicians, electricians, machinists, surveyors, physicians, representatives of the Uzbek trade departments, etc., come here every spring and autumn. They live in camps, in clay huts roofed with mud and reeds.

A street in Stalinabad.





STALINABAD—A CAPITAL IN THE MAKING  
the peasants to fight for Islam against the Bolshevistic  
giaours, without mentioning the English giaours, who  
were furnishing him with aid in order to be free to go on  
subjugating Moslems by the million.

The Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bokhara  
sent out troops against him. Enver Pasha retreated with  
his soldiers and Bassmachi toward the east, beyond the  
narrow pass of Khovaling, but was killed in the village of  
Sarikhosor on August 4, 1922. The bullet had pierced  
his head through the fez; in his pockets were found the  
German Iron Cross and documents confirming his iden-  
tity.

The command was taken over by another Turkish ex-  
general, Khodsha Sami Beg, called Selim Pasha, who  
again attacked Dushambe, unsuccessfully. Smarting  
from his defeat and from the epithet of coward flung at  
him by Ibrahim Beg, he rode his horse Duldulj, in full  
sight of his men, into the roaring stream Panj, and per-  
ished. His body was buried in a cave beside that of Enver  
Pasha. The army dispersed, but the gangs went their own  
marauding way.

On March 14, 1925 the Autonomous Republic of  
Tajikistan was set up as a unit within the Soviet Republic  
of Uzbekistan, and the village of Dushambe was declared  
its capital. The members of the revolutionary committee  
arrived by airplane.

“Chauffeur, please turn to the right. We must show  
the foreigner the Kreml.” Thus was the first governmen-  
tal building ironically called: a sort of caravanserai  
made of crumbling clay. An apartment hardly two yards

high had served the President of the State as office; a second accommodated the Minister of Justice; a third the Minister of Finance. Above the entrance to this discarded stable, inhabited to this day by horse-flies, was a sign in both Tajik and Russian: "Peoples' Commissariat for the Department of Health." A maple tree in the courtyard provided shade for meetings of the Cabinet, which on hot days could enjoy under its foliage the comparative comfort of 104 degrees.

For new buildings raw materials were necessary. From Siberia, via Archangel, to the outposts of the Autonomous Republic of Tajikistan, many thousand miles distant, all was smooth sailing. But from Termez to Dushambe the going was more than rough. The only means of transport was the camel. On either side of each beast planks were bound and allowed to drag through the dusty clay. By the time the caravan had travelled a hundred and fifty miles, each plank was some twenty-five inches shorter than when it left the railway station. Three Atlantic crossings could have been made in the time required by the carpenters hired in Nizhni-Novgorod and Ryazan to arrive at their destination.

In 1925 a post office was erected. "You see that building over there? The offices and living-quarters of the Central Committee of the Party. It was also put up in 1925. And the school, and those two smaller buildings — when they were being erected, many workmen lost their lives, for the Bassmachi shot at them from ambush."

## STALINABAD—A CAPITAL IN THE MAKING

Sixty-six workmen were buried on the site of the present Courthouse. The edifice was completed under the protection of a cordon of armed guards.

In 1926 that mill was constructed. A two-storeyed building with electrical machinery, and a dining-hall. In those days the town boasted of a single motor-truck. In 1927: a few bridges, the first Farmers' Home, the public baths, the Commissariat of Finance, the District Committee office, the printing-press, the headquarters of the G. P. U. And the number of trucks had increased to five.

From now on things progressed rapidly. The press building, made of reinforced concrete, and a second Farmers' Home. — “Chauffeur, to the House of the Red Army!” The theatre, the library. “Do look at our park!” — a lovely park with Adamtrees, Asiatic oaks (*Quercus asiatica*), maple and fruit trees. “There's the Commissariat of Commerce.” Three Tajik, one Russian, and one Uzbek normal schools, a memorial to Lenin, the workmen's houses, the Red Tea-house, a steam-mill, a Party school, the pharmaceutical storehouse with State dispensary, kindergartens, schools, electric power plant, automobile roads.

On May 1, 1929 the first train steamed into Dushambe, completing direct railway connection with Moscow, Berlin, Paris. The airdrome now has a fleet of twenty-eight planes. The amount appropriated for construction purposes in 1927–8 was one and a half million roubles; in 1929 it was five million; in 1930 eighteen million; in 1931 thirty million, of which eighteen was used for



building streets, and the rest for houses. At first the building sites were chosen at haphazard; now they form part of a civic plan.

In July 1929 an extraordinary Andshuman (Soviet Congress) decided to admit Tajikistan into the Union of Soc. Sov. Reps. as an independent Soviet Republic. (The Nationality Program of the Soviet Union recognizes "the right of all nations, without regard to race, to full self-government, which implies self-government even to the degree of State separation.") The century-old dream of the Tajiks was fulfilled, and Tajikistan was an independent nation.

Three and a half years earlier, at the time of the first Andshuman, January 1, 1926, a delegation of women had appeared. Albeit they were deeply veiled and remained only a short while, this occurrence aroused the ire of the delegates, and many of them rode home full of indignation. At the Congress of 1929, women delegates sat unveiled side by side with the men and made speeches, and no one was even surprised. More than a thousand women have been elected members of the Dyamgate, as district representatives. At the same Congress it was decided to change the name of the capital from Dushambe to Stalinabad.

"You see that cinema over there? That's where the Andshuman was held."

Centuries have been skipped. Without passing through capitalism, without having learned to know exploitation

STALINABAD—A CAPITAL IN THE MAKING through machinery, straight from the yoke of mediæval feudalism, the land enters upon the era of constructive socialism, from individual to collective enterprise.

Here in the city we meet sons of the soil employed in occupations whose very existence they did not dream of until they left their native villages. One of our friends named Alibai (which is pronounced "Olyboy," just as Tajikistan is pronounced "Tojikiston") is in charge of the credit department at the branch of the Central Asiatic Bank; another makes chemical analyses in the Tropical Institute, and has a feminine pendant in the chemist's shop, a girl named Bara-at, who mixed us a medicine against papataci fever from a Latin prescription.

Nasratullah Maksum, the State President, can read printed Russian only with difficulty, and written Russian not at all. His eldest son, editor of the *Tojikistoni Surch*, reads Marx and Lenin to him aloud, in so far as their writings have not been translated into Tajik. The rest of the peasants in the Central Executive Committee understand no Russian. The President of the Cabinet, Abdurakhim Khodshibayev, is a Tajik, as are all the Peoples' Commissars with the exception of Nissar Muhammedov, who is a revolutionary from Afghanistan and has charge of the Commissariat for Education; the wife of this fear-inspiring Hun is a well-bred Kurlander, who speaks German.

All members of the Soviet, all officials, are Tajiks; only the technical, medical, and agronomic specialists, as well as a few organizers of the Party, are at present Russians; but the change to Tajiks is already under

way. Gusseynov, Party Secretary of Tajikistan, is a Turko-Tatar.

The Peoples' Commissary for Justice is not a judge. The Peoples' Commissary for Health is not a physician. Fifteen places were reserved this past year for Tajiks at the Moscow University, but could not be filled for lack of candidates with sufficient schooling. While many boys of the backward Kirghiz tribes were educated by missionaries under the old régime, on condition that they join the Greek Catholic Church, nothing of this sort happened in the Emir's kingdom. In 1932 the first students will have graduated from the Tajik public schools and workmen's faculties, and be able to attend the high schools. (With the exception of the cherubic-faced Rakhimbayev, who is already Technical Director of the Vakhsh-Stroi, and the first of his nationality to become an engineer.)

But everyone is studying. Before the Revolution two per cent of the Emir's subjects knew how to read, and of these only one half of one per cent actually lived in the district covered by the present Tajikistan; that is, only 6,000 out of 1,200,000 inhabitants. These six thousand were taught in Arabic, which they neither understood nor correctly pronounced; the teachers themselves, who only knew verses of the Koran by heart, were often unable to write their own names.

The first lay schools were founded in 1926: six of them. Before the end of that year the number had grown to one hundred and thirteen, with 2,324 pupils — all male. In 1929: five hundred schools, with 28,400 stu-

**STALINABAD—A CAPITAL IN THE MAKING**

dents, of which 1,500 were females. In 1931 there were nine hundred schools, of which six are Russian for the children of Russian workmen. Out of 119,000 children of school age, 58,000 enjoy regular instruction; of these 11,500 are girls. 75,000 adults have learned to read and write. By the building of more schools in 1932, all boys were expected to be included, and in 1933 all the girls. All adults from the age of sixteen to thirty-nine were, from 1932 on, to be compelled to take elementary instruction in evening courses.

The most important as well as the most difficult problem is that of procuring new teachers. Of the nine Tajik Teachers' Colleges, five serve to educate male teachers, three female, and one, that in Tashkent, is co-educational.

This land, where so lately as 1926 more than ninety-nine per cent of the population was illiterate, now boasts 16,000 public-school pupils, some of whom study at the above-named nine normal schools, the agrarian Technicum, and the Conservatory, which everywhere in the Soviet Union is, for some strange reason, called "Musical Technicum"; the rest of whom are studying in Tashkent, Moscow, and Leningrad. The Stalinabad daily newspaper *Tojikistoni Surch* has a circulation of 11,000; the farmers' paper 12,000; a periodical devoted to young readers, founded last year, 8,000 copies; three other papers are published in the provinces.

In Olim's time the number of illiterates was, so to speak, 100.5 per cent, for the half per cent who could read and write were the clergy and officials, who used

their knowledge for the oppression of the people. Today the new readers and writers are educated in the spirit of the Revolution. Chauvinistic and religious machinations must today rouse opposition among the Communist Party of this country, which in 1926 stood on the side of the Bassmachi in great majority. Today the Party counts 6,627 members; of these 40.7 per cent are Tajiks, 26 per cent Uzbeks; the rest are Russian, Kirghiz, and Kazaks. In 1929 the Communistic Youth Group had 4,424 members; today there are 25,151, while the trades unions number 6,500 members.

Against the outlaws, the farmers united into defensive troops called the "Red Sticks," and the former staff quarters of Enver Pasha are today barracks of the Tajik volunteer battalion.

There are many souvenirs of battles against the Bassmachi in these barracks. There stand horses of dead or imprisoned Kurbashi; the dapple-grey steed of Alimartar Dojo, who with three hundred and fifty men was defeated near the village of Khodsha-Bulbular; the stallion of Kuratik Beg, the "cross-eyed one," is an *Equus Przewalski*, or aboriginal steed: along his spine, as though drawn with a ruler, runs a black line; at right angles to this, starting at the neck, is the stripe of the wild ass; the lower part of the legs is that of a zebra. Lovely horses, all of them, ungelded, their hind feet unshod. But all have a festering sore under the saddle, which, for all the prowess of their riders, is, strange to say, never removed. The bridles are highly coloured, un-

**STALINABAD—A CAPITAL IN THE MAKING** practical, made of painted wood. The saddle-cushions are of straw covered with bits of leather or carpet; the pommel is often pointed.

“And what about the horse of Loshkari Boshi?” we ask the leader of the battalion, who is presenting to us the steeds of the gang leaders.

“We’ll get him too,” he replies, “even Loshkari Boshi!” Loshkari Boshi, “Head of the Soldiers,” is Ibrahim Beg, supreme leader of the outlaws.

The Persian carpet of Alimartar Dojo is there too. Wherever he had this rug spread out was staff headquarters, the officers’ mess, the High Command. The swords of bandit warriors were literally swords of judgment. Some of the captured guns were the handiwork of their owners—the short-barrelled muskets made of branches and door-locks make some of the historic pistols and flints in our criminalistic museums look modern. But we also see some of the newer European makes, such as Winchester and Mannlicher rifles, Mauser revolvers, and hand-grenades.

We are shown photographs and maps of the inhospitable heights and caves whither volunteers of the Tajik Red Sticks had to venture, in order to ferret out the bandits; we see a collection of coins that formed part of their plunder: Indian rupees, Afghan grans, pierced Chinese sapeks.

“And what about Loshkari Boshi’s English sovereigns?”

“He won’t escape us. Ibrahim Beg himself no longer believes in his immunity. Wherever he makes an appear-

ance the peasants at once unite against him and announce his approach to the neighbouring villages.”

Whenever we think back upon the summer days which we are now spending in Stalinabad, we shall break out into a *warm* sweat! We are writing with a fountain-pen in which the ink is drying up, on paper damp with the sweat of our brow, in a room whose windows are closed all day and hung with heavy curtains, lest the heat come in and never go out again. The more we perspire, the more kvass and narzan do we drink; and the more we drink, the more we perspire. Sixteen pounds of our bulk have already gone up in steam.

We are clad solely in bathing-shorts, and whenever it gets unbearable — as it sometimes does in the middle of the night — we take a bath and shower. The *chaus* is in the garden.

In the bazaar ice-cream made from camels' milk can be had at a rouble a portion, and it is well worth the money. Perhaps the camel, which is being supplanted by the automobile, will devote its future energy to this worthy cause. (Ice-cream makers of Europe, buy camels!) The Tajiks consume their ices without seeming to realize how extremely good they are.

In the shooting-gallery of the Park they aim at airplanes, which crash to earth, and at squirrels, which climb up a tree, if the shot is accurate.

The photographer is a very busy man. What Oriental lives who does not desire to be immortalized before an Alpine landscape with a steamer thrown in, along with a

STALINABAD—A CAPITAL IN THE MAKING  
few palms and an antique statue? Photography is Tajikistan's newest discovery; the cinema is old. The talkie-factory "Tajik-Kino" has modern operators and produces films for export. But now anyone, without moving an eyelid, can have a picture of himself within three minutes. Isn't that the pinnacle of human inventiveness? Likewise the phonograph found its way here long after the radio had become a commonplace. As for the mechanical piano which was recently installed in the Park, the natives are still speechless. Now what, my friends, will they say when they hear my grandmother's music-box render the waltz from *Faust*?

Here the stages of evolution are curiously jumbled. The airplane, which dropped out of the clouds and alighted in Dushambe with the members of the Government, was the first vehicle seen in this part of the world. There was great astonishment, but, since birds can fly, why not human beings?

The automobile was more incomprehensible. Its wheels made of an unknown material, the fact of its arrival in their midst was a complete mystery. If an automobile stopped in a village, hay and water were brought to it, in accordance with the laws of hospitality, as though it were the camel, or horse, or donkey of a guest. Cases were recorded of Bassmachi shooting with their flint guns into the head-lights, in the belief that if they hit the monster in the eyes, it would go blind and be unable to advance.

The climax of dismay, excitement, and admiration was reached when, long after the automobiles, the first



horse-drawn carriage appeared. The concept was familiar from the Koran, and pilgrims had reported that in Samarkand and Bokhara litters were drawn with the speed of an arrow, by horses. But they had not come across the mountains. And now the carriages were here. Everyone stood about the wooden wheels, rapt by this masterpiece of engineering, and asked how it was possible to produce a circle of wood all in one piece?

Meanwhile the Tajiks have learned to drive motor-cars, and, in the valleys cut up by ditches, they are often obliged to accomplish feats which would astound the chauffeur of a European city. There are twelve hundred native tractor-drivers in this country, where steel ploughs had never been known and where, to the present day, the private fields are ploughed with the wooden "omatch."

To cap the climax there came a new and utterly incredible invention: the bicycle! Instead of four wheels there are only two, one behind the other. By itself the vehicle cannot even stand, but if a man sits between the wheels, elevated so that his feet do not touch the ground, then it not only stands, but goes forward, and the man stays on! "Sheitan Arba — the Devil's carriage!" No one brings it hay or water. Let the thing die of hunger and thirst!

"There in the background of the stage you will see . . ."

We could see nothing, for as the words were spoken the theatre was plunged into darkness. No one is sur-

**STALINABAD—A CAPITAL IN THE MAKING**  
prised when lights go out; the wonder still is that there is any electric light at all. On the stage of the National Theatre, when our attention was drawn to something in the background only to be thwarted by a technical imperfection, a kerosene lamp was brought on the stage and the performance proceeded. A lecturer suddenly plunged into darkness continues his speech by candle-light or in the dark.

But soon the river Varsob, a tributary of the Kafirni-gan, is destined to produce enough light, not only for Stalinabad, but for the whole countryside, not for thirty but for three kopeks a kilowatt-hour, and in such steady flow that the exceptions shall no longer be the rule.

The Varsob-Stroi is a hydraulic station about ten miles north of the city, along a road which gave our chauffeur ample opportunity to prove that he could swear like the proverbial but seldom-heard trooper. Yet six months ago this road was not even "a son of a dog"; its mother, six months ago, would have merited even more dire punishment than is now being invoked on her head; it was only a ribbon of mud. Six months ago A. M. Gindin, a young engineer of twenty-eight, belonging to no party, graduate of the Timiryasev Academy in Moscow, was commissioned by the Tashkent Hydro-Electro-Stroi to go to Stalinabad and build a power plant there. Gindin could find no accommodations in the village of Dushambe, grown into the capital Stalinabad. He slept in the office of the Building Department, rode to the allotted tract of land, and, leading his horse by the bridle, searched up and down the river for a stretch which might

develop ten thousand horse-power. Then he hired two workmen and tried to induce the peasants of the neighbouring hamlet of Shafteh-Michgon to co-operate with him. "All you will have to do will be to press a button and everything will be as bright as in Dushambe," he argued. A few were ready to work for him, but demanded — though they were now electricians in a land of barter — that their wages be paid in goods: green tea, chewing-tobacco, flowered kerchiefs, silk material for cloaks. After a time other workmen were secured, Kirghiz, Uzbeks, Tajiks, and sometimes, of necessity, kulaks from the interior of Russia, who coveted the proud title of workman. All slept in one tent; Gindin's pocket was the bank; the sole means of transportation was hitched to a post outside, neighing; and in the neighbouring hills the Bassmachi lay in ambush.

A bridge was built, then a flood tore it away; the second bridge fared no better — but why relate all this? Now there are barracks for thousands of workmen, plenty of raw materials: iron, stone, wood, and machinery. The lock, a dam 196 yards in width, and a conduit, 1,131 yards long and thirteen feet deep, are being built by shock troops. Soon two turbines will be generating 7,750 kilowatts at high level and 4,000 kilowatts at low. Thus industry will be provided with power at a low cost, and Stalinabad will be safeguarded against recurrent eclipses.

Well, and what of it? Do not people build elsewhere under difficulties? Were there not pioneers in California as well? Is not the Panama Canal a thousand times greater marvel of technique?

## STALINABAD—A CAPITAL IN THE MAKING

Possibly. But everywhere it was profit that lured the contractor, and high wages that tempted the workers. The pioneers of a former era were dreaming of millions. This fellow Gindin, belonging to no party, will, when the Varsob-Stroi is finished, be transferred to the Arctic Sea and will there build another power plant. Many of those who are now crowding about us, pointing proudly to the labour of their hands—“Look here! Look there!”—will probably go with him, either for love of constructive activity or, as in the case of the ex-kulaks, in order to reach a higher grade in the ranks of skilled workmen.

One evening as we are taking a walk on the outskirts of the city, we get into conversation with the workers of the brick-factory and learn that they are Bassmachi, who have surrendered voluntarily. They come from Afghanistan and have had their families follow them here. Their Party leader is their former sergeant, a slender man with turned-up moustache, in a white shirt. Most of them wear Afghan silver coins as buttons. They tell us they had enough of fighting and were happy to be able to work.

“How much do you earn?”

“For every thousand bricks, twelve roubles. Some make only five hundred a day; the average is nine hundred and eighty. One of us manages fifteen hundred, he is the best of our shock troops.”

That's what they call themselves: shock troops. Being a demobilized military unit, they have taken the military word into the language of productive labour and social reform.

“ You have a shock brigade? ”

“ Yes. And we are all chipping in to present the collective with a tractor. We’ve already taken up almost two hundred roubles.”

These ex-bandits are engaged in the reconstruction; they have a shock brigade; they contribute tractors to the cause; they are making new bricks for the new houses of the new capital of the new Republic.

“ See that theatre over there? It is made of our bricks. And the bank over there? Also made of our bricks.”

They point with outstretched arms and turn our shoulders first this way, then that; they show the same enthusiasm as our guides when we arrived in Stalinabad, an enthusiasm which we, at that time, thought exaggerated.



## FOLLOWING SILK DOWNSTREAM



To tell the story of the production of silk, you have to start *ab ovo*.

With the egg . . . or, strictly speaking, with those functions which culminate in the egg. It is the old problem of the Greek Sophists: which came first, the egg or the chicken. In the Grenage Institute of Tashkent, at any rate, not only is the egg of the silkworm handled with more care than the breakfast variety receives in the kitchen, but science, in the role of matchmaker, stimulates the love-life of the silk-butterfly, to whom this egg owes its existence.

But while science is very much in evidence here in the form of microscopes, thermometers, and other apparatus, it is here as the servant of industry, a silk industry, which takes its source at this institute. From this source a rivulet flows, at first sluggishly, through the mountains from village to village, meandering in zigzags across the whole breadth of Central Asia before it develops into the great River of Silk.

In April people come here to the Grenashni-Savod in

Tashkent, or to the supplementary cocoon nurseries in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and get their supply of silkworm eggs, *Bombyx mori*.

The distributing centres have been in existence only a few years, but their history can be divided into three distinct chapters. First — or Ancient History — it was the men who called for the eggs, and a month later came back with the cocoon and received money in exchange. Women only did the actual work of feeding and caring for the caterpillars. The second phase — or Middle Ages — the Mussulman raised the quota of work to be done by the female slave entrusted to him, thereby simplifying his own: in other words, he also sent the woman to fetch the eggs. All he did was to bring the cocoons to the factory and pocket the proceeds. Then came a right-about-face: at the distributing centre the women were enlightened and taught that whoever does the work is entitled to the pay. And so now — the beginning of the Modern Age — practically the entire clientele consists of women, and it is with women that the contracts are closed. Contracts are also made with schools.

As a fever patient might press a thermometer under her arm, so these women on their way home hug the little box of eggs under their arm-pits, maintaining that this is the right temperature for them, less warm than the outer air, where they might hatch too soon.

The little box is the size of a cigarette package and weighs only twenty-five grams. Yet these twenty-five grams represent not less than thirty-five to forty thousand

## FOLLOWING SILK DOWNSTREAM

eggs, which, when transferred from the arm-pit and the box to the heat of the rooms, soon hatch into an equivalent number of tiny flour-white worms.

With finely chopped mulberry leaves these are fed three times a day, and wax from little worms into caterpillars, which go on eating until at length they grow weary of everlastingly feeding and shedding their skin, and so, toward the middle of May, about thirty days after they have slipped out of the egg, they decide to slip back into another. Needless to say, the month-old worm needs a larger shell than the one he originally came from, so he is obliged to build it himself. He wraps it about himself with patience and spittle, and within twelve days he has finished the job.

While the worm is in the process of immuring himself in his chrysalis, which all the forty thousand co-inhabitants of the little box are doing at the same time, he is brought back to the Grenage Institute.

But one little box pressed into the pit of the arm no longer suffices. The *arba* is brought out, a cart whose wheels are six feet high, for the same reason that camels have been given long legs: that the drifting sands of the desert may not completely obliterate all trace of the vehicle. The driver sits, not on the wagon, but on the back of the horse, his legs drawn up, resting his feet on the shafts. In Tajikistan, where carts are not in general use, the silken burden is transported by mules.

One man could not get far under the load of chrysalids that has grown from such modest beginnings. The con-



tents of the little box has increased considerably in volume in the six weeks that have elapsed. The twenty-five grams now weigh sixty kilograms; each kilogram comprising five hundred and forty cocoons.

In the courtyard the breeders, with their horsehair veils chastely drawn over their face, unload their sacks and baskets. For white cocoons, "Bagdada," they are paid one rouble seventy-five kopeks per kilogram; for "ascoli-piccio," those in which the pupa adheres to the cocoon, two roubles twenty kopeks; for the Chinese, which the Italian specialists call "gialla-oro," they receive two roubles; the native cocoons are called "tshoidari" and net only one rouble fifty kopeks per kilogram.

Veiled and unveiled, these women stand about the carts in groups, exchanging notes on their experiences as cocoon-breeders, chatting with alien women who have crossed whole mountain chains on their way to Tashkent. School-children also mingle in the groups talking shop.

The sacks with their silvery and golden contents are carried into the sheds. Sorting machines stretch away like a moving ribbon. Workmen test every cocoon, to make sure that it is really shaped like an egg, that it shows no anomaly, that it is not, by some whimsical chance, spun in the form of a heart or a sphere. The cocoons are classified as to size, by rolling them over three sieves — small, medium, and large. The medium-sized cocoons are the best.

The faulty specimens — for example, it often happens that an inquisitive butterfly has already pierced the walls of its little prison — are sent to Moscow, to be made into

## FOLLOWING SILK DOWNSTREAM

what is called "silk waste." Up to a few years ago this silk waste was sold to Milan; but today, with the help of Italian specialists, the Soviet Union is in a position to manufacture its own finished and semi-finished product and to export the same.

These faulty specimens, as well as the greater part of the good ones, that come to the spinning-mills by the cartload, are first of all shoved into drying ovens. The heat pierces the silken walls, and the inhabitant, concealed behind them, dies.

Twenty-three tons of the best cocoons are left to breed in a shed where an even temperature is maintained. Here we have pretty goings-on. Out of the frames barred with a coarse mesh, between which the cocoons have been laid, from the fifth day on, hundreds of thousands, nay, millions of butterflies emerge. They do not flutter far.

Hardly have they seen the light of day when they begin to mate, either on the little metal wires or on the table. The females exude an odour which entices their partners. They are fat creatures with short wings, and remain fairly immobile while their mates are asserting their prerogatives. On the other hand the male — who has a turned-up moustache — makes a tremendous fuss. Uninterruptedly he beats his wings, filling the air with powder, so that the workmen would suffocate if copious ventilation were not provided. Air-shafts in the ceiling and in the floor carry away the wing-dust and let in new air.

After two hours of uninterrupted copulation the female is satiated. She knows what the authorities on

caterpillar-breeding have found out by lengthy experimentation: that this is just the right length of time for fecundation. But the husband is not so easily dissuaded. He would continue his dusty activity for fifty hours — being biologically equipped for such endurance — and then fall dead. This is known only from experimentation; here he is not permitted to indulge himself longer than is profitable. After two hours a rude human hand tears asunder what science hath joined, and throws the inconsolable bridegroom into a basket, destined for some poultry collective: mere chicken-feed.

As a result of careful selection the number of male and female butterflies is about even. If there should be an extra male, he tries to usurp the place of a more fortunate lover. A duel ensues, and, as among humans, the strong one creates the future, the weaker one stands by and philosophizes. Sometimes a sympathetic woman worker intervenes in favour of the beaten philosopher. As among humans.

Similarly, if there should be a supernumerary female, she must be supplied with a mate — a mate who has already done his duty elsewhere — and this is no longer a matter of mere complaisance, but of business expediency. For although an unmated female will lay eggs, they are sterile, just as in the case of the barnyard spinsters!

When the mass marriage is consummated, human hands knock on the wire meshing or on the table. In a flash the pairs separate, and all begin to urinate at once. A white milky liquid covers the floor. If the butterflies were not induced to relieve their feelings in this manner,

## FOLLOWING SILK DOWNSTREAM

then the males would later soil their basket, which would not be a misfortune, but the females also their lying-in beds, which must remain clean.

The lying-in bed: each female is tucked into an envelope. On the evening of the day on which she was born, married, and divorced, she also becomes a mother. She begins laying eggs at once, and within two days there are from four hundred to seven hundred, slate-grey-blue in colour. By the time this is accomplished, she has lost all internal moisture, and dies.

Does she die? Certainly not, according to the principles of science, albeit she is dead, beyond a doubt. Science recognizes only three causes of death: illness, old age, or violence. Here there can be no question of any of these three phenomena. The condition of the female is normal; she is young, even for a butterfly; and neither copulation nor egg-laying comes under the head of violence. The apparent demise is, then, nothing else than a transfiguration of the female butterfly into her eggs, just as these eggs transform themselves into caterpillars, the caterpillars into cocoons, and the cocoons again into butterflies.

The corpse of the defunct or transfigured mother lies beside her children in the envelope. But her trials are not yet over. Her wings are torn out, her body is pulverized by means of a pestle and examined under a microscope which enlarges it five hundred times. Then it is easy to ascertain whether the mother shows traces of having suffered from jaundice, grasserie, or pébrine (a special hereditary type of spotted typhus, peculiar to the silk-

worm and discovered by Pasteur). If any such diseases are discovered, she and her progeny are destroyed.

Those eggs, however, which after the mother's post-mortem can show a clean bill of health, are left to lie where they are, in an even temperature, until the following April they are distributed again in little boxes of twenty-five grams, fed in the villages and brought back as cocoons, to arise again as butterflies, to copulate, fertilize, bear young, and die, all in the name of the silk industry.

## II

The lay-out of the places where the cocoons are collected is everywhere the same. On the outskirts of the town which is the distributing centre there is a long building made up of shelves, or cells, sheltered by a roof, and to one side are drying ovens of clay.

We passed many of them, and in each a different stage of the proceedings was being carried out. While the first cocoons were arriving in Tashkent, their delivery had long since been accomplished in the south of Tajikistan, in Sarai-Kamar, and the whole crop had been sent to the spinning-mill; while in some of the mountainous districts the eggs were just beginning to be distributed.

Often we watched the iron tray with its snow-white or golden yellow "bonbons" being shoved into the kiln. The smoke of the oven was like an extra blanket spread over the sultry air and did not entice us to linger.

Not until we had reached a higher, cooler district, in the foothills of the Pamir — with the waters of the



An Uzbek woman sorting cocoons on a collective farm in Uzbekistan.

Unwinding cocoons in a silk-factory in Samarkand.





Vakhsh sparkling over red rubble-stones beneath us, and the dazzling white of the Czar Peter Mountains above — did we dismount from our horse before a cocoon establishment.

The woman in charge wore breeches and high boots, a fact which she later explained by saying that during the civil war she had become accustomed to wearing a uniform and could not go back to women's clothes.

“Is that the scar of a bullet-wound on your cheek, Comrade?”

“Yes, I was shot. I've another scar on my neck and two on my leg.”

“You've lived through a good deal, Comrade, haven't you?”

“More than you would ever be able to imagine. . . . My husband was leader of one of the partisan divisions. He came home severely wounded. Our village was taken by the Whites, and ours was the first house entered by the invaders. Perhaps someone denounced us. They seized my husband, bound him, and cried: ‘You've sung your damned *Internationale* for the last time.’ Whereupon he began to sing the *Internationale*. ‘We'll soon make you hold your tongue!’ They threw me upon the bed and called mockingly to him: ‘How about a little musical accompaniment for *this*?’ He sang the *Internationale* while they raped me. Nothing could stop him. They brought in our two children and threatened to shoot them. First they shot the little girl, she was three; then they aimed their rifles at the boy; his name was Mischa, he was five. My husband stopped singing. They shouted in glee,



then shot my little boy, and afterwards my husband. That was in the Ukraine in 1918.”

This brief life-story sent shudders down our spine. The woman was right when she said she had lived through more than we could ever have imagined.

What is there left for us to say to her? We ask how she made her way from the Ukraine to the Pamir, from the horror of civil war to the quiet activity of the silk industry. She rolled herself a cigarette.

“Two weeks later I volunteered at the front. I’ve been shot four times. But even graver wounds could not have kept me from the front. Unfortunately I could never hear the *Internationale* again without falling in a fit. To this day I haven’t got over that. If anyone sings the *Internationale*, or merely whistles the melody, I have a seizure. For this reason every kind of work was impossible for me. The Party offered me my choice of occupations. I said I was willing to go anywhere where the *Internationale* was not sung. They suggested Italy. But that was not what I wanted. . . . ‘There is no place, Comrade, in the whole Soviet Union where the *Internationale* is not sung — except perhaps up in the Pamir.’ So I had myself sent to the Pamir. Here there are no orchestras. The peasants accompany their folk-songs to the du-tar (Tajik guitar). Of late this too is changing. We have radios, and when I go home at night, I have to pick streets where the loudspeakers cannot be heard. Even so, I usually stuff my ears with cotton. I’ve been here two years and in all that time have had only four attacks — back in Russia I had at least one a week. Formerly I could not even speak of

## FOLLOWING SILK DOWNSTREAM

these things, but they told me not to shut them up inside me or they would eat out my heart, and I believe they were right. Well, that's enough about me. . . . Let's talk about the work up here."

We accept the diversion.

This branch establishment receives four thousand boxes of eggs from the Grenage Institute in Tashkent. "For us the first of May is not a holiday, for on that very day we begin distributing the boxes; in other districts the cocoons are delivered at this time. Down in the valleys the cocoons develop at the natural temperature, but our breeders often have to heat their rooms to obtain the proper temperature of 78 degrees. It is June up here before the caterpillar begins to spin himself in. Out of ten grams of eggs we get about twenty-four kilograms of cocoons, mostly of the Bagdad variety. When the cocoons are delivered to us they are put into the oven for at least fifteen minutes, until the worm is quite white and dead. The cocoons are laid on the shelves to dry for from six weeks to two months; then they are sent to the thread-factory.

"Peasants even used to come from Afghanistan to get boxes from us, and brought us the cocoons. But theirs were very small, because they have so few mulberry trees over there. This year they delivered nothing at all. Now the boundaries are closed. But that doesn't matter. Our production is increasing and we produce almost four times as many cocoons as we did three years ago."

"So you are contented, Comrade?"

"Yes and no. The silk-breeding in Tajikistan has in-

creased by 1,939 hundredweight of cocoons since last year; that is twenty-seven per cent. Our district shows the greatest improvement. We produce almost twice as many cocoons as the Vilayet Gissar, the Vilayet Kurgan-Tyube, and the Vilayet Kuljab together. This year we shall produce 946 hundredweight. But that is much too little; the weather was bad, many of the roads were impassable, the mulberries were late in blossoming. . . . According to the Five Year Plan we should have delivered 1,804 hundredweight, and then our district would have had its own spinning-mill. But we fulfilled only fifty per cent of the plan. If we manage to make 2,200 hundredweight next year, our quota will be complete and we shall be given our mill. We will succeed. And when they begin to build the factory, I'll ask them to play the *Internationale* — for then the past will be dead.”

## III

In Bokhara, a city of crude and despotic romance, rugs have been woven since the beginning of time, while armourers stood at their forges. In Samarkand, a city of glistening turrets and delicate façades, silk has always been spun. If ever there were similar geographic-æsthetic affinities in Europe, they have long since disappeared, and one reads of the “ fire in the slaughterhouse of Saragossa ” or the “ atrocities of the Weimar police ” without any sense of incongruity. Perhaps this sentimental geography will soon vanish in Soviet Asia as well, for even here modern industry selects its sites from a practical point of view. On the other hand, in any land of planned

## FOLLOWING SILK DOWNSTREAM

economics, a traditional industry cannot be left to lie fallow for arbitrary reasons; indeed, a traditional industry can be given fresh impetus by the methods of a socialistic State.

Regrettably this has not been the case with carpet-weaving in Bokhara. This handicraft ceased to exist during the years of hunger when the forces of reaction cut off the Emir's realm from Soviet Turkestan, and the latter from Europe. During the civil war the masters of this craft wandered with their looms and samples into Afghanistan, and subsequent attempts by the Soviets to revive the carpet industry remained fruitless. It is more difficult to buy a Bokhara rug in Bokhara than in Berlin or New York.

Silk is quite another story. The Soviets have not only encouraged the industry, but put it on a sound practical basis, and at the same time made it a means of liberating the native women. "Khudsum — the Storm" is the name of the biggest spinning-mill of Samarkand. It employs eleven hundred workers of both sexes, just as many as the spinning-mill named after the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution in Fergana, which is its principal socialistic competitor. Like chess opponents who are playing *par distance*, the moves of each are telegraphed back and forth, and large billboards in the "Storm" and the "Anniversary" record each stage of the inter-urban contest.

Though our eyes have grown used to the splendour of gold on white, from feasting on the extravagance of ecclesiastical architecture in Samarkand, they are none

the less dazzled by the alternate gold and white mounds of cocoons in the storeroom of the silk-mill. Equally lustrous are great heaps of white and yellow silk, first spun by a worm, then unspun by human hands, to be respun by a machine.

When the cocoons have been separated according to colour, size, kind, and quality, they glide down a chute to a crew of women employees in the workroom. The cocoons have been thoroughly dried in advance, and now the first step is to moisten them again. A steam bath dissolves the sticky coating of the little silk house, and the fresh surface is polished by delicate rotating brushes. From a nugget or an egg-shaped piece of Carrara marble it is transformed into a simple bobbin, which remains impervious under a cold bath, just as it had withstood the hot one.

Out of this final bath the workwoman fishes the cocoon. Its outer coat is removed: a fibrous stuff, fit only for coarser thread. Now the last breath of the caterpillar is sought for and found, the very end of the filament it span. This is passed through the eye of an agate stone capable of holding five other cocoon threads simultaneously.

Many of the women of Samarkand wear their horse-hair face-shield in the contest against Fergana. Some of them do not remove it even when they draw the threads through the agate stone and thence lead them over the reel: a wheel which, to speak geometrically, is an octahedron, but turns so rapidly that you cannot see the corners. This unrolls the six cocoons and twists the six filaments

## FOLLOWING SILK DOWNSTREAM

into a single thread from two hundred and fifty to five hundred yards in length.

Over the heads of the working-women the threads glide swiftly toward the whirling spools, winding themselves tightly about each other as they go. Nets divide this room into compartments in which the cocoons are softened, brushed, and unwound, in which the ends of the threads are knotted, the spools changed, the lustrous strands lifted out and twisted into skeins.

Thousands and thousands of chrysalids are thus robbed of their dwelling. Dispossessed and denuded lies the poor worm who has produced the precious raw material and ingeniously manufactured the half-finished article, his house and his sepulchre. He is called a "chrysolita"; everything here has an Italian appellation, for it is but three years since the factory was installed by specialists from Turin. Now it runs without alien help and is a unit in the Five Year Plan. From the chrysolita soap is made, the silk-glutin is utilized for fuel-oil; and the rough threads we have here seen wound off and wound up are transported to the mill in Khojent.

The vapour rising from the basins, the criss-cross strands of silk, the whirling of spools and cylinders addle our senses. . . .

Where are we?

A narrow vale in the light of the moon.

Bushes are luxuriant with blackthorn and laburnum, great spider-webs suspended in their branches.

Mists are rising up from the meadow.

Nymphs are robbing the nests of their silver and golden eggs. Nymphs plucking dandelions, and dancing a dance of veils in a magic circle.

Autumn is in the air, with a breath of Indian summer.

The average wage of the workwomen is 130 roubles. In the evenings they attend the educational courses. A few years ago they were imprisoned, penniless, illiterate slaves of their husbands.

## IV

“There are no antiquarian or exotic curiosities in the history of silk-manufacture. . . .”

Thus spoke the Director of the Musée des Tissus in Lyons a few months ago, when we commented that this gallery containing the most indescribably beautiful patterns of all periods and all lands would only begin to interest the layman when it was shown under what economic and technical conditions such masterpieces had been produced.

“Always and in every place,” he added, “the production of silk has been accomplished by the same means. Joseph Jacquard did nothing more than perfect the spinning-wheel, which was in use the world over. On the staircase you can see models of his apparatus as well as those of previous ages. One original is in the Musée Gadagne. No other specimens are to be found.”

But after today's experience we know that he was wrong. Here in Khojent we find contrivances worthy of a whole technological side-show in the Lyons museum. The oldest spinner of the Croix-Rousse, the silk district

## FOLLOWING SILK DOWNSTREAM

of that city, would shake her head over the archaic spools, reels, and spindles that are to be seen here; at the sight of the hand spinning-wheel, its ancient cousin in the Musée Gadagne would pale. But the directors of the Lyons Museum of Weaving must hurry if they still wish to see these antedeluvian implements at work.

The last of the hand-weavers live in the Old City of Khojent. Through their long-drawn-out workrooms of adobe runs a wire. Under the yarn-beam and at the opposite end hang stone weights attached to this wire, to keep the woven piece taut. The weaver seems as antiquated as his method of working; his beard looks as though it were made of by-products of his craft; and his shoulders sag as though the stone weights were dragging him down. Yet this greybeard is strong and nimble. With his feet he lifts the yarn-beam, with his hands he throws a weaving-shuttle under the thread; and so he produces the chain with his foot and the shot with his hand; step and throw, step and throw for the length of a man's life, the length of an old man's life. Step and throw; the same weave out of green and blue and violet thread, for the length of an old man's life, of ten old men's lives.

Still more odd than the weaving-loom, this strange combination of comb and brush, is another little contrivance: in the yarn-beam a lath has been inserted at right angles, and from it dangles a fur tassel, which, at every movement of the pedal, smites the weaver softly in the face.

Finally we grasp the purpose of this: it scares the flies



away from the master when he throws the shuttle. Of flies there is in fact a plethora, and the steam which fills the room fails to discourage them. The steam issues from two pots in which two liquids boil incessantly: starch and tea.

The weaver turns out six yards a day and earns less than half the wages of a factory hand. Although the hand-woven goods are more expensive than the manufactured, it is nevertheless easy enough to sell them, because the output of the factories does not yet equal the demand. Not for long now will our old weaver sit crouching under his fly-swatter of fur. The factories are inexorably weaving his shroud.

Across the way other looms are clattering in chorus. There younger colleagues of the hoary home workers are at work, turncoats from the hand-loom to the semi-mechanical, exchanging a craft for a trade. The silk-factory "Red Weaver" is an artel, a co-operative union, of 413 former home weavers. There are, besides these, 116 workers of both sexes employed in the factory. The earnings of the members depend on their production, but never sink below the norm of wages for the category in which they are working.

Brightly shimmering, many-hued patterned silks are woven, green-blue-violet striped material for the chalats of the men; claret-red and golden flowered shawls for the women. From cardboard rolls overhead, through thousands of holes, run threads of various colours, in different directions, seeking each other, forming alli-

## FOLLOWING SILK DOWNSTREAM

ances, and, in a manner strictly prescribed for them, creating a design.

One hundred and thirty-two weaving-loom. One pull at the string, and the shuttle snaps over to the other bank of the silk stream, which everlastingly mirrors the same reflections and runs through the same bed; is eternally the same, yet eternally different, since it rises anew from ever new sources. The bouquet of flowers, too, which drifts over a wave of silk, and gradually vanishes, is the thousandth replica of other bouquets which have drifted across the waves and gone over the gentle waterfall.

In a special atelier the Tajiks transfer the sketches of given designs onto tiny sheets of paper marked off in squares, and stamp the pattern into the stencil rolls. That branch is in charge of male employees. The women sit on the ground, as for centuries they were accustomed to do in the *ichkari*, the women's quarters in the houses of their masters. And very likely their mothers and grandmothers used these same instruments to reel in the threads that keep arriving from the mills of Samarkand: black spindles, each one carved in a different design. We respectfully call the attention of the Lyons museum to these tools, as well as to the sculptured frames and the gigantic four- and eight-cornered reels.

Women with staring eyes, unaccustomed to the unbarred, unfiltered light, girls with eyebrows painted together over the bridge of their nose, and delighted with the hideous effect they produce, are singing at work. Words and melody are strange to the stranger. For all

he knows, the humming and purring of the spindles is being accompanied by the warning lament of Atropos, the serene ballad of Clotho, or the watchful chant of Lachesis:

Unwind the spool, the thread is spun,  
 Each cord my sure hand steers.  
 When each its fatal course has run,  
 My sister wields her shears.

But we conclude that it cannot be a song of the Fates, for we catch the words "Lenin" and "fabrika." Gradually it takes on the rhythm of the wheels, or is it the wheels which of themselves accelerate to the jubilant finale of the song?

The factory, built in the erstwhile country palace of a powerful chief of police, produces silk stuffs to the value of 5,109,000 roubles a year. But, just as the home weavers near by are technically far behind their most old-fashioned colleagues of the Croix-Rousse, so the factory, with its starting-wheel worked by hand, its spinners crouched on the floor, and its weavers who work while standing, can by no means endure comparison with the great mills of Lyons.

We must go a little further still to come, at last, completely into the third epoch of the silk-weaving industry. A complex of vast buildings will soon bring into one mighty unit all the processes in the production of silk which we have just travelled through Central Asia to observe in their separate phases: from the silkworm nurseries in Tashkent to the cocoon refineries on the Afghan

## FOLLOWING SILK DOWNSTREAM

border, from thence to the spinning-mill in Samarkand, and finally to the hand-weavers and semi-mechanical looms in Khojent.

All these processes and some not herein mentioned are now to be united, along with facilities for the disposal of by-products. This is what economists speak of, in theory, as "vertical co-ordination." In space, however, vertical co-ordination usually expresses itself horizontally. The various departments are ranged side by side. There are two spinning halls with three hundred and eighty-four cocoon basins; a thread-factory with eighteen hundred spindles; and a weaving-mill with four hundred looms.

The building is laid out with an eye to the convenience of the workers. They use the main gate as an entrance, the executive offices being in another block. Inside this gate is a circular portico some fifty-two yards in diameter, covered by a dome twelve yards high. Around this pillared hall are the working-men's institutions, the Executive Council, the offices of the Party Committee, trades unions, and similar organizations, the Labour Insurance office, the pay-office, a dressing-room with five thousand lockers, complete with swimming-pool and showers.

Almost in the centre of each workroom, into which vast windows pour a flood of light, one comes suddenly upon a chasm, sixteen feet deep, thirty-nine feet wide. There are ventilation chambers provided with electrical appliances which serve the same purpose as the humble fly-brush of the ancient weaver across the way.

Four million roubles are appropriated for the con-

struction of this aggregation of silk industries, which will produce hundreds of tons of finished material each year. The cement-mixers are working full blast; trees are hacked rather than planed into posts; pavements are being rolled, roofs covered, doors fitted into place. Spinning-machines have already arrived, of American, French, and native manufacture. The old Secretary of the Party unit calls our special attention to those marked "Grusin Metal Trust, Tiflis." The old man teaches in the Fab-Sa-Uch, a school for the mechanics of the silk industry which has four hundred pupils, more than a third of whom are Tajik girls. He himself is not a native of Tajikistan, but of the Rhineland. True, a great deal of water has flowed down the Rhine since he, Cæsar Storch, came to Turkestan to set up in Tashkent the first machines exported by Krupp. He remained here and has five children, all of whom are Communists, as, like a good father, he took pains to inform us. One son is head chemist; another, Adolf Cæsarovich, is Red director of the Oil and Fat Institute in Saka-Andishan. Quite as a matter of course. It is a good thirty-four years since Comrade Cæsar left the machine-works at Ackersdorf on the Rhine. His brother stayed at home and is still working in that very factory. But Comrade Cæsar doubts whether his nephews have in the meantime become scientific experts and directors of factories.



## ROBBERS VANQUISHED



This is the story of what happened on June 23, 1931. A writer out for effect would relate the singular events of that night as if they had taken place a few days later. Their plausibility would thereby be enhanced, but as we are aiming at truth rather than plausibility, we will narrate the incidents of June 23 as we lived through them.

We left Stalinabad around noon on a truck, travelling due south. The bridge over the river Kafirnigan (literally: the faithless woman who was drowned) had been carried away by floods; a mile or so downstream its timbers lay strewn about the bank. Red soldiers kept the traffic going. They had stretched a rope for some six hundred and fifty yards across the river, and a board rigged like a boatswain's chair was pulled back and forth along it, carrying one person at a time. Beneath us, as we were drawn across the face of the waters on the *lulka*, natives braved the rushing stream on the *burdyuk*, a bundle of inflated skins. They were steered by a man in a loin-cloth, who swam beside them, holding fast to the air-filled raft and guiding its course by movements of his feet.

Once safely across, we had only a mile or two to go to

reach the village of Koktash. The word "Koktash" we could translate ourselves, for during the last week we had imbibed gallons of "kok-tshaj," green tea, in order to quench our thirst and wash down the dust; and "Tashkent," we knew, signified "stone settlement." Koktash, therefore, must mean "green stone." But when we got there, everything proved to be red: gory tree-tops waved us a cheerful welcome, and the triumphal gate and the speakers' tribune were draped in Soviet bunting.

A festival was being celebrated and we had wished to be present — had, in fact, postponed our trip through Tajikistan in order to take it in. It was a holiday organized by the Red Sticks, a volunteer group of peasants founded as a defence against bandits.

The Red Sticks fight on the outposts of Soviet ground, and along the border of British colonies and protectorates, defending the Soviet Union against the Interventionists, or, in general terms, against all those who threaten the harvests of their collectives, who plunder their co-operative stores, who scatter their herds, destroy their tractors, and threaten to deprive them of all their innovations: railways, clubs, electricity, newspapers, and books.

Sixty thousand men are enrolled in various units of the Red Sticks. But we chose to visit those of Koktash because, in more than one respect, they are the most important.

Here, directly south of Stalinabad, the Lokais are at home — a restless, semi-nomadic, Uzbek tribe whose warrior caste and clergy had in the days of the Emir re-

## ROBBERS VANQUISHED

ceived special privileges, including virtual exemption from taxation. The Emir needed these Uzbek wedges in the Tajik body, being familiar with the precept: divide and rule. The ruling family had sprung from one of the Lokai tribes, and for some two hundred years this dynasty, the Mangites, had gloried in their prestige until, in 1920, it was somewhat dimmed by that of the neighbouring tribe, Issan-Khodsha, which provided the new chieftain. Here, in the village of Koktash, District of Fakrabad, Vilayet Gissar, stood the cradle of Ibrahim Beg, and here, in accordance with ancient custom, he was made to sit upon a carpet of white felt and proclaimed Father of all the bands of Central Asia.

The Lokais had fought side by side with Ibrahim Beg, who was the son and father of their land, the Vendée of Central Asia. And at a moment when the summer festival of the Red Sticks was already announced, Ibrahim Beg, with the last of his Bassmachi, popped up again in the District of Fakrabad, among the very men who had once called upon him to be their leader. What a home-coming! His former Kurbashi (cavalry officers) are functionaries in the State Executive, in the district and village Soviets, in the collectives and Soviet farms, in the co-operatives; they advocate the unveiling of women; are members of the Party; their sons have become Komsomols. What a welcome! The Dechkans, whom he came to liberate from the claws of Bolshevism, set out against him with knouts and sickles and fire-arms, gave him battle for battle, pursued him until nearly all his Kurbashi and Jigiti crept away to surrender themselves.



He himself lurks in the hills with a handful of his men, not daring to show himself by day. Can he really still hope for reinforcements? He has proclaimed that soon he will wreak a terrible vengeance upon those who deserted him.

But his tribal brothers do not seem worried by his nearness; what he hopes they by no means fear; and to-day, June 23, 1931, they are holding their celebration. In the distance, far beyond the scene of the festivities, rises the massive range of the eastern mountains. Mountain, mountain — rock, rock — ridge, ridge — and like the commas between these harsh words, the glaciers make sharp white gashes.

A little in front of the mountain range with its white Kalmuk helmets, lies the hilly region between the rivers Kafirnigan and Vakhsh. Up there the herds of domestic animals graze beside their wild brothers; and somewhere up there the wild brothers of those who are down here, giving a festival, hold themselves in hiding. Perhaps Ibrahim Beg himself, peering over the jagged edge of some crevice, is watching our goings-on, with the help of an English field-glass.

Many hundreds of horses are hitched to pegs, while their masters sit cross-legged on the ground in a wide-swing circle. Their gaily coloured scarves serve as holsters for daggers and pistols; their shoulders and hips are joined by a cartridge-belt. As corner-post of each group, two posts stand erect, and from them a broad red banner is stretched, over fifty or sixty heads.

The principal entertainment, which has been going on

## ROBBERS VANQUISHED

for hours in the inner circle, consists in physical encounters similar to ju-jutsu. In Uzbek they are called *kurash*; in Tajik, *goshten*. First the partners kneel side by side in the grass, touch the earth and then their faces with both hands, which may be a religious ceremony, but seems rather to be a rule of the fight; then they arise and with an air of boredom follow each other slowly around in short curves, then circle about each other with outstretched arms and clawing fingers, each trying to seize his adversary by the lapel of his coat or his linen belt, each trying to wrap his calf and foot about that of his adversary and throw him to earth. A swift movement followed by a scuffle. Sometimes the one twirls the other horizontally in the air, then with surprising suddenness finds himself flat on his back, having been thrown by a tricky manœuvre of the man at his mercy.

As a sign of triumph the winner hops about on one leg and receives a flowered scarf, the loser being consoled with a cup of green tea.

The European spectator finds much to marvel at. Men, whose enormous black beards evoke an atmosphere of patriarchal solemnity, walk into the ring, slip off their sandals, make the ritual gesture of stroking first the ground and then their face, and proceed—to misde-mean themselves, whirling about the ring, yanking at their equally venerable, equally hirsute rivals, tripping them up, twirling them round and round—provided they are not being tripped and twirled themselves—then victoriously hopping about on one leg, apparently with not the slightest suspicion of diminished dignity.

Even more astonishing is the impeccable behaviour of the sorely tried costume. It consists of a pongee cutaway — under which, in place of a vest, a bare torso presents itself to view — linen shorts, and a sash. These garments are tugged at and clung to; the wearer is hoisted by them and mercilessly tossed about by means of them; yet nothing ever tears, the trousers stay up where they belong, and even the tyubeteyka, the little embroidered cap, remains at its post. But should it by chance fall off, the combat is interrupted until it is retrieved and put on again.

The villages take sides. Uzbeks, who are Mongoloid and have broad skulls, stand up against Tajiks, who are Aryan, with long skulls, dark hair, and black beards. One bearded Golem in particular is worsted over and over again; and each time he turns protestingly to the onlookers, who merely roar with laughter. At last in a fury this stocky and stubborn combatant decides to hop about on one leg as though he had won. But the laughter only increases. Three Russians, who have learned the rules and tricks of the “goshten” during their stay in Central Asia, try out a few tentative passes.

It begins to rain. But the rain cannot separate the opponents nor damp the interest of the spectators. Finally the last champion has received the last scarf as the last prize. The cohorts line up for the return march to a point not far from the village where a wooden rostrum has been erected. Around this the crowd takes its places, in anticipation of the ceremonies.

Haknassar Turdiyev, Vice-President of the Republic,

albeit he speaks no word of Russian, and Chairman of the District Soviet, presides over the meeting. He was born in the year of the monkey, in the seventh of the ten animal years, and is consequently forty-seven years old, a native of the village of Jaldirkapee, ten miles distant; he is by profession a farm-labourer. For three years after 1917 neither he nor anyone else who lived in this neighbourhood had so much as heard of the Russian Revolution. Not until 1920 did a rumour begin to spread that a Russian named Lenin had come to Bokhara and that the Emir had fled to Dushambe with the Russian stranger at his heels. Shortly afterwards the men of all the villages were collected and driven with sticks to the river Djinghikishke, just because the Emir desired to see his people. Many took petitions with them, but no one had an opportunity to present them. All that happened was that the Emir galloped past on a black steed with golden harness, followed by his body-guard and four elephants. Later it was proclaimed that the Emir was fighting against the Christians from Moscow, and if anyone so much as caught sight of a Russian, he was to shoot him down. Then the Emir fled to Afghanistan. But the people retained their enmity toward the Russians.

“I myself,” Haknassar Turdiyar continued his narrative, “went with all the inhabitants of my village into the mountains, and we lived up there on wild game and herbs. Two years later some peasants whom we had met told us that under the Reds conditions were not, after all, so bad. True, they urged people, especially children, to learn to read and go to the doctor when they were ill, but

otherwise used no coercion, respected one's wives and cattle, and prevented no one from going to the mosque who wished to do so. The Reds paid for what they bought, and built new houses; and all together conditions were much better than under the Emir. So said the peasants.

“ We could not believe it. One whole night we sat about the fire and thought it over. Had the peasants been bribed, we wondered, to give us a false impression of the murderers? Were they trying to decoy us into the hands of the enemy? Or had they spoken the truth? In the grey of dawn we decided to send five of our men into the villages to find out what things were really like. Three days later they returned and said: It is bad only for the rich; for the poor it is good. Whereupon we disbanded. I came to Koktash and began to work here. Everything was being made over, and I liked that. I was appointed Village Ancient, elected to Congress, and became a member of the Party.”

While Haknassar Turdiyev was telling this story, the Red Sticks had grouped themselves around the speakers' tribune, and the meeting, of which he is the chairman, begins. Among those whom he calls upon is Abdurakhim Khodshibayev, the young Cabinet leader of the young Republic. He speaks of the darkness of Czarism and the Emirate, of the sun of the Soviets, that drove this darkness away. He speaks of the clouds of the Bassmachi, forced back toward the horizon by a righteous storm raised by the Red Sticks. After many such flowery and Oriental turns of speech, he explains the economic and political causes of local banditry.

## ROBBERS VANQUISHED

“ Throngs joined the Bassmachi while the lies of Capitalism were the sole source of information about the Soviets. At first the gangs were for slaying every unbeliever as an alien in Uzbek or Tajik territory. Later, when they met a Russian, they would ask: ‘ Have you been here since the time of Czar Nicholas or only since Lenin? ’ Whoever answered: ‘ Lenin ’ was shot; the others were left in peace. For their fight is no longer against unbelievers, it is *for* unbelievers, although only for those who are in foreign lands: namely, the European owners of Asiatic colonies.

“ Beyond the Panj River our tribal brothers suffer under the yoke of feudal lords, the mullahs and the colonizers; they are poor and uneducated; their women are at the mercy of the exploiters; they pay exorbitant taxes, they live in ignorance, they plough their land with wooden ploughs. But already they have heard rumours of what has happened here. . . . All the inhabitants of Central Asia see that the Soviets have brought about an undreamed-of advance. Ibrahim Beg, with whom most of our peasants were in league ten years ago, either openly or secretly, has no more adherents in his native country. He was not sent here to win a military campaign but to hinder our efforts. Just as Fusail Maksum, two years ago, led his followers into the District of Darvas near the Indian border, in order to hold up the planting with his skirmishes, so Ibrahim Beg hoped to foment resistance against collectivization, to support the kulaks with armed forces, and so interfere with the harvesting.

“ Now the collectivization of Tajikistan is fulfilled ac-

according to the Plan: thirty per cent of agriculture in general and sixty per cent of the cotton-raising.

“ Here, in the very town where Ibrahim Beg was born, you see modern buildings, new streets, machines, schools; right here, in the capital of the Lokai territory, where he had his greatest following, you are assembled today, you, the Red Sticks, to celebrate victory. You have triumphed over the Bassmachi. True, Ibrahim Beg is still alive, he is living in our land, in our province, scarcely a day’s ride distant from the field where we are holding our festival; but the peasants will not shield him; they plot his downfall. Only by night does he dare leave his caves to nail his proclamations to the trees — proclamations full of lies, and spurious arguments for the cause of the Emir and the kulaks.

“ Ibrahim Beg compares himself to an eagle, which retires to its craggy nest in order to descend upon its prey with renewed strength, and then soar up again to unattainable heights. But today no height is unattainable; airplanes can soar into the sky; they . . .”

At this precise moment the roar of a motor is heard. Up from the south comes an airplane, flying directly over our heads at an altitude of not more than two hundred yards. It describes a loop as though it wished to land. All eyes are uplifted, for it seems like a sign from heaven that just when a metaphorical airplane was being evoked to refute a metaphorical bird, a real plane should swoop out of the sky.

Did Abdurakhim Khodshibayev, we wonder, arrange for this effect, to strengthen a figure of speech which, in-

deed, seemed to us none too strong, inasmuch as an airplane is no weapon against an eagle?

But it is obvious that this *deus ex machina* comes as a surprise to the speaker himself. He interrupts himself and looks searchingly at the aircraft, which describes a circle right over the heads of the assembly, then flies off in the direction of Stalinabad.

Abdurakhim Khodshibayev resumes his speech, in order to give it a peroration. "We cannot rest until we have driven Ibrahim Beg forever out of our territory, until foreign powers have forever despaired of winning over any one of us to their designs. We follow our own designs, we, the Socialist Soviet Republic of Tajikistan in alliance with the Communist International. *Sinda bod, sinda bod Tojikistoni surch, sinda bod Komintern, sinda bod rafik Stalin.*"

Other speakers followed, interrupted by applause from the audience, maledictions against the Emir and the outlaws, cheers for Stalin, Nasratullah Maksum, and Abdurakhim Khodshibayev. At the close, members who had especially distinguished themselves in the fighting were officially rewarded with guns or watches. An honour is also conferred upon a woman: Bibitshan Mamur, who approaches the stand unveiled, with an infant at her breast. She is chairman of a district Soviet and is almost the only woman present among the thousands taking part in the festival.

Evening falls over the far-away ridges of snow, over the grey cliffs in the middle distance and the green hills in the foreground, where the horses had been grazing



while their masters wrestled, drank tea, made music, listened to speeches, stared at a circling airplane, and received prizes. Now the festival is over.

“Would you like to see the site of Ibrahim’s birthplace?” Haknassar Turdiyev invites us. And we accept. We dash off on white Persian mountain ponies, over marshy ground, through reeds and ferns. “There were huts and fields here, but the river carried them away, many people lost their lives; it was in the year of the panther; twice since then the year of the panther has come round.”

On the bank of the Kafirnigan is the ruin of a house, or, rather, the remains of one wall. Made of sunbaked clay, the walls broke under the pressure of the flood, but the foundations held. From two empty windows with Moorish arches, the one remaining wall stares vengefully but impotently at the river which ruined her.

That is all there is to be seen of Ibrahim’s birthplace. We turn our horses. “It was here that I spoke with Ibrahim,” says Haknassar Turdiyev, “but that was twenty years ago. I was bringing corn to the water-mill that belonged to his father, and we exchanged a few words: the kind of words a poor man does exchange with a rich one. His father was the friend and adviser of a certain Tuksayev, who was tax-collector for the beys — our province did not pay taxes to the Emir. Ibrahim’s father informed Tuksayev just how much grain the peasants brought to be ground, and Tuksayev levied the taxes. He kept the greater part for himself, but the spoils were divided with Ibrahim Beg’s father, who was, therefore, a

rich man. Just the same his son, Ibrahim, engaged in horse-stealing from his earliest youth. His marksmanship also made him feared. He is older than I by a year of the ape (fifty-seven years). I have not seen him for twenty years, although not a day has passed these last few years without some mention of him.”

Our white ponies race back to Koktash. In front of the collective stores we find Abdurakhim Khodshibayev. He is seated on the steps, and in this familiar atmosphere the head of the Government is being questioned on matters of local interest: fields and stables. We join the group.

The two sons of Karshi Aksakal, head of the Karluk clan, proudly relate the sad story of their father, who had, in the year 1921, been invited by Ibrahim Beg to join the Bassmachi and bring all the Karluks with him. But Karshi first desired to hear about the aims of the Reds and sent word to Nasratullah Maksum, the friend of the Communists, that he desired to meet and confer with him. The meeting was arranged as follows: at night, in a specific meadow near Koktash, they were to approach each other on foot, coming from opposite directions, with hands spread out before them and no weapons, for at that time no leader could trust another leader. After this conference Karshi Aksakal joined the Reds and fought against the Bassmachi. He personally pulled Kurbash Baldakavka off his horse, overpowered him with his naked arms, and brought him a prisoner to Dushambe.

Ibrahim Beg vowed a cruel vengeance against Karshi Aksakal. He surrounded Pardshisai with his men, and

Karshi fled with his family into the mountains. His friends were slain, among them Mullah Ali Mohammed. Three months Karshi remained in hiding with his two sons, then he raised a "partisan division," killed many bandits, captured three hundred and eighty rifles, four machine-guns, and numerous revolvers, swords, and hand-grenades. Twice he was decorated with the order of the Red Flag. In 1926 he was elected member of the Central Executive Committee, and managed a Soviet farm of twelve thousand sheep. In 1931 Ibrahim Beg returned from Afghanistan, and Karshi Aksakal mobilized his Party volunteers. In an encounter near the village of Sangimusul, on April 24, 1931, his men were forced to retreat. When they no longer saw him in their midst, they turned back against the Bassmachi and put them to flight. They found Aksakal in sitting posture, leaning against a rock. A bullet had gone through his head, which also bore three deep gashes made by a sword. He still held his rifle. "We carried him into the valley. At his grave we swore vengeance."

This dark episode of the dark ages, which really happened but three months ago, is told us by the two sons of Karshi Aksakal, while we are sitting on the threshold of the co-operative building and eating rice-meat.<sup>1</sup>

At our elbow is another dark hero, Issai Buri, who three months ago, under equally lurid circumstances, broke away from the Bassmachi. To prove the sincerity

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<sup>1</sup> That universal dish of Arab countries, mutton and rice cooked in a huge pot — everybody sitting around and helping himself from it. It is a horrible-looking mess, usually with a sheep's head with the eyes floating in it, and you put in your fingers and fish out what you can. — *Translator.*

of his conversion, he killed the chief of his band and brought his head in a bag to Koktash. And the man who took such drastic means of proving that he meant well is now urging us to help ourselves with both hands, while the mutton and rice is still hot.

From time to time men — and women too — approach and hand Abdurakhim Khodshibayev slips of paper setting forth petitions or complaints. Some want to be promoted to more advanced schools; some complain of not being allowed to drive a tractor. One delegation approaches with a most imposing document. Are we dreaming, or is this a mediæval parchment to which every Teutonic prince of the Holy Roman Empire has set his hand and seal? Oh dear! It is only a humble village's collective entreaty for a load of synthetic manure, and the grandiose seals are only the prints of farmers' thumbs dipped into violet ink. A similar dactyloscopic document, ceremoniously presented by another delegation, declares the adherence of some new borough to the Union of Red Sticks.

Khodshibayev converses with them all and invites them to partake of the mutton and rice. The slips of paper he stuffs into his high cap of white felt. One of them he hands over to us for perusal: it is a copy of one of Ibrahim Beg's proclamations, printed in European letters — for the enemy knows how to turn revolutionary innovations to his purpose.

“Read it,” says Khodshibayev. “He identifies the kulaks with the independent farmers, by speaking only of *dechkans* (farmers in general), who are supposed to

## CHANGING ASIA

be burdened with taxes. By taxes he means the membership dues to the organization. He names all the nations whose plenipotentiary he claims to be — with one single exception: England.”

“ Does he compose all that himself? ”

“ Hardly. He is a very capable man, but he cannot read or write. His chief of propaganda is a high mullah from Kabul. His information is never quite up to date, and when he isn't indulging in downright lies, he bases his plea on facts long since relegated to the past. That is why everyone laughs at this document.”

IN THE NAME OF THE MOST KIND  
AND MERCIFUL ONE  
APPEAL TO THE BELIEVERS OF  
ALL THE WORLD

Near is the help of God,  
near is victory.  
(Ayah from the Koran)

To the people of Turkestan, Tataristan, Kazakstan, Kirghizistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, who dwell in Russian territory: Greetings from Divan Begi and Totsham Bashi Muchammed, from Ibrahim Beg, and His Highness Emir Olim Khan.

By these presents we remind you that in the times of the Russian Czar Nicholas and the Emir of Bokhara, Olim Khan, all your peoples dwelt peacefully and happily in their native lands and were permitted freely to practise their religion. In the years 1295 and 1298 respectively, the Czar Nicholas and the Emir of Bokhara were deposed from their thrones, by acts of violence, initiated by Lenin, cursèd be his name, who led the people away from the paths of duty and religion, promising

## ROBBERS VANQUISHED

them Revolution, by which they understood freedom and justice, but which was a betrayal of the subjects of the Czar Nicholas and the Emir of Bokhara.

Thereafter a few wise men, who had not submitted to Lenin, cursèd be his name, instituted a campaign against the new despotic Government. Thereupon came the representatives of the Government of Lenin, cursèd be his name, to these wise adversaries, and declared that the Government of Lenin, cursèd be his name, would henceforth demean itself in a good and just manner; the suggestion was made that the opponents either submit or emigrate. The wise warriors followed this advice; some of them submitted to the Government, others went into foreign lands. As for our part, we too, following the request of the Government, withdrew into foreign lands.

At first the new Government granted the people the right to worship according to their religion, and every man was permitted to occupy himself in accordance with his descent, fortune, and ability. At first the new Government did demean itself in a manner that was just and merciful, but after two or three years it began to oppress its subjects in the following respects:

1. The Bolsheviki are responsible for the undermining of the honour of women in Russian Turkestan. It is their doing that women go unveiled and are thereby converted into prostitutes.

2. The new Government confiscated the land and the water from the rightful owners; obliged many dechkans to plant cotton and forbade them to plant corn, with the result that in many districts there was no bread to be had, even for as much as three roubles a pound.

3. The Government imposed useless iron ploughs upon the dechkans and made them pay a hundred roubles apiece for them. Tractors are still more useless and expensive.

4. The Government sends its tractors into the farmers' fields — tractors which, as they conceal from you, have been manufactured in foreign factories — and charges forty roubles for each batman [a current measurement] that it ploughs. With this money the Government buys from its subjects horses and cattle at low prices, for its co-operatives.

## CHANGING ASIA

5. When the harvest chanced to be bad and the dechkan could not fulfil the Plan, taxes were levied upon him to the amount of two thousand roubles, besides a tax in crops of anywhere from one hundred to one thousand poods — and this under the pretext that he had not delivered enough cotton. These taxes were all collected by force.

6. The Government levies taxes for the following purposes: for mutual Assistance, for the Red Auxiliary Organization, for Education, for Hospitals, Loans, Co-operatives, and finally for an Orphan Fund.

7. In the time of the former Czar the markets prospered, and every poor and needy man could purchase to his heart's content at the bazaar in Gissar or Dushambe, and paid ten or fifteen kopeks for the goods he needed; but now that oppressors are at the helm of the Government, the poor dechkans can only procure goods by permitting themselves to be humiliated and insulted, and even so they must pay eighty kopeks for a yard of dress-goods.

8. The Government hoodwinks the dechkans by herding them into so-called Kolchos, depriving them of horses or cattle of their own and thereby placing them in a situation from which there is no escape.

9. At present the Government is occupied in confiscating the estates of its most distinguished subjects, only to give them to new settlers from Fergana, Tashkent, and Samarkand. This disloyal Government, together with its Party, further intends, during the coming years, to send you as exiles into far-away provinces; this it regards as one of its duties.

10. Honoured brethren, you shall further learn what the future holds in store for you: the Government plans to do away with the mosques and houses of prayer, and in their stead to found schools and clubs; dechkans who have died are to be buried without religious ceremony or even burned; the younger generation is to be brought up in the spirit of Lenin, cursèd be his name; and your wives and daughters are to be sent into the streets and made into prostitutes; the Government further intends to seize the best products of the dechkans to give to alien

## ROBBERS VANQUISHED

dechkans; all religious books are to be collected on one spot and burned; and finally all those are to be destroyed who dare even to speak the name of God.

11. Brethren, be not guilty of negligence, or your women, for whom you have paid thousands of roubles and hundreds of sheep, will be seized by the Government and put into the ranks of the Komsomols [Young Communists]; then you will be forced to grant your wives the divorce, and the result will be that your wives will become the wives of the strangers. Prostitution among women and girls will spread more and more.

12. This treacherous and horrid Government deprives its subjects of the right to be masters of their wives and property; the SAGS [registry office] compels the wives of the dechkans to bare those parts of the body [face and hands] which it is, according to the Shariat, strictly forbidden a woman to display before other men. This satanic Government has robbed the populace of all its customary wedding ceremonies and other traditional pleasures. It forbids anointments and other religious rites.

In view of the rapid spread of the above-named phenomena, the meeting called by the League of Nations in Berlin [!] February 8, 1928, at which representatives of the exiles from Russian Turkestan were present, as well as at the meeting of the League of Nations in December 1929, where representatives of America, France, Japan, Germany, Persia, Turkey, Italy, Afghanistan, and Poland took part, it was decided, in accordance with the declarations of the representatives of the refugees from Russian Turkestan, and, finally, by reason of the political information given in the year 1930 by the Comrades Trotsky and Zinoviev, to dissolve the Party Government in Russia and Bokhara and to put in its stead a monarchistic Government. At present the Plenipotentiary of His Highness the Emir Olim Khan has decided and proclaims the following:

We are empowered by the above-named nations to raise armies of the necessary strength on all boundaries and provide them with flying carriages and shooting weapons. But you are called upon to repair to the territory of Bokhara where you



## CHANGING ASIA

shall invite in writing the entire Red Army, the militia, the workmen's troops, and all subjects without exception to assist us with all the weapons at their disposal. Be it known that I, when I come there, in the name of God and His Prophet, will pardon all who may have served the Government of the Bolsheviks, but who have repented in time.

Our goal is completely clear.

Oppressed dechkans! We wage this war in the name of your freedom from the oppression of the Bolsheviks.

The Seal of Ibrahim Beg

We read this appeal for participation in the campaign of the outlaws, and note that the robber bands claim to be incited by the League of Nations, which has, for its part, fallen an easy prey to the robbers, who have in turn deceived the lovers of peace. And here we see, oddly enough, the realization of one of the ideas expressed at the founding of the League of Nations: that it have its own army. The gangs that murder out of ambush and disturb the building up of a country call themselves the troops of the League!

Bedtime. The salesroom of the collective stores has been cleared and rugs are spread out on the floor for us to lie down on. Khodshibayev throws himself down near a window. Flies, fleas, and the League of Nations buzz and swarm. In spite of them we drop off to sleep.

Half an hour after midnight we start up, awakened by the creaking of a door and a ray of light. Two men, armed to the teeth, walk up to Abdurakhim Khodshibayev. We clutch our revolver. . . .

They rouse Khodshibayev and whisper something in

## ROBBERS VANQUISHED

his ear. He jumps up. Asks a question. They hand him a piece of paper.

“Up! Up!” he calls. “Get up. Ibrahim Beg has been taken prisoner.”

We read the communication:

### Tajikistan, Province of Lokai Official Communication

(Copy to be sent to the Province Committee of the Party)

On June 23 of this year, at twelve o'clock, we took prisoner Ibrahim Beg and Sahib Kommandir as well as one Jigit. Ibrahim Beg, and the two accompanying him, appeared on foot in the neighbourhood of the villages of Ishkabad, Khodsha-Buly-Bulon, and Ak-Turpak. They were armed with rifles holding eleven bullets, one Mauser revolver, and a Browning revolver. In Issanbey the robber leader Babandshan surrendered; a Mauser was taken from him. At present all the captured Bassmachi are under the observation of Comrade Valeshev. The Mauser pistol of Ibrahim Beg is in my possession, I have as yet given it to no one.

Commander of the Volunteer Division:  
Mukkum Sultanov

In the morning an auto drives up with three men, two of whom are the escort of Ibrahim's Chief of Staff, Sahib Kommandir. He is not bound and jumps from the car. The villagers call out curses at him, but he walks silently by. Truly, he looks a robber chieftain out of a picture-book: a man of huge proportions, muscular, with a long, black beard, a black cloak, and high boots. Conspicuous by its absence is the missing cartridge-belt with short gun and stiletto.

He has been disarmed, as well as his captured leader,

Ibrahim Beg, who has been transported by plane to Stalinabad.

The airplane which appeared in the sky yesterday at the very moment when it was being evoked, was carrying the captured "Eagle" . . . ! The circle described above our heads was meant to tell the identity of the passenger! But who could have rightly interpreted that signal, who would have dared to imagine the truth?

Now the Red trooper Gutfeld sports the pistol of Ibrahim (marked: "Waffenfabrik Mauser, Obendorf, No. 22,802"). It is there in his belt, encased in a wooden holster.

Trooper Gutfeld speaks Uzbek with the captured Sahib Kommandir, Tajik with Abdurakhim Khodshibayev; he knows all the languages of Central Asia, is a German from Volsk, and gives us a message for his sister, who lives in Berlin. She married a German prisoner of war in Russia, who was shot in 1922 in Berlin for being a Communist. "It must be very dangerous in Berlin," says Gutfeld, who today, between the mountain Barbatak and the bank of the Kafirnigan, captured his six-hundredth bandit, the chief of them all, Ibrahim Beg.



## FROM TIGERS TO COTTON COLLECTIVES



Many an auto that seemed more cocksure than ours may have slipped off this raft into the current. Yet we are borne safely over to the Province of Aral, which is enclosed by two branches of the river Vakhsh.

Here at last there is something green to look at. But new troubles lie in wait for our long-suffering "Amo" truck: every hundred yards there is a ditch, like a cæsura in the rhythm of the road, which even without this is hard enough to scan! Canals. And camels. Otherwise not much of anything.

The town we are entering in the evening twilight turns out to be a village which has grown too broad in the beam. The market-place could not be described as round or square or oval or anything geometrical except large. It is as large as the Place de la Concorde, but surrounded by an architecture as far remote as possible from that of the Ministry of Marine, the Jockey Club, and the Hotel Crillon: surrounded, in fact, by hideous clay huts.

We have had a day of fatigue, thick dust, precarious ferries, and numerous canals, most of them seemingly

unfordable. We are given lodging in the new hospital, and when we compliment the local comrades on this modern edifice, they answer: "You will see more like it tomorrow." Meanwhile what would we like? Vast quantities of water, please, to bathe in. And then we should like, if possible, to meet someone who can inform us about the final goal of our hot pilgrimage: the cotton-fields.

Soon we are sluicing ourselves under a shower by a swimming-pool equipped with running water. When we have dressed again, we learn that the local Soviet is meeting at eleven that night, and surely we shall be given the desired information there. At this hour the "Place de la Concorde" is empty of people, except for those lying asleep in their beds in front of their loam huts.

In the courtyard of the Soviet House the members are sitting on the ground; only the officials sit at a long table, brightly illumined by the moon. The moon also shines on the paper we have spread out before us, in preparation for the notes we propose to jot down, once the inevitable opening sentences are concluded, with their tedious statistics of schools and collectives. . . .

Chalmurad Imamberdi takes the floor and the first sentence, which we have sworn not to make a note of, is as follows: "In the year 1926 a zoological expedition came to Aral from Moscow and, within six weeks, captured nineteen tigers alive, shot eight others, also thirty wild pigs, besides many poisonous snakes, jackals . . ."

"Not so quickly, please . . . killed *how* many tigers, Comrade Imamberdi?"

## FROM TIGERS TO COTTON COLLECTIVES

“Eight, besides the nineteen which were captured, but those taken alive were quite young. Now there are no more tigers here.”

“None at all, Comrade Imamberdi?”

“That I cannot say definitely. There are, of course, tigers everywhere. No doubt you have some in Germany as well. But here they have to all intents and purposes disappeared. Two months ago some soldiers caught three tiger cubs in a trap and sent them to the comrades Stalin, Voroshilov, and Molotov. And last week on the banks of the Javan-su we discovered a drinking-place for tigers; as we were stalking them down, they dispersed and have not come back.”

“Did no one bother to hunt here?”

“Who was there to do it? At the time of the exodus into Afghanistan, organized by the Bassmachi in 1925, no one was left on our island. All five hundred families migrated. Nothing was left but huts in ruins, pheasants in the prairie grass, snakes among the rocks, and tigers in the jungle. Whoever strayed this way became the prey of tigers or wild boars — we have found any number of human skulls gnawed at. . . . In 1926 the return movement began because settlers had heard they would be given credits, irrigation facilities, implements, and building materials. The former inhabitants even brought Afghans with them. Also, out of the mountainous districts of Tajikistan came landless or land-poor peasants to settle in the cotton districts of Uzbekistan.

“There are now 2,652 farms on the island. Of the new settlers sixty per cent are from Fergana; thirty-five

per cent from Obigarm, Garm, and other districts on the Pamir; the rest are Kirghiz and Afghan citizens. The island of Aral consists of 74,130 acres; 24,710 acres are planted; of these 16,143 belong to cotton collectives; 89 to private cotton-growers on irrigated ground; and 445 to private cotton-growers on unwatered ground. The residue is vegetable gardens. Within the next two years 34,600 acres more are to be planted, principally in cotton, but also in rice, tobacco, alfalfa, oats, and mulberry trees.

“The process of collectivization met with no difficulties here — the majority recognizing the advantages of mechanization and of farming on a big scale. There are twenty-seven Kolchos, of which fourteen are run by former inhabitants of the district.

“We received deputations from Afghanistan asking us to organize Kolchos in their midst or at least to send them a tractor. We told them it was impossible. What was the result? They filed a petition to their Bey in the district capital, Mazar-i-Sharif, asking him to introduce the Soviet régime in their district. . . .

“A Kolchos comprises anywhere from twenty-five to three hundred and fifty farms. We contracted to plant 20,015 acres, but have actually planted only 16,143; that is, twenty per cent less than we agreed to do, in the contract with the State on the strength of which we got our loans.

“Why? Because Ibrahim Beg and his Bassmachi appeared again and assailed us — us whom, years before, he had induced to leave our cattle as fodder for tigers,

and to live in Afghanistan as impoverished exiles. As all the former inhabitants of Aral had come home, this district was the object of his especial wrath. He led attacks in which members of the Kolchos were killed, horses, cattle, and stores carried off, bridges destroyed, and cotton-plants trampled under horses' hoofs.

"The Kolchos rose against the bandits and fought four battles against them. On both sides there were losses. At Mount Karatau the outlaws lost one Kurbash and fifteen Jigits; at Maksumabad they lost the dreaded leader Alek Kommandir and fifty-three of his gang; four Kurbashi and a hundred and two armed horsemen fell into the hands of the peasants.

"Grain caravans from Kuljab were repeatedly attacked by the robbers, who shot down at the camels from their mountain perches. This fighting interfered with work for days at a time; farm-hands were taken from the fields to act as sentinels; and vehicles were commandeered for the soldiers sent for our protection.

"Machine-oil was held up in transit, and our tractors stood idle for two weeks. There was a similar delay in the case of two carloads of harrows. Of the three hundred and sixty members of the Kolchos who, after completing their work here, returned to their homes to attend to their own farms, a hundred remained there because they had heard of the reappearance of the Bassmachi in Aral.

"That explains why we are twenty per cent behind the Plan. And I think you will admit that, under the circumstances, it is not very much."



We concur.

“But there were other difficulties as well. Among those who had emigrated in 1925, then came back and resumed their former holdings, there were eleven beys and over two hundred landlords with their ‘podkulaki’ (peasants whose sympathies favoured the kulaks). These did not enter into the collectives or, if they did, then only as a blind to conceal their activity against the aims of the Soviet. We deported nine of the eleven beys; two submitted to the commonwealth. More than a hundred of the kulaks emigrated to Afghanistan, joined forces with the Bassmachi, and returned with them in May, across the Amu-Darya, to attack us. It was they, our former co-citizens, who led the bandits into Aral. Two were found among the dead, one was taken captive, and more were seen by the farmers here.”

“Are there any kulaks left here?”

“Yes. A landlord is anyone who has more than three hundred sheep or more than fifteen acres of cotton and who employs labour. But the farmer who merely hires workers by the season is of course not a kulak. The village Soviet determines how much the kulak may plant and how much he has to account for. He is not allowed to sell privately and a watch is kept to see that he doesn’t.”

Brightly the moon illuminates the paper on which we have noted the words of Chalmurad Imamberdi and some of the remarks with which his comrades, seated on the ground, prompted or amended them. We had resolved to eschew figures, but after so much talk of tigers, bandits,

FROM TIGERS TO COTTON COLLECTIVES  
and kulaks our conscience is uneasy. One really ought to know with statistical exactitude what progress agriculture has made in the five years since the days when the tigers, untouched by Bolshevism, were a law unto themselves. "Can you not give us some exact data?"

"What kind of data?"

"Well, for example . . . about the work in the cotton-fields."

"Suppose you look over the collective farms and see the data with your own eyes."

"Gladly, tomorrow. But give us a few facts in advance."

"As you like."

We prepare to listen to favourable data. But it does not begin very favourably.

"One hectare of land should, on an average, yield sixty-five poods. But last year we produced only fifty-two poods. We shall also fall short of sixty-five poods this year, although the harvest will be better than last year."

"How do you know the harvest will be better?"

"Last year at this time fifty per cent was stacked and weeded, this year eighty-five per cent. But for the help of the neighbouring Kolchos we could not have achieved as much as that. The various Kolchos in our district have helped each other as well. Altogether there have been 15,620 working-days spent in mutual assistance. Up to six months ago we had no women workers. Now there are six hundred women at work on the fourteen Kolchos. Of course that is still far too few.

## CHANGING ASIA

“ Three years ago there was not a single native among our tractor-drivers; last year of the 250 tractor-drivers there were 40 Uzbeks and Tajiks; among the 180 new tractor-drivers that we have put in this year there are 95 nationals. In 1929 we had one single regimental surgeon with two assistants. Today we have five physicians with twenty-six trained nurses, a hospital with twenty-five beds, four medical stations, and a dispensary.

“ In 1927 we erected the first school for twenty-four children and one *lik-bes* (course for abolishing illiteracy). Now: 36 schools with 1,890 children, 45 anti-illiteracy courses — the schools this year are costing us 290,000 roubles — also four crèches, 30 telephone stations, radio, cinema, 15 Red tea-houses. . . .

“ I will come to you in the morning and you will tell me what you desire to see: our tractor schools, or the agricultural Technicum, or the Women’s Information Bureau, or the crèches. But by far the most important sight is our collective farms. In 1932 we mean to unite many of them, and thus create five giant units, because that simplifies the problem of irrigation. Our largest farm is the Stalin Kolchos, a thousand hectares in size, of which 785 are planted in cotton. If Ibrahim Beg comes here today, he’ll get a surprise — they say he is somewhere in the neighbourhood. . . .”

“ Yesterday, Comrade, he was taken prisoner.”

Next morning we cross the market-place of Aral, which had seemed so exaggeratedly large and shapeless. Overnight its dimensions have shrunk, and it has acquired a



The funeral procession of the president of a collective farm in Tajikistan. A tractor is being used to carry on the Asiatic custom of exposing the corpse as the procession marches to the grave, so that all may have a last look at the deceased.

A comradely production court at the backward Kolchos "10th October," in Tashkent. Representatives of the good Kolchos (collective farms) of the district, which have fulfilled their plan by more than a hundred per cent, act as judges.





form of its own. Much of it has been absorbed into the swaying, shimmering life of the encircling bazaar. The open space has become a stage full of actors, with camels for "supers." These supers turn their backs on the scene in a great circle and superciliously ignore the tumult that goes on within it. Moreover they conceal the hideous back-drops: the huts.

In the centre of the market-place are three clay walls forming a primitive open restaurant where one can eat the inevitable and ubiquitous "plov" — rice and mutton stew. Earthenware bushel measures are heaped with spices and watermelons. Saddles, whips, fly-chasers, and fans are also for sale.

There is a great demand for Nas-Vay, a green chewing-tobacco, which, however, is not chewed, but held on the tongue and constantly moistened with saliva. The pedlar has a scale and little stones for weights. The prospective buyer points to the wares and to the stone which corresponds to the measure of his needs. A polished gourd is used as a tobacco pouch; this is called *kadu* and is hung either on the saddle of one's donkey or from one's own belt.

Camels are not sold according to weight. With the air of a connoisseur we examine each beast before pricing it, only to discover that each camel costs 350 roubles. From which we conclude: either camels have a stabilized valuation as such, or else some mysterious law guides our taste to specimens of identical quality. A donkey is worth a third as much as a camel, but very few are for sale — who would part with his little donkey unless he had to?

Sheep can be bought in abundance at 75 roubles a head, fat ones too, with wabby buttocks.

There are horses of many colours and many social ranks at corresponding prices. One black stallion seems particularly good value to us for 700 roubles, but we will not buy him: someone is sure to lend us a horse.

Someone did. And we rode out to the cotton district.

After days spent in an automobile on roads that were never designed for it, it is pleasant to sit astride a horse. He, too, stops at every ditch, but only to fill his tank; and even though brown, salty water increases rather than quenches the thirst, still, water is water, and no amount of tugging at the reins can make him desist.

At the edge of a cotton-field stands a statue of bronze and silver: a grey-bearded Uzbek leaning on his harrow. "Is this a Kolchos?" we ask, whereupon the statue comes to life. Yes, this is a Kolchos. "May we look over it? We have come from Germany, from Europe."

"From Europe?" He relapses into a statue. He stares at us, open-eyed. It is some time before he invites us to dismount. He turns his head toward the huts and calls out a message which is passed on from the women, through the children, to the heralds, who in turn pass it on to the men.

That is to say, two fellows with trumpets of beaten metal, nearly ten feet long, approach. In old days these instruments, called "*karnay*" were used to call the tribe together for war; now they have become, *O tempora!* the signal for going to work or coming together in conference. The trumpeters blow two long-drawn-out tuba

FROM TIGERS TO COTTON COLLECTIVES  
notes; there follow a short blast, then a long, uncanny one, like the neighing of camels.

And from the little bushes men emerge in cloaks and sashes of various colours, but all wearing a little cap of the same colour and shape. These caps, the tyubeteyka, indicate not only a man's district and tribe, but also the amount of devotion that has gone into its fashioning. There are caps woven like tapestry; in the district of Kashkadria there are red caps embroidered with gold; some are made of dark blue felt embroidered with four reddish-yellow circles; in Tashkent you see caps of cherry-coloured velvet embellished with roses; in Samarkand caps of brocade; in Karki, Turkmenian caps with intricate ornamentation; you can even see black caps, worn by the Jews of Bokhara. Those which now appear on the heads of men coming toward us with rakes over their shoulders are of pale violet silk. On each of the four segments, which are joined together by undulating seams, a stylized fruit is embroidered — or perhaps instead of a fruit it is meant to represent a short-stemmed tobacco pipe; art is entitled to its licences.

The men, as their caps indicate, belong to the Province of Fergana, which is in Uzbekistan, a foreign land — but a thousand times less foreign than the land which has produced us and sent us hence, a visitor, exotic from head to heels, without chalat (the long, coloured cloak) and without tyubeteyka!

“We have come from Europe and would like to look at your Kolchos.” Apparently they regard the two parts of this sentence as being in some causal relationship to



each other rather than a temporal one, and they wonder with certain misgivings why they should be the object of voyages from Europe. But astonishment and suspicion are soon allayed; it is always easy to make friends with Tajiks and Uzbeks, for the more warlike are the traditions of a people, the more peaceful is their temper.

We sit down under a shed which protects us from the direct beat of the sun, but not from the heat. Nor does the brown puddle in front of the shrubbery, at the edge of the grove, produce any coolness. But it serves as a source of water for the tea. Children, wearing the same tyubetyka as their elders, bring us flowers. Watermelons quench our thirst while the green tea is being brewed, to be partaken of by all in turn out of a single cup without a handle, the *piala*. The loamy dregs left by the first man are poured out before the next is given his portion of tea.

Our hosts are from Namangan, Vilayet Fergana, where they were allowed only three quarters of a hectare, or at most a whole hectare of land; that is very little. Then came men recruiting cotton-growers for Tajikistan, where new Kolchos were to be established. They promised them that inhabitants of the same village could remain together, that each would receive from three to three and a half hectares of land, that every man would receive a credit of six hundred roubles, without interest for ten years, and that tractors would be put at their disposal. Each man could retain his little farm at home for three years, and once a year, after the harvest, could go home free of charge, by automobile to Stalinabad and from

FROM TIGERS TO COTTON COLLECTIVES  
thence by rail. If, after three years' trial, he were dissatisfied, he could return to his original home for good.

And so they set out for the mountains to the south, these 190 cotton-farmers of Fergana, taking with them their horses and wagons and cooking-pots—leaving their homeland to the Bey, the kulaks, the mullahs, and the good-for-nothings. Fifteen of them did not return to Aral after their first furlough home; either they did not like it or else they feared the Bassmachi. But all the others sent for their wives and children and chickens and chattels.

The 190 families have founded four Kolchos, named after villages in Fergana; the one we are visiting is called Kyzyl-Yuldus, and 28 families belong to it.

Ask these peasants if they are well off, and they will answer like peasants the world over. Life is not easy. Nothing but work. There is nothing worse than growing cotton. And if there were anything worse, it would be having to plant a *new* cotton-field.

There is only one advantage in a new cotton-field: it takes the bugs some time to get on to it! In the neighbourhood of old plantations they settle down, or at least leave their eggs, but before they become aware of large new fields to exploit, a considerable time may elapse.

“ But the actual laying-out of a new cotton-farm! Ditches to dig, rows to hoe, fields to isolate . . . not to mention the subsequent work: sowing, weeding, picking . . . hard, very hard . . . and the discipline of the Kolchos! Why, in the old days every man suited his

work to the mood he was in. . . . Now every man has to suit his mood to a definite job.”

The Chairman of the Kolchos, the Uzbek Halmat Boymat, hurries away to fetch his ledger. A thick copy-book with columns and figures which he has made himself. This fact he mentions repeatedly. The book is divided into three sections: (1) Heavy work: sowing, picking, weeding, building ditches; (2) Medium work: ploughing, tilling, furrowing, second weeding; (3) Light work: watering horses, fetching bread, marketing at the bazaar, cooking.

The averages: one man alone has to dig out four cubic metres of earth a day for the canal; a man with two horses and two harrows has to work two hectares; one man with two horses and a plough with two ploughshares must till three quarters of a hectare; two men with one horse, or one man with a Banner sowing-machine, must sow one hectare within ten hours.

“Up to June only half the members were able to achieve a normal day’s work, but from then on, the figures have risen so that now some of the men are able to accomplish three days’ prescribed work in one single day.”

“And what happens when someone works more than the norm, Halmat Boymat?” We put this question because the *uravnilovka*, the so-called “radical” uniformization of wages, is always criticized as a great hindrance to economic development.

“Hm,” answers Halmat Boymat, and looks at the faces surrounding him. “You ask whether a man gets

## FROM TIGERS TO COTTON COLLECTIVES

more pay if he works more than the norm? Hm. If someone does twice as much work he gets twice as much pay. Naturally. But we prefer all to earn the same. If, after delivering our quota of the crop, we have anything left over, we prefer to divide it among ourselves in equal parts.”

“ But that isn’t right. For then the lazy man gets as much as the industrious one! ”

“ Not quite. For if he is lazy he cannot fulfil his allotted task and drops beneath the average daily wage. Just the same, there might be a better way of scaling things. But, you see, it’s so hard for me to calculate. All I can write is figures, and of course I know what columns they belong in. My entries always agree with those made by each member. That’s the best I can do. Next winter I am to attend a course where they teach you how to keep books on a Kolchos. Probably I’ll never be an expert at it. More likely, some of our younger lads. As it is, they learn the most outlandish things. But the young men lack weight. In fact many of them are too hot-headed.”

We learn that Kolchos members are entitled to a holiday at Kurban-Beiram. Formerly no Mohammedan would work during this holy period. Well, and what happens here? The young men go into the fields and challenge each other — ostentatiously — to a sort of socialistic duel of work.

Last year on the first of May the entire Kolchos worked; this year, armed with banners and drums and their two gigantic trumpets, they marched to the meeting to Aral. At the last harvesting women worked for the first time.

At the time for picking, season workers are taken on; it had been difficult to find five hundred, although there was work for three times that number. The basic wage for these assistant labourers is two roubles fifty kopeks for eight hours, but since they usually work longer than that, they earn an average of four roubles. They receive one pood of flour a month at the price of one and a half roubles; that is eight hundred grams of bread daily for twelve kopeks. And after the work is finished they receive five metres of material.

Every member of the Kolchos gets two pounds of bread a day, which is reckoned up after the harvest. The buying station pays four roubles and fifty kopeks for each pood of cotton, and sends to the co-operative cotton cloth (forty kopeks a metre) and various manufactured articles, such as boots and cloaks. Whoever is ill receives the average wage, and it makes no difference if he is at home or in a hospital.

That is what the peasants tell us while sipping tea; but then they get up, for not even a visitor from Europe can keep them from going back to their fields. We go with them, although it was more agreeable in the shade than in the merciless sun: we are even more eager to look at the cotton than we were to hear about it.

In these latitudes the newspapers are full of communiqués from the "cotton front": telegrams announcing victories or defeats; editorials on the extermination of weevils; articles about mixing breeds of cotton; sporting items relating to rival claims; social news of organizers who have been transferred or been granted a bonus.

## FROM TIGERS TO COTTON COLLECTIVES

We prepared ourselves in Tashkent for our visit to the cotton districts by going to the NICHI, a comprehensive experimental institute for cotton-culture. Hundreds of irrigation engineers, students as well as experts, are occupied there in testing material, submitting stones to pressure, treating sand chemically, and setting up wooden models of ditches in the laboratories. Pumps and regulators are constructed, plans are drawn for powerful hydro-electric plants and irrigation systems. Factories in Philadelphia, Pa., Schaffhausen, Switzerland, and Berlin, Germany, supplied the machines used for testing materials. Cement is placed under a pressure of thirty atmospheres, stone is turned against stone, and compressed air is led through copper piping into the material to be tested.

This is what we saw in one of the buildings of the institute. But we saw other departments too. In the agricultural department experiments determine the amount of water required by the plants, and the results of different methods of farming and fertilizing. Subterranean irrigation is studied as well as the possibility of artificial rain — of making the clouds dirigible and inducing them to spill their contents at any given point. What a problem! If it were solved, how much easier everything would be, especially in this zone, where deserts as big as the whole of Europe would be turned into arable land! But it still remains to be done.

Meanwhile, in the department devoted to breeding, Egyptian cotton is crossed with American; the quickly ripening varieties with the long-fibred; the strong-podded

with that which is proof against drought. Here the flora of Africa and America mate and their progeny grow up to surpass their parents in strength and fruitfulness. Soon there will be bushes that bear not only thirty pods, but four hundred.

The economic army fighting for the independence of the Soviet Union is throwing the cotton-markets of Washington, Liverpool, and Bremen as well as the Federal Farm Board of the U. S. A. from one panic into another. In Tashkent we visited the general staff of this army. But how do things look at the front? We are now at the front. . . .

Shouldering their rakes, our column marches from cover into the trenches, past plants bearing yellowish-red blossoms. They might almost be potato plants. We march beside ditches in which brown water collects, refreshing the earth, but not, alas, the air. And the mulberry trees are all too young to give shade.

Youthful members of the collective march along at our heels. Having been told in school that there was a thing called Germany, they now press close to the living, perspiring proof of the correctness of that theory. . . . They would like to hear something about that strange country, and about the capitalistic system in general, but we would rather hear something about cotton.

But it is precisely the young ones who have the least time to spare. They are the advance troops and their work is waiting for them. They remove their sandals, turn up their trousers, stand in the middle of the ditches (in the main canal the water reaches their knees, in the

FROM TIGERS TO COTTON COLLECTIVES  
criss-cross ditches only their ankles), shovel out the mire, and clap it firmly onto the embankment. Others remove weeds from about the plants. All this is done with the same instrument: the rake.

In sooth, had we not seen the chemical, physical, and agronomic laboratories, we should have considered the production of cotton as a laborious though somewhat primitive task. As a matter of fact, the peasants might be surprised to learn that scholars in Tashkent are racking their brains to make their work easier. Still more surprised to learn that their work is ruining the digestion of members of the Federal Farm Board in Washington and members of the stock-markets of Liverpool and Bremen. They merely wield their rakes.

We are cordially invited to join in the work. We do not descend into the *arik*, however cooling it might be to stand in mud up to one's knees and in water up to one's navel. We take a hand at weeding, which looks easier. But we soon have blisters to show for it. This rouses among the peasants a sympathy not unmixed with complacency: not everyone is capable of such hard work. . . .

Look about you, stranger; we have made all this. These great gardens full of yellowish-red blossoms. . . .

And do you know that a few years ago tigers dwelt here? Now it is we who dwell here, we!

But we do not live comfortably; we want you to know that. The dwelling-houses are supposed to be finished by winter, but there will not be enough for all the families. And no new building credits are being granted, so long



as the old ones are not yet paid off. The new tractors and the building wood have not yet arrived. There isn't enough tea or sugar, and there ought to be more chewing-tobacco, for it frequently happens that there is none to be had at the bazaar in Aral.

“And the newspaper arrives very irregularly,” calls out a lad half buried in mud.

“Were conditions better last year?” we ask the Uzbek, Halmat Boymat.

“Oh, no. Last year we didn't have enough bread or meat, now we have sufficient. There are many new roads and new canals and we have learned to handle the machines. Next year conditions are sure to be still better. We now have roads leading to the island, ferries have been installed, and goods will arrive more promptly. But at present there is a dearth of tea, sugar, and tobacco. The Bolsheviks invented tractors and the Kolchos — that is good; but the Bolsheviks give us too little merchandise and too few machines — that is bad.”

“The Bolsheviks? Are, then, none of you Bolsheviks?”

“Only the young ones.”



## A DISTRICT ON THE PAMIR



There was no railway through the present Republic of Tajikistan before the advent of the Soviets.

Formerly the only way out was by horseback from Garm, an important economic, political, and strategic point in the mountains. It was an eight- or ten-day ride to the railway station at Termes or Fergana, where you left your horse in charge of some stranger until the train brought you back. The trip to Bokhara, the capital, took an entire month. Consequently you didn't make the trip at all, but remained cut off from the world.

Now, in addition to the bus lines, an airplane flies twice a day in fifty minutes to Stalinabad, the new capital, from which point you can go anywhere you like by rail, if you have money and a passport. The wilderness is a thing of the past.

To speak honestly, we flew from Stalinabad to Garm, not because of the economic, political, or strategic importance of this mountain region, but because the burning heat of July in the valleys of Tajikistan was becoming ever more importunate; at night the heat would follow us into bed, tear the shirt from our back, and wrap

itself round us. Away to the mountains! Up into the shade of the Pamir!

One could say about this flight what the late Princess of Monaco, *née* Heine from Hamburg (would that her uncle, Heinrich Heine, had lived to witness her marriage!), said with a pious glance toward heaven: "My land is small, but exalted!" The line of flight from Stalinabad to Garm is hardly a hundred and twenty-five miles long, but it is nearly ten thousand feet high.

At first the airplane moves at a normal altitude above the river Kafirnigan and the bus road, heading due northeast; over villages and hills on which flocks are grazing — for the land of cotton-wool is at the same time the land of sheeps' wool. Wherever we sat or lay or walked or drove, sheep were grazing, rams with twisted horns, some with pointed noses, some black, some yellow, some snow-white; some black with white ears or white with black ears; many with pointed beards just like their Kirghiz shepherds, all very different from each other, but all with the huge wabby buttocks, all the more grotesque when the body is shorn. We lay about in sheep's dung until loud baa-ing awakened us from a deep sleep; but we had our revenge: we ate extra large helpings of plov and shashlik.

Beyond the city of Obigarm, which marks half the distance of our flight, the Vakhsh appears, not as a river, but as a strip of silver foil. Here we must be nearing the roof of the earth; we float above the clouds to avoid running into the mountains.

The needle of the altimeter moves more rapidly than

the second-hand on a watch. We mount at an angle of forty-five degrees, always parallel to the slope, always slanting, with grey crevices beneath us into which no man had ever looked until airplanes found their way hither. The strata and veins of the rocks are all there is to be seen. In the oases between the crags little houses push their way; they overlap each other, one seeming to balance on the shoulders of the next. Narrow arched bridges span the chasms. Seen from the slanting plane, the overlapping houses appear even more bizarre.

Our limbs are still very weary from the orgies which the heat plunged us into — jumping up — taking a drink — compresses on the head — showers — lying down — sweating — an uninterrupted ejaculation of sweat — yet here we are, on the level of glaciers, gazing upon snow.

But we do not touch the glacier; we land instead at the airdrome of Garm. Passengers stand in wait to fly back whence we have come. As buses wait for arrivals in other places, here horses await the alighting passenger. The bank of the Vakhsh is a perpendicular rock with an arbitrary line bisecting it: that is our path. Seen from the back of a horse the Vakhsh is no longer a strip of silver foil, it is a wild beast, greedily bellowing for prey, preferably us. True, we are high above it, but the precipice is steep and the path is narrow, and bumble-bees buzz into the horse's ear and make him shy violently. Oh, for a nice, safe airplane!

But here at length is Garm. It is cool and lovely in July on this slope of the Pamir, under the roof of the

world. We go to look up the young Tajiks whom we had met in Stalinabad and who had advised us to flee from the heat and visit them. A bare two hours ago we got into a plane that bolted with us straight up to the stratosphere; then we got on a skittish horse made skittisher by insects, to ride along a cliff cut through by a rushing torrent; and now we're on the ground, cursing the position in which courtesy obliges us to imbibe our tea, in front of a house on the market-place of Garm. Squatting tailor-fashion is no fun for a gentleman whose embonpoint not even the heat of Central Asia has succeeded in melting away.

“Everything you see in the way of new buildings, Comrade, has been built by the Soviets. And, as a matter of fact, the Soviet régime has been in force here only two years.”

“But I thought the Emir had fled twelve years ago! Who ruled here in the meantime?”

“Please do not rise, Comrade. Pray yield to the custom of the land. Sit at your ease on the ground with us and hear the story of our province before you begin exploring it.

“The first Soviets were elected here much later than anywhere else and they managed all the affairs of the district. But who were those elected and their assistants? They were the former functionaries of the Emir and the former Chinovniki of the Czar. The present district of Garm belonged mostly to the Emir's kingdom and was ruled by two beys. They had their seats in Darvas and Karai-Tagan respectively. A part of the Garm district

belonged to the Russian Province of Pamir.

“Even after the Revolution those who had formerly been in power had sufficient influence to have either themselves or their relatives elected. They gave the landlords free rein, enforced not the Soviet laws, but those of the Shariat, and oppressed the working-classes as they had always done.

“In the spring of 1929, Bassmachi came over from Afghanistan, under the leadership of Fusail Maksum, and occupied all the townships of the district. The kulaks sympathized with them, for they knew that collectivization would soon put an end to their power. The mullahs, too, joined forces with the robbers. The smaller farmers, tenants, and peasants could do nothing against the usurpers, inasmuch as the authorities remained ‘neutral’ and the Red Sticks had not yet come into existence. On the contrary, Fusail Maksum kept enrolling new recruits and increased his bandit army tenfold.

“It was only when he attempted to advance toward the north, across the boundaries of Garm, against Fergana, that he encountered armed resistance. There his army was destroyed. He himself fled, first to Khas-Tau, in the mountains, where he remained a few days under the friendly and hospitable protection of the inhabitants, who sent his pursuers on a false scent. Finally he made his way back to Afghanistan—and today he runs an inn, with a caravanserai, on the outskirts of Kabul.

“After the departure of the Bassmachi, order was established in Garm. The old rulers were deposed, real Soviets were elected, and the Party was reorganized.

“ Early in April some of Ibrahim Beg’s bandits came into our neighbourhood. Their leader was Mullah Sherif. They were stronger than Fusail Maksum’s bands had been, and much better armed; they even had hand-grenades. They made Khas-Tau their base of action, because they knew it to be friendly to Bassmachi, from the time of Fusail Maksum’s attempts. They destroyed the bridges in order to be safe from Soviet interference. But in the intervening two years the situation had changed. The peasants united, attacked the raiders, and threw them back across the Panj. In this engagement half the Bassmachi were drowned, among them a brother of Fusail Maksum and probably the leader, Mullah Sherif himself.

“ The last of the bands came through here three weeks ago (after the capture of Ibrahim Beg), but not to pillage or commit arson or disturb the peace. . . . They were in flight. For a week they wandered about in our district, but no one offered them food or drink, and their horses had no fodder. They did not venture into the villages, but waylaid passing peasants and commanded them to bring food up into the mountains. Instead of that the Red Sticks came and the Bassmachi vanished. That is the story of Garm.”

“ But what happened so to alter public sentiment? ”

“ Please do not rise, Comrade. Pray yield to the custom of the land. Sit at your ease upon the ground with us and hear the story of economic conditions in our province before you begin exploring it.

“ Before the Revolution one fourth of the land was in

## A DISTRICT ON THE PAMIR

the hands of great landlords; almost five thousand farms belonged to the mullahs and their functionaries. The Emir did not pay them a salary; on the contrary, they paid tribute to him. A sort of semi-serfdom existed: the Bey or the Mullah drew up a list of peasants who were to cultivate his fields and serve in his house.

“ Now the ground is divided up. Over 264,000 acres are planted, as against 98,000 before the Revolution. Of course there are still kulaks, but not one of them has more than twice as much land as any of the small independent farmers. The herds, increased by forty to fifty per cent, now belong to the peasants; formerly they belonged to the beys.

“ Under the Emir’s rule about 15,000 individuals were obliged to emigrate each year. They would go to Fergana, to Bokhara, or to Tashkent, where they worked among the weavers or in the cotton-fields. Many returned after a number of years, during which they had become familiar with revolutionary ideas. Nasratullah Maksum himself, the Chairman of the ZIK (President of the Republic) is a native of our district.

“ At that time there were but few manufactured articles, and most of these were brought in by returning emigrants. In Fergana there was a tax on all goods sent to the south, to us. We still have these tariff-books. From them you can see that the yearly import of manufactured goods amounted to about one rouble to one rouble ten kopeks a head. The manufactured goods sold to the co-operatives under the Soviet régime amount to about sixty-five roubles a head. This year it is expected to rise



to a hundred roubles. Only the difficulties in transportation prevent us from importing more goods. Formerly there were but two general bazaars in the whole countryside; one in Kalai-Khum, the other here in Garm. Today we have seventy stores, about one and a half per village. The entire private property of the peasants amounts today to five million roubles. Soap and petroleum were unknown in the old days, and only three per cent of the populace was accustomed to drinking tea. The mullahs preached against the use of sugar, giving as their reason that in the sugar refineries a flour was used which was made out of the bones of hogs. Shirting was as rare in the lands on the Pamir as in Europe in the sixteenth century. In Kalai-Khum all weaving was done by handlooms. These have been abandoned; they could not brook competition with the textile factories.

“ If a peasant planted cotton at all, he did so only to stuff his pillows with the fibre, to line his chalat, and to wad his quilts.

“ Now nearly every peasant owns two chalats; so does his wife. He also owns two comforters, and from one to two hundred yards of cloth, which is much more than he can use; but the people here like to invest their money in goods.

“ Till recently our only means of illumination was pine torches; now we have kerosene lamps, but very shortly we shall have electricity.

“ We used to wear sandals or go barefoot. Last year ten thousand pairs of rubbers and ten thousand pairs of shoes were distributed, but that wasn't nearly enough.

## A DISTRICT ON THE PAMIR

“For a sheep we used to get twenty pounds of tea; for one pood of grain, one pound of tea. Only the rich could own horses. The wooden ploughs were drawn by oxen. Now about half the peasants have a horse of their own; they got them from Afghanistan, while the boundaries were still open, in exchange for cloth.

“Only twenty per cent of the population pay taxes; the small landowners and farm-labourers being exempt.

“In the times of the Emir all subjects were taxed, as a matter of principle; often to the extent of thirty-five per cent of their possessions. One tenth of every harvest had to be delivered as *ushar*; one fortieth of the livestock went each year as *zakat* to the Emir; cheese, wood, and milk, all were subject to tribute. Half the money earned by Tajiks who had worked in Fergana was levied from them on their return. Toll was levied on the bridges for passing herds, and the irrigation canals were a means of exploitation, extortion, and bribery.

“A *tanga* (twenty kopeks) had to be paid by married men each Thursday, as a luxury tax; because on this day every good Mussulman must sleep with one of his wives. In Afghanistan this religious tithe, called *kurpa dshumbani*, is levied to this very day.

“We are an exception among the countries of the Soviet Union. Only twelve per cent of our expense budget can be covered by our taxes. Eighty-eight per cent is given by the Central Government, to establish balance between the nations.

“While in the days of the Emir fifteen thousand men had to emigrate each year, because they would have

starved at home, we find difficulty today, in spite of all effort and propaganda, in enlisting even six thousand spare men for work in the southern cotton districts. We can find no labourers at all for road-building; formerly hunger and unemployment forced them to it; now nothing forces them."

"Are there many who can read?"

"Please do not rise, Comrade. Pray yield to the custom of the land. Sit at your ease on the ground with us and hear the story of the educational development of our province before you begin exploring it.

"Five per cent of the children attended the Koran schools, of course no girls. Now, out of 5,800 children, eighty per cent of the boys and fifteen per cent of the girls attend the 160 schools provided for them. It has been decided to enforce universal school attendance. True, many of the farms stand isolated among the mountains, and even in the larger villages there still exist many parents who would rather see their little daughter dead than send her to school. In seventy schools for illiterates, we teach 3,500 men and 1,000 women. The number of registered candidates is of course much greater, for almost all members of the collectives and trades unions desire to read and write. But we have neither the facilities nor adequate means of transportation to enable us to establish a course for illiterates in every mountain village.

"We have one teachers' course with 105 students, of which a fourth are women; a school for Soviet and Party workers; an agrarian school for members of the collec-



A class in anatomy in Bokhara. In the Bokhara Khanate there were formerly eight thousand sorcerers and only one physician (who attended the Emir, his harem and court). Today courses in anatomy are being conducted in scores of schools.

A class for the liquidation of illiteracy in Tashkent.





tives; a course for tractor-drivers; and one for the building trades.

“ The religious schools are not forbidden; the Mullah is there, too, ready to enroll new pupils, but none come. Many of the mullahs described themselves as illiterate at the census. All they know is the Koran, which they have memorized, and from which they taught their pupils to ‘ read ’!

“ The role played by the mosque, too, has undergone an alteration. In summer the older men sit grouped together, leaning against the wooden pillars of the mosque, and it is safe to assume that the new political developments do not enjoy their full approval. In winter only one of the two rooms of the mosque is used for prayer; the other is the meeting hall. This latter is heated and is called *Olla-u-Khana*, which means the ‘ house of fire.’ There everyone sits around, under sooty beams, in the smoky room, the newspaper is read aloud, everyone takes turns in putting new logs on the fire, Young Communists drop in and argue with those who defend Islam; the Kolchos hold their meetings there; deputations and agrarian specialists who come from the city sleep there. This part of the mosque has, then, become club, inn, and tea-house all in one.

“ The hall of prayer remains as it always was. No, not quite. When the kulaks objected to the schemes of collectivization, members of the collectives pulled the prayer-rugs of their enemies from their privileged places near the niche of prayer and spread them beside the rear wall, where, up to then, only the poor had knelt. That was

a severe blow to the religious rich, worse than when their civic rights had been taken from them, and worse than the parcelling-out of the land could ever be. Turbulent scenes ensued. The humiliated Bey called upon Allah for help and revenge. His prayer not being granted, he never again entered the mosque, but became an 'atheist.'

"Many of the mosques are closed, especially in villages where no more individual farms exist and everyone belongs to a Kolchos. In the *mihrab*, the holy niche reserved for prayer, in the holy wall which faces Mecca (here: toward the south-west), gas and oil for the tractor are kept as well as rope, parts of machinery, and sickles; and grain is heaped up where prayer-rugs used to lie. The Olla-u-Khana has turned into a library and Lenin corner.

"Arise, Comrade, and see for yourself what things have come about in our district on the Pamir."



## A VISIT TO THE CITY OF GARM



Snow blinks at us from the Czar Peter Mountains, and the rushing waters of the Vakhsh cool the air. In the abstract, the weather may be of a more than springlike warmth, but who ever feels warmth in the abstract? — we are shivering, having for weeks accustomed ourselves to a temperature of a hundred in the shade.

European buildings separated by great gaps. A crowd has gathered in the market-place in front of a small white house: the radio station. Through wide-open windows we look straight into the broadcasting-room itself. Anyone who happens not to have a radio in his hut can come here and not only listen to the programs, but see them as well. At the moment a master of Tajik folk-song is squirting jokes into the ether, and the listeners outside the window greet his sallies with loud exclamations, despite a sign which states: “ Silence! Performance! ”

The manager, a young Tajik, sees us sauntering along from Europe, and begs us urgently, loudly, and without the slightest consideration for the subtleties which the folk-singer may be murmuring into his microphone at



the moment, to give a lecture on "The Present and Future of Europe."

"When?"

"At once. Come on in. Make way, Comrades."

This is somewhat breath-taking. From experience in other quarters of the globe, we are accustomed to submit our radio speeches, even unpolitical ones, to the censor weeks ahead of time. Nor is it easy to improvise. We protest that our knowledge of Tajik is insufficient.

"Doesn't matter. Doesn't matter in the least. Speak Russian and we will translate what you say."

He blows a whistle — which means "Silence!" and "Performance!" — which can be heard in the mountain huts of the Pamir plateau, in the barracks of the Indian corridor beyond the border, and in the guardrooms of Persia, China, and Afghanistan. Comrade Fedya presents himself, glad to attend to the translating.

"Attention! Attention! Attention! A guaranteed genuine European will now speak in person about the political and economic situation in Europe and its future possibilities!" Fortunately that is a subject which can easily be exhausted in twenty minutes, and while our words are still oscillating from the antennæ across the roof of the world, while all Asia listens to the translation of what we have just said, we have left the radio station and are proceeding with our tour of inspection.

The first things we notice are dark disks stuck on the walls of the clay huts, in horizontal and vertical rows. Is this supposed to be ornamental? In the course of our promenade we recognize that the activity of some of the

women is the process by which these round cakes are produced. We diagnose (with our nose) what the raw material is, and finally learn the purpose of the finished product. Before the houses sheep's dung is mixed with water and chaff, and a game of "patty-cake, patty-cake baker's man!" ensues. Chastely veiled are the women while they perform this labour, for never would a loving spouse permit the flower of his harem to be sullied by the gaze of strangers' eyes, while she is kneading manure into disks. The disks, when dried, serve as fuel for the winter.

But by no means all the women of Garm wear the veil. More than a third have discarded it. By no means the only occupation of women in Garm is turning wet sheep's dung into *topak*. We peer into the window of a large building. A woman comes out and asks us whether we are looking for something. "No, nothing. We just happened to be passing, heard some machines clattering inside, and wondered what they were."

"We are an *artel* [union] of seamstresses. Please walk in."

And so we come into a co-operative of linen seamstresses. There are forty women, all unveiled, some even seated on chairs, for they are working at sewing-machines; the others sit on rugs, plying needles or scissors. Children play beside them; the hair of the little girls is braided into fifteen thin plaits, at the end of each of which dangles a little bow.

Sheets, pillow-cases, underwear are sewed here, while at the same time lectures are held and concerts given;

in the evenings there are courses, especially in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

“What do your husbands say to this?”

“At first they were opposed, but now they are satisfied, because we earn money. This enabled us to install a radio at home, and we now use wood for fuel instead of topak. Life has become easier for our husbands as well.”

“How much do you earn?”

“The manageress gets 285 roubles a month fixed salary. The members divide the profits. A linen seamstress earns about 125 roubles, a finisher 100 roubles.”

Portraits of Rosa Luxemburg, Krupskaya, and Clara Zetkin dominate the walls, but Lenin and Stalin are also present, as well as Nasratullah Maksum, State President of Tajikistan.

“Do you know who Lenin was?”

“Yes,” answers the woman of fifty, to whom the question was addressed. “He was a Russian and liberated us from the veil. Praised be his name.”

In a corner a samovar is steaming; cups of tea are handed around. Tambourines (*doryas*) are leaning against the wooden pillars which hold up the roof. The manageress asks the women whether they wish to show the stranger a dance. A few giggle. Dance before a man who is not one's husband?

Thereupon a small and slender old woman steps forward and begins to sway, with fluttering hands, and the tambourines begin to swing. The old woman grows ever younger and more lively, without, however, accelerating

her gestures or sacrificing their symbolism. She dances aloofness, elusiveness, surrender. Now and then the tambourine-players hit the drum-skin with tiny staccato movements of their wrists so that the little surrounding bells shiver; then the dancer lets her neck snap forward and backward; the Ouled-Nails of Africa have this same dance-figure, which seems to imitate the motions of a bird.

The old woman is not nearly through with her dance, but already young ones have joined her to earn their share of praise. There is a clink of ear-bangles that look like little pagodas. Hands are bared to the wrist — hands accustomed to the long sleeve of the parandsha, which cover them so that not the least finger-tip may be exposed. The dancing women flutter in coquettish fear from an imaginary partner, sway in a circle; but not one of them has nearly the grace of the old woman.

Women have come in from the neighbourhood, asking us also to honour their co-operatives with a visit. So before long we are honouring the washerwomen's artel.

“A month ago a division of the Red Army came here, to clear away the débris caused by a local avalanche. We organized an emergency committee and washed and mended for them eight days and eight nights: their underwear, sleeping-sacks, and sheets. Since we naturally refused pay for this, they presented us with six hundred roubles to buy a steam washing-machine.”

We go farther. In the woman's “ambulatorium” a robust Russian woman doctor is in charge. She shows us her case-book. She has from eighteen to twenty patients a

day, mostly of a gynecological nature. "Ab.-Com." is noted beside the diagnosis of some cases — for without the decision of the Committee on Abortion, which studies the social as well as the medical aspects of the case, no interruption of pregnancy may be undertaken. At first there were almost forty per cent of miscarriages, because the prospective mothers were too young; even today this remains at five per cent. Eczema is a common ailment, due to insufficient hygiene, but through the work of enlightenment the number of such cases is also diminishing. Medicaments are given free of charge at the drug-store upon presentation of the doctor's prescription.

"You see, I practise every day," says Anna Michailovna Orlova. "The rule is that I have every fifth day off, but since my patients travel from a great distance and even look me up in my home, I have renounced my free day."

"Then you will be glad, Anna Michailovna, when you are transferred?"

"Well, it's this way: until the Revolution I was just a nurse in St. Mary's Hospital in Moscow — you probably know the place: it is the house where Dostoyevsky was born. After the Revolution I was given the opportunity to study medicine. I was so happy at this glorious and undreamed-of chance that I declared myself willing, out of gratitude, to work in the most obscure and distant corner of the Soviet Union. And so I contracted to work here for three years."

"Well, Anna Michailovna, three years pass quickly."

"They have already passed. But it's this way: it has

turned out that my intended sacrifice is no sacrifice at all. My work is successful; I've had my medical books sent out from Moscow — they weighed fifteen poods — I shall remain here.”

Russian residents, when asked how they happened into this out-of-the-way corner of the world, very often reply: I'm here because I volunteered, in the interests of Socialism, to work for a while in the remotest backwoods of the Soviet countries. But not all the answers have the same ring of truth and devotion as was the case with our friend Anna Michailovna. Many a man who has disgraced himself at home, and many a deposed landowner, have emigrated to Asia (where as recently as three years ago labourers were beginning to be scarce) to earn their qualification of workman, membership of a trades union, or perhaps even an official appointment.

Others stalked hither for sombre motives, especially at the time when the N. E. P. was careering along on its erring ways. They tried to turn an honest or dishonest penny by trading in colonial articles, karakul, sheep's wool, rice — with a little smuggling and spying on the side.

Along with these, whose knell has long since rung, others really did come here out of political conviction, to do social work: that type of new men and women who can rightly be called shock troops. Almost all came with the purpose of remaining a short time, and almost all have remained permanently, or come back after a visit home. The heroic scenery of Central Asia binds them, as a mother is bound to her children.

The former nurse and present physician, Anna Michailovna Orlova, is no exception, but typical of the Soviet workers who have come here from the Russian homeland. Each of them feels himself the bearer of a new culture, if not the founder of a new State. Everyone shows you what he has accomplished, tells you how horrified he was when he arrived, and how happy he is that he can remain. They tell you the story of their lives, in which their arrival in Tajikistan is the salient point.

It is different when one talks to the natives. They were the objects of the process which in other countries took a thousand years and here was accomplished within ten. They grew up in the most dismal slave-imprisonment and sombre bigotry; many resisted the new times and experienced their Damascus, not all of them simultaneously.

It is here in Garm that Khassyad Mirkulan, a young Tajik woman in European clothes, tells us the story of her life. From time to time Rafi Aman comes into the room, her young, sun-bronzed husband, in order to ask with a smile if he may not remain. She, too, smiles at him affectionately; "No, I am not yet finished." She is ashamed to tell her story before him.

But to us Khassyad Mirkulan tells the story of how, out of a mere article of female "goods," a free woman was made: one of the thousand and one stories of the Soviet Republic of Tajikistan.



## KHASSYAD MIRKULAN



“I was born in Chustpap, in the valley of Fergana, in 1904. When I was eight years old I was veiled. My father was a weaver. My mother and I used to embroider caps. My little sister helped us to wind up the spools. My brother worked for a baker. We were very poor and that is why I was so long single. I was not married off until I was fourteen.

“How it came about? Well, naturally I did not even know my future husband; in fact I hadn't the slightest idea that I had been promised in marriage. It was only later I learned that the uncle of my bridegroom (his father was dead) had visited my father together with the Imam (the priest) to ask whether I had been promised to anyone. My father said no, and they went away.

“Next day they came again. My mother baked flat bread, cooked mutton and rice stew and tea, and gave the guests a cap embroidered in silver as a present for the bridegroom. I was sent away to a neighbour's and had to remain there from early morning until sunset. A girl is not allowed to stay at home while the relatives of



her future husband are in the house. That is a religious custom, but I was unfamiliar with it and had no idea why I was being sent away. When the guests had departed, I was fetched back, and we ate the rest of the plov — what the guests had left; then we washed the dishes.

“ My purchase price had been agreed upon: two sheep, four poods of wheat, two horse-loads of wood, three poods of rice, a cow, three camels’-hair blankets, one chalat, and two robes. But it was never paid. My bridegroom’s uncle brought only the blankets and the pieces of clothing. Even these did not please my mother. ‘ Shabby! Mean! Not even silk,’ she exclaimed. But the uncle replied: ‘ We are poor.’ ”

“ A few days later my mother told me that I would be married. I was very unhappy to have to leave home and not to see any of my little girl friends for two years. For in the first two years of her marriage no woman is permitted either to make or to receive visits. Nor did I know whether my fiancé was old or young, nor how many wives he already had. I was not even allowed to inquire.

“ The wedding itself? Three weeks after the betrothal we prepared a sumptuous repast; all the relations came; then the Mullah appeared with the bridegroom. The children came running into the ichkari to see me, where I was sitting with the two daughters of our neighbour.

“ ‘ Khassyad, we’ve seen your husband.’ ”

“ My friends asked (I would never have been so bold): ‘ Is he old? ’ ”

“ ‘ No, not old; and he is wearing a silken cloak.’ ”

“ ‘Well, how old is he?’ asked my friends. I was mortified enough to crawl down the well.

“ ‘He is the same age as Khassyad’s brother.’

“ This answer brought gladness to my eyes, for I had expected to be given to some senile old man, seeing how poor we were.

“ My mother, who had been busy over the fire in the courtyard, now ordered me to redden my nails with *kh’na* (henna), to salve my eyebrows with usmah-grass, and to put on my best dress. A few hours later the uncle returned to us and called out: ‘Ready!’

“ I put on my veil and walked toward the closed door. On the other side of it stood the Mullah, praying. At length he asked me, through the door, if I was willing to be married. My mother indicated by a sign that I was to be silent. Three times the Mullah repeated his question. It was only when he asked for the fourth time that I had to answer: ‘*Ha*’ (Yes).

“ Two kinsmen of my husband came into the room, spread out a rug, and placed tea and confectionery on it. Thereupon they led my husband into the room and he sat down on the *tshapan* (rug). It was the first time that strange men had penetrated into the women’s quarters. My mother, my friends, and I stood veiled in a corner, with our faces to the wall, and wept.

“ Then everyone else left the room and I was alone with my husband. He called my name: ‘Khassyad,’ and I went and sat down beside him, but with my face averted so that I could not see him. He poured tea into the piala and handed it to me. I shook my head: I couldn’t drink;

I was trembling too much. So he drank all the tea himself, but offered me some cakes. I refused. We didn't exchange one word. After a while he clapped his hands, whereupon my mother came in, took away the tea-pot, and barred the door from without.

“ He approached me and removed my veil. My heart was beating painfully. I was ashamed to be so naked before a strange man, and was afraid I might not please him.

“ It was at this moment that we saw each other for the first time.

“ He nodded to me in a friendly way and spread out the cushions on the rug, and we lay side by side all night. He did not so much as kiss me.

“ He lived in the house of my father for three days, which custom requires, then I moved to his house. It was only here that I learned that I was his only wife: I had not dared to ask him about this before.

“ We lived together a month and a half without his ever touching me. Then one day his sister said to him: ‘ Aren't you ashamed? You are eighteen and you behave like a boy who goes only with men! ’ — ‘ I am sorry for her,’ answered my husband, ‘ she is so timid.’ The sister cooked some meat and put nasha into it, which is a narcotic root. I was made to eat this and thereupon lost consciousness. I do not know what happened to me then. The next day I had high fever and for five weeks I lay in delirium.

“ My husband was a cotton-worker, but in 1919 there was no cotton planted even in the valley of Fergana, so,

six months after our marriage, he went to Tashkent to look for work. There he died of pneumonia. As he had no brother, who could inherit me, I returned to the house of my father, where I sat about for a year and a half and embroidered caps.

“ One evening my mother’s brother came to us in great excitement. He had heard that Bassmachi had raped all the women and girls in the neighbouring villages and intended attacking our village that very night. My two cousins, Obidabi and Sobira, and I disguised ourselves as old women and fled, on foot, across the mountains. After two days we came to Kokand. There my uncle handed us over to an Ishan, a miracle man, with the words: ‘ The flesh is yours, the bones are ours.’ By which he meant: Do what you like with them; when they are dead, we will bury them.

“ Our uncle took his leave, and we remained as servants in the house of Rachmatullah Ishan. He had four wives and an old woman-servant, who all took pleasure in ordering us about. All day long muridi (assistant priests) sat about the house, or clients who came to ask Rachmatullah for advice, in exchange for gifts. We were forever cutting up onions for the plov, making tea, washing dishes in the arik. For five months we worked and slept in the old women’s garbs in which we had come; we received no wages and ate whatever food was left over: often only bread and tea.

“ Every day came a deformed old man, Murid Hakim-Said, whom we hated. To this scarecrow Ishan gave Obidabi to wife, the elder of my two cousins, although

Hakim-Said already had two wives at home.

“My uncle came for the wedding. He brought the news that my father was dead. The Bassmachi had killed him because they believed he had hidden me from them. Before my mother’s eyes they had cut off his head with a sabre.

“My uncle said to me: ‘Should anyone come to us and ask for you as wife, we will marry you off again, provided he can buy you away from the holy Ishan.’ I wept, for I longed to go home, but he wouldn’t take me, saying I no longer belonged to my mother, but to the Ishan. Besides, there was not much to eat at home. Then I begged him at least to send me my dress, and that he promised to do.

“A few days after Obidabi’s wedding, the youngest wife of Rachmatullah Ishan fell ill and spat blood. The tabib (medicine man) was called in, and prescribed frog soup every day for a week.

“The old serving-woman took a little bag and a pair of tongs and went with me to a swamp to catch frogs. Over and over again she tried to seize the frogs, but they always managed to leap away. At last she handed me the tongs and I succeeded in catching two frogs, which we put in the little sack and carried home.

“Next day I was sent out alone. I had just managed to catch one frog, when suddenly I heard music. I ran to the highway and saw a sight which I would never in all my life have believed possible: a long procession of women, marching behind a band and singing. Many of them were unveiled! In the open street! Two women car-

ried staffs; between these was a red cloth with something written on it. They saw me and called out something I didn't understand. I ran along with them, to find out what they were saying. Finally I understood what it was: '*Jashasun khotunlar osodleri* — Freedom for women!'

"I followed them with my little frog in a bag. We came into a courtyard where there were tables laid out with tea, cakes, and apples. I did not dare to sit down. A woman — I later discovered that her name was Ibrahimova — mounted the speakers' platform and made a speech. She said it was wrong for a man to be allowed to beat a woman; it was wrong that women were not allowed to learn anything, but forced to go veiled all their lives. 'This is the 8th of March — that is Women's Day. On this day all women must remember that they are human beings just as men are.'

"I stood rooted to the spot. It would be lovely if women could be as free as men, but had not Allah forbidden that? Everything that this woman spoke was sinful. I was sure she would be stoned when she had finished speaking. But instead everyone shouted: 'Freedom for women!' and some threw off their veils then and there.

"I still stood unable to move. Ibrahimova invited me to be seated. 'I am afraid,' I said; 'I live in the house of an Ishan. If he learns of all this, he will kill me.'

" 'Is the Ishan your husband?'

" 'No. I am his servant.'

"Ibrahimova then asked me whether I had a husband and where my father was. I told her I was a widow and that my father was dead.

“ ‘ Would you like to study? ’

“ ‘ Study! I am a woman! ’

“ And then she explained to me that the Emir was no longer ruler, that no human being might have any advantage over another, not even the Bey, and that all people must study, even women.

“ I had never heard such a thing before and I said: ‘ Indeed I should like to know things. Take me along with you. I will never return to the Ishan if you take me with you.’

“ ‘ Very well. But first drink your tea.’ I removed my veil and laid it down close on my left hand. On my right I laid the little sack with the frog, who was still kicking. I was afraid they would take away my veil; and I was afraid the frog would jump out, and then they would all laugh at me. I was terribly ashamed of the frog.

“ When I had drunk my tea, I put on my veil, took up my things, and followed Ibrahimova; on the way I threw away the frog and the tongs.

“ We came to a big building — this was the living-quarters of the women pupils — where Ibrahimova introduced me to another woman and took leave of me. At last I was given a new dress, and the woman led me to a bathroom. I had never seen a tub before. At first I was afraid to climb in, but soon I wished I could stay in it forever. Then I had a shower. I was put into a dormitory with ten young women. For the first time in my life I lay down in a bed, and thought I had strayed into paradise.

“ Next morning I went to the classroom and began to

learn the alphabet. The others already knew many letters and figures; I admired them greatly, but it was not long before I, too, learned to read and write and do arithmetic.

“ Whenever we went out I wore my veil. My colleagues urged me to leave it at home, but I answered that someone from the Ishan’s household might recognize me and then they would fetch me back.

“ When I had been nine months in the school, the director asked me if my mother knew I was there. ‘ I believe she knows it,’ I replied, for I was sure the Ishan had explained the circumstances of my flight. Rachmatullah Ishan had the reputation of being the most knowing man in the district.

“ ‘ I will write to your mother that you are here.’

“ I was afraid my mother would take me back to the Ishan, for had not my uncle said: ‘ The flesh is yours, the bones are ours ’? So I begged the director not to write. He only said: ‘ I will not do so without good reason.’

“ A few days later, when I was on duty cleaning the dormitory, I saw a veiled woman standing in the doorway waiting.

“ ‘ Don’t be afraid,’ I called laughing. ‘ You may come in. There are no men here.’

“ The strange woman came up to me quite stiffly, and I was afraid. Her black veil was all but touching my face, when she cried: ‘ Khassyad! ’

“ It was my mother. At first she could not speak, but kept touching me. Then she drew me violently into her arms and wept and wept. Meanwhile my uncle had also



come up, and was looking at me in complete bewilderment.

“After a while I learned why they were so excited: My uncle had gone back to Kokand shortly after his daughter’s wedding, to bring me my dress as he had promised. In the house of the Ishan he was told that I had been murdered. You see, when I had not returned from my frog-hunt, the Ishan had called in a soothsayer. The old woman threw a pod of cotton into hot water and began to tell what she saw: On the bank of a canal a Bassmach had seized me — snatched me onto his horse — and rode away with me. Then she saw him drag me into the bushes. Suddenly the old witch screamed out: ‘Now her light has ceased to burn.’ My uncle had gone home with the news of my death, and my mother had mourned for me a long time. . . .

“Three days before, a notice had arrived from the school that I was there and that my mother should come to Kokand. She had started out with her brother, in the greatest excitement, in order to find out what this notice might mean. In spite of her happiness at finding me alive she reproached me: ‘How do you happen to be without your veil? Who ever induced you to commit such a heinous sin? You have fallen into evil hands!’

“I vowed that I was unveiled only at home and in school, never on the street. But she found even that sinful and immodest, for a man might happen to come in and see me.

“That evening we were the guests of the director. I wore my veil, though he was used to seeing me without

it, and his wife and sister sat there without veils. He spoke in undertones to my uncle and my mother, then they called me to them and I learned why he had written to them. One of the teachers wished to ask my mother for my hand. 'No,' I said, 'I wish to remain here and to continue studying.' The teacher was sent for. He agreed that I could continue at school even if I were his wife.

"And so we were married. It was a wedding quite different from my first. We simply went to the Soviet Registrar's Office and had ourselves inscribed as man and wife. The official who married us was none other than Ibrahimova herself. She was happy that I had remained at school and even more so when I told her how much I liked studying.

"I stayed there until 1922, then my husband and I were granted permission to enter the Rabfak (Working-peoples' Faculty — a course of preparation for the University) of Tashkent.

"As a student and the wife of a Young Communist, I could not possibly go on wearing the veil. I cannot describe how I felt the first time I went out in the streets unveiled. I walked close on the heels of my husband, so that my face was all but pressed to his back; then I peeked out to see if the passers-by weren't standing still and laughing at me.

"You must bear in mind that no woman was allowed to bare her face and hands to any man other than her father or her son. She could also show her face to her own brothers and the older brothers of her mother. I remember one day when I was eight years old and had just

taken to wearing the veil, my mother said to me: 'Mirismon was circumcised today.' Mirismon was the son of neighbours; I had taught him to walk, when I myself had been but three or four years of age — so I had known him practically from his birth and had played with him daily. My mother's remark was a way of informing me that from now on he might no longer see my face.

“ ‘ If a woman coughs so that a man may hear it, or if a strange man sees the hand of a woman, that is sinful and brings shame on the whole family.’ Thus the priest often must have spoken, for frequently, after he had been in the mosque, my father would come into the *ichkari* and repeat this warning, which the Mullah had read out of the *Ktab*. A girl who turned her head to look after a man was counted a prostitute.

“ I am telling you all this so that you may understand what it meant to me to walk unveiled through the streets of Tashkent, and why I looked around to see whether everyone were not standing still to mock and laugh at me. I soon noticed that no one stood still and no one laughed.

“ In 1923 I joined the League of Youth. When I had finished with the *Rabfak* I attended the University. I studied political economy, the history of revolution, and allied subjects. I had learned Russian back in the working-peoples' faculty.

“ I remained in Tashkent five years; joined the Party and completed my course at the University. My husband had been graduated a year before me and was working in Kagan, near Bokhara, whither I now followed him. There I became political leader of the Women's Union, most



A class in physical culture on the square facing the Women's Pedagogical Institute in Bokhara. These girls will never be forced to wear a parandsha.

An Uzbek woman bringing a complaint to the Woman's Section of the Communist Party in Tashkent, asking for action against someone who has wronged her. Such "actions" are frequently asked for against a husband who has beaten or otherwise mistreated his wife, or against neighbours who have violently expressed their disapproval of the woman's modern ways. Many women in this section have been killed by relatives or neighbours for removing the veil.





of whose members were silk-workers. From Kagan I was transferred to the Women's Section in Stalinabad, which at that time was still called Dushambe. After a while I was elected Vice-Chairman of the City Soviet (Vice-Mayor). It was the reconstruction period — hundreds of new houses were being built, the first railway came, everything had to be organized. Sometimes I did not get home for days on end.

“There was a Russian woman working in the same department as my husband, and they fell in love with each other. From a ‘professional’ trip to Tashkent he wrote me that he had been to the Registrar's office there and had registered his withdrawal from our marriage. He wrote that he had not had the courage to tell me of his decision and asked me to forgive him. My divorce hurt me very much, but my work left me very little time to nurse my unhappiness.

“In 1929 I came here to Garm to organize a district delegates' day. The women here were very backward politically and economically. To bake topak cakes of sheep's dung was their only occupation. There were frequent child-marriages with their resulting miscarriages. Polygamy was the rule; there was an appalling lack of hygiene, lack of information, and almost complete illiteracy. I suggested that the Party station me here until these evils should be rooted out. And so I have remained.

“That is all I can tell you about my life. Oh, yes, six months ago Rafi Aman came to Garm as Secretary of the District Committee — that silly boy, here he comes again to ask whether I have not yet finished my story! I had

almost forgotten him! Well, I married him and am very fond of him, though he really doesn't deserve it. . . .

“ You'd like to know what has become of all the others I mentioned? Ishan Rachmatullah stayed in Kokand. Two of his wives died, but the one to whom I failed to bring frogs is still alive. His palmy days are over: few people come to him any more for miracles. The Murid, Hakim-Said, the deformed old man whom we detested and who married my cousin Obidabi, died some years ago, and Obidabi has married again. My other cousin, Sobira, returned to Chustpap. She drives a tractor there and so does her husband. My brother is Red director of the bread-factory at Fergana, my sister works in the silk-mill in Samarkand.

“ My mother is head of a vegetable collective with forty members. She has learned to read, and writes me long letters — but these are none too legible.

“ Her veil? She threw it away six years ago.” .



## WHAT ARE THE CHANGES IN KHOJENT?



Before the war the inhabitants of Khojent raised fifty thousand roubles to bribe the railway *not* to enter their city on its way from Tashkent to Kokand.

This proves three things:

1. That Khojent is not, like the other parts of present-day Tajikistan, situated outside the lane of traffic.
2. That Khojent is a very rich city.
3. That it is also a reactionary city.

In explanation of (1): The entire district is practically an enclave of the Soviet Republic of Tajikistan within the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan, being included in the former because the population is not Mongolian but Iranian, and speaks Persian-Tajik instead of Turkish-Uzbek.

In explanation of (2): The district boasted a silk industry carried on by home weavers, who were exploited on a large scale by rich merchants; as well as vast orchards and cotton-fields, worked by serfs and owned by a dozen beys.

In explanation of (3): The district was blessed



with an extraordinary number of mullahs, medersas, mosques, and minarets; for every four hundred inhabitants there was a mosque. Every woman was veiled; every rich man had half a dozen wives; the poor man, seeing no prospect of being able to buy himself a wife, was reduced to the palliative of homosexuality.

There are tangible remnants of this past. Now, as before, the railway winds its way through the barren steppe, leaving the city of Khojent some seven and a half miles to one side. A good many of the hundred and ten mosques are still active. Here one sees more veiled women than in other cities. Many of the silk-weavers have closed their home workshops, but those who have not done so earn hardly more than in the days when the merchants exploited them.

Then what are the changes?

How often has one heard that question during the past fourteen years, whenever discussion turns on the Soviet Union. How frequently this question has been thrown out as a challenge, whenever some unfavourable report, true or invented, has made its way to the newspapers.

“What are the changes, if a district on the Volga is suffering from starvation?” (1920).

“What are the changes, if the NEP, free trade, has been once more introduced?” (1921).

“What are the changes, if the Soviets cannot do away with the hereditary evil of waifs and strays?” (1922).

“What are the changes if this State of workmen cannot accomplish the feat of doing away with unemployment?” (1924).

## WHAT ARE THE CHANGES IN KHOJENT?

“ . . . if Trotsky is forbidden to leave the country . . . ? ” “ . . . if Trotsky is forbidden to remain in the country . . . ? ”

“ . . . if engineers under trial are to be shot for purely political reasons . . . ? ” “ . . . if engineers under trial are saved from shooting for purely political reasons . . . ? ”

“ . . . if the Five Year Plan does not succeed because it is absolutely impossible that it should succeed . . . ? ” “ . . . when the Five Year Plan succeeds, because it must succeed . . . ? ”

“ . . . if it is impossible to manufacture goods . . . ? ” “ . . . if the surplus of manufactured goods causes dumping all over the world . . . ? ”

“ . . . if, without private initiative, without the pressure exercised by a boss, without the fear of discharge and unemployment, it is impossible to force people to work . . . ? ” “ . . . if without private initiative and so forth, forced labour is the rule . . . ? ”

“ . . . when there are the same wages for all . . . ? ” “ . . . when there are not the same wages for all . . . ? ”

What, then, are the changes?

If there had been no other change on this sixth part of the surface of the globe but that exploitation has been done away with—leaving aside the eradication of unemployment, of the misery of children, of illiteracy, of religious superstition, of corruption, leaving aside the fact that a hundred million human beings have been filled with constructive enthusiasm, with knowledge and

culture, leaving aside all this — if only for the sake of abolishing exploitation, it would be worth while to live in our day and age.

But how many people understand this? A man born into capitalistic conditions, his mind befogged with capitalistic ideology, sees nothing horrible in the most horrible squalor. He is accustomed to a social inequality which begins before birth and continues after burial. He does not deem it cruel — at best he feels it to be regrettable, but inevitable — that hundreds of thousands must act as robots for a single man who is clever enough to exploit the stupidity of the masses.

The reader has read this editorial digression with displeasure. But one such digression becomes obligatory to balance unfavourable evidence which cannot be glossed over — which indeed should be repeatedly and emphatically pointed out. In other words, the reader must be reminded that these pictures are drawn to scale, and details which are derogatory if studied as isolated phenomena take on minor proportions when regarded in their relation to the picture as a whole, which is decidedly favourable.

Then what are the changes here?

We arrived late at night by train; our car was uncoupled, and we stretched out for a nap, intending to drive into the city by bus in the morning. But the best-laid plans. . . . An inhabitant of Khojent, friend of our friends in Stalinabad, appeared with his car. Our supper and room were waiting for us; we could fetch our valise in the morning. So off we drove to supper in

WHAT ARE THE CHANGES IN KHOJENT?

shorts, slippers, and night-shirt. The car stopped in front of a new hotel; we entered a restaurant where tables were laid with white cloths and decked with flowers — the sort of restaurant to which in our part of the world no workman, even in his Sunday best, would be admitted. The guests: Tajiks, who but a few years since would have leapt into the deepest circle of hell rather than eat at the same table with any giaour; Russian workmen who but a few years since would have starved rather than break bread with a Sarte. . . . Now they all sit together and glance up with curiosity at the entrance of a representative of the capitalistic world in his underclothes.

We were prepared to wait a long time for food — that plov which had been served us at least sixty times in the last two months as a sign of special hospitality. But what was this being set before us — without our having to wait? Liver soup with dumplings!

We were too astonished to exclaim.

Second course: Selchfleisch,<sup>1</sup> with dumplings and cabbage.

We were still too astonished to exclaim.

Third course: Kaiserschmarren.<sup>2</sup>

We were too astonished to keep silent. But hardly had we exclaimed when the cook was standing before us. He had been hovering in the doorway to enjoy our appetite and amazement.

“Well,” he inquired, “how does it compare with German cooking?”

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<sup>1</sup> A smoked meat dish peculiar to Austria. — *Translator.*

<sup>2</sup> An omelet which is a Viennese specialty. — *Translator.*

“But it’s not German; it’s Austrian!”

He broke into a joyful profanity and, in strongest Austrian dialect, asked: “Don’t tell me you’re Austrian too!”

Yes, we claim the same nationality as this dyed-in-the-wool Viennese from Brünn. And so, having found a compatriot from Berlin, Vienna, and Prague, he laughed for sheer compatriotism. Our Tajik host, the Georgian hotel manager, and the Russian and Tajik guests laughed with us, for they couldn’t fail to react to the heart-warming intimacy engendered by Selchfleisch and Kaiserschmarren.

Next day we went over to the hospital to have a bandage renewed. The doctor, accustomed to thinking of foreigners as foreigners, was eager to show us the hospital, particularly the new apparatuses. It is an institute where cures are effected by the application of the science of physics; no medicines are used other than heat, water, air, and electricity. We inspected quartz lamps; sweat-boxes with forty-eight lamps; a pantostat; a Franklin electric shower; Heyden X-rays; a heliopan capable of three hundred thousand volts, which cost twenty-one thousand marks in Berlin, and various other contrivances made of ebonite, silver, and quartz which, like ourself, had come here from far-distant lands, although we noticed other diathermic apparatuses which bore the trademark of a factory in Leningrad.

Everywhere, under the showers, in the galvanizing tubs, under the violet rays, we saw patients; Tajiks and Uzbeks, being treated for ailments such as paralysis,

## WHAT ARE THE CHANGES IN KHOJENT?

eczema, and rheumatism. Every cure is more than a mere triumph of science; it is the conquest of science over superstition, a conquest which, since it takes place to the accompaniment of magical blue lights and snapping sparks, is calculated to take permanent hold on the minds of a primitive people.

Patients sit on their beds reading newspapers and books. In the living-room they play chess or write letters. A few limp about on the gravel paths of the park, which overlooks the banks of the Syr-Darya. In a little pond there is a single water-lily, but a real *Victoria Regia* — in full bloom. To us more magical than all the blue lights and snapping sparks.

Much space is devoted to gardens in Khojent. You wander through them till the colours and perfumes make you dizzy. In one corner pomegranates are ripening; in another, tuberoses are blooming. Everywhere you see and inhale jasmine, reseda, verbena, lavender, nutmeg. The very grass seems to have narcotic properties.

This olfactory orgy is put to good use. Two years ago a factory for essential oils was installed in a former *se-raglio*. With one distilling apparatus and one truck to start with. Now the work is carried on night and day in the analytical as well as the synthetic laboratory, with all the branch activities of extraction, rectification, enfleurage, not to mention the extensive gardens. The annual capacity is as follows: 31 tons of essential oils; 540,000 bottles of perfume; 1,620,000 bottles of eau-de-Cologne, 1,080,000 bottles of toilet water. The area planted in flowers under the auspices of the Khojent Bo-

tanic Institute covers nearly three thousand acres and yields some thirty-two thousand tons of essential oils.

Tajik men and women (the women unveiled; but when the whistle blows at the end of the working-day, on go the veils again!) handle with skill the refractometer from Jena, the mixing apparatus from Tashkent. A few years ago the same men were taking part in "bull-fights" with a goat for bull; and the same women were making fuel out of sheep's dung.

In shock troop formation they produce "Quelques fleurs" and "Beauté-de-nuit" and Chypre, without an inkling that one of the deepest preoccupations of an alien society is: shall it spray itself tonight with Chypre or with "Quelques fleurs."

In socialistic rivalry among themselves they strive for an exact reproduction of the scent of lilies-of-the-valley and violets: flowers they have never seen, much less smelt.

On a sliding belt they fill flasks with eau-de-Cologne to the tune of four thousand flasks per day: almost as many as the "4711" firm in Cologne. So what can be done on the banks of the Rhine can be done on the banks of the Syr-Darya; and the fragrance that floats across the square before the Cologne Cathedral is the fragrance that floats over toward the Mosque of Khojent.

They mix amyl alcohol with phenol-ethyl alcohol; amyl acetate with hydroxy-citronellol; vanillin with amyl valerianate, without ever having learned these unpronounceable names, much less their chemical formulæ in school.

## WHAT ARE THE CHANGES IN KHOJENT?

Yes, but isn't that equally true of the employees of Herr Farina and Monsieur Coty? What, then, are the changes here?

We are being ushered into a lecture-room. There are seats, a blackboard, and test-tubes; this is the "Technicum," a way-station of the former herb-gatherer on his progress from gardener to chemist.

It does not happen to be an hour when there is a class. Only three students are in the room, Tajiks of course, one of whom cannot even speak Russian, but he is desperately trying to decipher the mysteries of a German periodical devoted to the perfume industry. The two others are watching the progress of experiments they started yesterday — holding éprouvettes against the light and to their noses. We get into conversation with one of them.

Name? Usman Dshon Gaybov.

Age? Thirty-two years.

Attended school? No.

Religion? None.

Profession? Formerly brickmaker. Now tanner.

Member of the Party? Yes, since 1928.

Member of a trades union? Yes.

In what capacity? Chairman of the Leather Trades Union, District of Khojent.

Father's profession? Tanner.

The father died when Usman Dshon Gaybov was a child, and for that reason he had to hire himself out as a brickmaker. But the fact that his father and many of his ancestors had been tanners gave him some atavistic yearning to refine whatever he found in the raw. To him



the herbs that he gathered were not only herbs, but potential essences. Now he is studying chemistry with the object of giving the Soviet Union the full scientific benefit of his experiments in the "tanning" of plants and flowers.

Not all the students are as far advanced as he. The courtyard of the seraglio resounds to the voices of porters and camel-drivers. It is a setting that reminds one of the liturgical Christmas spectacles in Catholic lands. Through the portal come men, camels, and asses, all heavily laden. They lurch up to the scales, and lurch away again, through the gate: men, camels, and asses, on their way to gather a multitude of sweet-smelling flowers, here called "burgan." Having gathered them, they will pack them on the backs of the men, the camels, and the asses and come back through the portal of the courtyard. And over and over again, till such time as the flower-farms here have produced enough oil to produce an improved oil, or better still — and this is the wish-dream of all chemists — till everything can be produced synthetically and nature abolished.

Cases packed with little glass bottles arrive from distant lands, from Moscow. But the glass-factory in nearby Degmay is nearing completion.

The labels are shown us with pride: they have been printed on the spot. In three colours! "Aren't they beautiful?" In the show-windows of the rue de la Paix it is doubtful whether they would entice many buyers. But these are export goods, going from Tajikistan to still more primitive lands: western China and Afghanistan,

## WHAT ARE THE CHANGES IN KHOJENT?

whose womenfolk, if shown a flask from Chanel or Worth, would probably not be impressed. . . .

The jars and bottles and tubes are loaded on trucks: toilet water, hair-lotions, creams. "To the hairdressers' co-operative in Leningrad"; "To the hairdressers' co-operative in Kiev." . . .

Emerging from the perfume-factory to the street, we draw a deep breath. The pure air has a magically negative aroma. What a godsend after our sojourn in the factory rooms! For nothing in the world has such a bestial stench as a perfume-factory.

Our thoughts wander to the Tajik workman who was trying so hard to decipher the German journal of perfumery — trying to discover how scents were created in the Far West, although these secrets came originally from the Near East. Here it was that exquisites were anointed with amber and balsam and spikenard; here one was sprayed with attar of roses; here houses were redolent of myrrh. The Far West is in more ways than it knows a plagiarism of the Near East.

Did we not see native patients of the Physiotherapeutic Institute playing chess, the game of their remotest ancestors and of the Persians? The present generation has only recently relearned the game from the Russians, just as they had had to relearn the art of producing balsams. Perhaps infinitely much has changed since yesterday, but practically nothing since the day before.

The people of Tajikistan, Iranians, fathers of all Aryan peoples of Europe, are being roused from the deadening gloom of slavery and are learning. Even learning

to feel. Not only for the West, not only for themselves. but for East *and* West.

There are orchards where, casually, one can pluck pomegranates. And vineyards where, casually, one can pluck great clusters of the grapes known as lady-fingers, despite the fact that Bolshevism has abolished the word and concept: "lady."

There is a nitrogen-factory which cost six hundred thousand roubles. Also a garage three storeys high with accommodation for four hundred cars. A stadium. The headquarters of the silk industry. Jam-factories. The Fire Department. A normal school. Brand-new buildings. Buildings under construction. . . .

Through an open gate we peer into an ancient park and decide to enter. The hedges, once clipped by the hand of a pedantic gardener, now grow wild to their heart's content. The flower-beds, released from their master's mania for symmetry, have spread with an equal mania for chaos. The paths, which were formerly long scars on the lawns, have been healed by flowers and verdure. And the liberated park blossoms out as it never could have done in the days it was confined to a gilded cage.

A path strewn with fallen leaves leads to a circular space, in the centre of which is a great open pavilion, where cots are set out. On the steps sits a teacher with pupils at his feet. They pay very little attention to the approaching stranger until he introduces himself. Then Comrade Azimov returns the courtesy. He is principal of the Central Asiatic University of Tashkent and holds

WHAT ARE THE CHANGES IN KHOJENT?  
courses here for political leaders and functionaries of economic enterprises.

One of his students works in the fruit trust; another in the supervisory committee of local workmen and peasants; a third in a branch of the Goss-Torg (national stores); a fourth is member of the cotton committee; a fifth, chairman of a home weavers' artel; most of the others are directors of co-operative stores and Kolchos.

The class which we interrupted while taking a walk is learning the principles of managing a collective farm, along with the fundamentals of Party history and Leninism — branches of study unknown to Europe's higher or lower institutes of learning. Next term the students will also study "Histmat" — which is the Soviet Union's abbreviation for "Historic Materialism," just as we use such trade-names as Socony and Nabisco.

The people are all red captains of industry, or soon will be. They manage enterprises, the economic condition of whole districts is entrusted to them, they must organize, build, and administer millions of roubles. They grant appropriations and make far-reaching decisions.

Bi-Dodo-Khudo, which means "Not God-Given" (his name was formerly "God-Given") is only now being initiated into the arts of reading and writing, although for two years he has been head of a vegetable Kolchos, which embraces forty farms and 356 acres.

"How can you fill such an office without knowing how to read or write, Bi-Dodo-Khudo?"

He smiles: "I learned my methods here."

"You've taken courses here before?"

He smiles again: "Before the Revolution I spent ten years as gardener of this park. It belonged to the District Manager of the city of Khojent. Mirza Bogadir Mujinov was all-powerful. He had six wives, despite which fact every one of his employees who wished to marry had first to submit his bride to the boss. All married workers had to bring him their daughters as soon as these were eleven years of age. He also sent for the wives and daughters of such men as were imprisoned. He took tribute from the relatives of rich criminals. And so he became the richest man of the district."

"Is that what you learned from him, Bi-Dodo-Khudo?" the others ask, laughing.

"No. Not that. Something quite different. He was cunning, and because he did not know how to read or write, everything that he dictated to one scribe he had read to him by another. And so he prevented anything occurring which might have been an arbitrary disregard of his wishes, or an error, or an attempt to deceive him. I do the same thing — exactly like Mirza Bogadir Mujinov."

"What, then, has changed?" we say jestingly. Since the principal seems to regard even this jocular remark of ours as worthy of being translated into Tajik, he who is not the gift of God replies, while handing out two school copy-books for our inspection:

"Mirza Bogadir Mujinov died illiterate. I shall not die illiterate. That is the difference."



## IRRIGATION DIFFICULTIES



While we are (at five a.m.) driving out to the water power plant on the river Vakhsh, the temperature is still pleasantly cool. A few weeks ago, when we were still a Central European, a temperature of some hundred degrees would have been most alarming.

On the telegraph wires blue-and-yellow birds are perching, like notes of music; we wonder what tune it would make if we tried to play them, and we also wonder where they perched in the days when there were no telegraph wires. Thirdly we wonder, as we often have in more civilized lands, how they contrive to escape electrocution.

Our native chauffeur, though he is not supposed to take off his own cap, does so, of sheer necessity, when he unscrews the cap of the boiling radiator. Incidentally a native chauffeur must be able to do more than drive a car. His tools are a shovel and a hoe, and the name of his enemy is: the arik.

Yesterday there was no arik; tomorrow there will be none; but today it bisects the highway and is at least a yard wide and half a yard deep. Thousands of these con-

duits water the rice- and cotton-fields, and, once their duty is accomplished, are directed to other plantations, without the slightest consideration for passing cars, which, however, cannot be expected to jump such ditches. So we carry a bridge with us (just as we always carry gasoline) — but our bridge is not always long enough.

Another arik! We get out of the car. We switch off the water and smooth down the edges of the ditch. The chauffeur attempts to drive through: he steps on the gas, but the wheels won't bite on the moist clay, though we help by pushing with all our might. Hey-yup! We back and dig and shovel. The chauffeur steps on the gas. At long last we move forward as far as . . . the next arik.

The streams of Central Asia have a passion for beds a thousand yards wide, even when they are only entitled to a hundred. From month to month they alter their courses. It is impossible to build new bridges over each new stream; the only compromise is ferries, which consist of planks laid across two row-boats. It is no easy matter to get a truck aboard one of these primitive ferries, without endangering its balance. And if you are lucky enough to cross a stream and begin to drive ashore, with the fore wheels safely on the bank, the front part of the raft goes under, so that the hind wheels of your car lie a couple of feet lower than the bank. But from experience the chauffeur and ferrymen know what to do: passengers are ordered to stand in the stern while the bow sinks, and if the passengers are heavy enough, all is well.

Skeletons lie strewn along the road: horses and camels,

## IRRIGATION DIFFICULTIES

victims of bandits who made a point of disturbing the work of progress. There are carcasses of later date too: sacrifices to dust, heat, thirst, and overburdening. The torn hides reveal entrails which are iridescent in the sunlight. Rows upon rows of vultures are feasting on the carrion and seem barely to notice the passing car.

We keep coming upon scenes from a Passion Play. There goes One afoot, with twelve disciples. And a woman, heavily veiled, swaying on a camel, beautifully caparisoned. There is a lad of the tribe of Ur, herding the she-asses of his father; a Captain of Capernaum gallops arrogantly by; three Kings from the East ride toward a manger over which a five-pointed Red star is shining; their donkeys are so tiny that the riders must either draw up their feet or trail them in the dust.

Eagles circle overhead, some of them already replete — and therefore very regal and very high above us, with wide-spread wings, the personification of peace and order. Others, still hungry, fly lower, on the watch for little birds, who fly away screaming. But their attempt to escape is futile; the eagle anticipates the direction of flight, outflies his victim, and in a trice has him safely in his talons. “Class war in nature,” one of us remarks. Whereupon the other puts his gun to his shoulder and shoots. The eagle flutters away with wounded wings, no longer royal; he has let go his prey, which flies in a daze and cannot regain its balance, unable to comprehend that out of the two frightening premises — its capture and the shot — freedom has resulted.

Dust and more dust. The brown clouds which fill our



path are the steps of horses materialized. Behind us is a trail of dust like the wake of a ship. Before us, high waves of sand. Breakers of sand wash over the decks. We resemble nothing so much as our own death-masks. Our tongue, throat, and stomach are lined with a flour of clay. We should have worn gas-masks. The "Afghanez," or south wind, brings new whirls of dust through the air and over the river; the powdered clay of the Afghan steppe darkens the sun itself. Dust, and nothing but dust, has filled this plateau since the days of the Bible and the Koran. Why is it not watered? Well, it *is* about to be watered, in the year 5691 after the creation of the world, in the year 1931 after the birth of Christ, in the year 1309 after the Hegira, in the year 2 of the Soviet Republic of Tajikistan.

Through the walls of dust we drive into the workers' camp. We find barracks for men, sheds for materials, garages for autos, bins for coal, and an appropriately isolated depository for dynamite. Co-operative. Engineers' office. Club. Scaffolding.

We see no more of the river: no drop of its water, no breath of its cooling influence is here. The river has its source in the foothills of the Pamir at an altitude of eleven thousand feet, and flows through the entire Tajik Republic. Not far from these works it flows into the Panj, the "Five River," which is the boundary of the world of the Soviet and the world of colonies and semi-colonies, and which here becomes the Amu-Darya.

We drive to the site where the Vakhsh emerges into the valley. The mountains which frown down upon it are

## IRRIGATION DIFFICULTIES

steep and stern. Their distant peaks, sharp and prismatic, are so close together that they look like gigantic villages. The wind of the desert has left inscriptions in the sides of the mountains, sandy and intricate symbols.

The valley which spreads out before us has an area of 770 square miles; in the language of farming, which is important here: 494,200 acres. Of these there are 123,500 which cannot be planted, mere sand, boulders, and desert. The Vakhsh-Stroi is designed to irrigate 296,500 acres. There will be a rice Sovchos of 14,800 acres and a vegetable Sovchos of 5,000. Eighty per cent of the district is devoted to Egyptian cotton, including plantations, hot-houses, wool-factories, and oil-factories. In 1926 the Soviet Union imported three and a half million poods (57,000 tons) of Egyptian cotton. The territory to be irrigated by the Vakhsh-Stroi will make this import superfluous, and will, besides, provide light and power for the adjoining countryside.

At first it seemed that Egyptian cotton would not thrive in Tajikistan. But it soon transpired that the seeds sent out from Egypt had not been freed of insects and were also inferior in other respects; this manœuvre all but ruined an entire crop, covering an area of nearly five thousand acres, in 1930, and the failure served to reinforce the inherent conservatism of the peasants: "See where all these new-fangled ideas will lead you!" Even the specialists were sceptical. But an emergency call brought a horde of Young Communists to the scene, from all corners of Central Asia. They cleared the land of plants smuggled in from an inimical country, planted

other varieties, and fifty per cent of the crop was thus saved.

Two and a half miles from the spot where we are standing — which is to say, two and a half miles from the entrance of the river into the flatland — the stream is harnessed before it has a chance of dividing into tributaries. At this point, too, the main canal, which is to be twenty-eight miles long, begins. At present it is nothing but a dry and stony groove. We walk along the bed. To the right there is a wall sixty feet in height which will soon be called the right bank. To the left there is a wall sixty feet in height which will soon be called the left bank. The network of smaller canals will comprise thousands of square miles of cotton-land.

A lock with nine supporting pillars is being built at the point where the master canal branches off from the river. Its purpose is to catch up the fall of the entering water and send it on with a speed of two hundred cubic yards per second. At the fifteenth mile a hydraulic station of 42,000 horse-power will be erected.

Preceding us, on rails, is the dredger which has made our path and patiently prolongs it. Its maw is gigantic; with a single tooth it bites from the lower jaw to the upper into the stony earth, and when the steel dragon turns aside to spew out his mouthful, his nostrils puff out and emit steam. Within eight hours this monster consumes and spits out 650 cubic yards, and each day it works its way forward eighty-two feet. Whereupon the rails have to be laid anew.

## IRRIGATION DIFFICULTIES

This is a Bucyrus dragline excavator. We know him from California, where we saw him at work two years ago. There he was busy turning things topsyturvy: consuming fat fields and converting orchards into deserts. There the monster did not spew out what it ate, but digested its nourishment; and no smallest portion of its excrement was left unexplored, for there man was hunting for gold at the expense of agriculture. Here, on the contrary, the dragon consumes an indigestible mass of stone that the earth may become fruitful. . . .

True, the problem is not easy to solve. Sceptics have gone so far as to say that it is insoluble. What workman will come to the Afghan border, where bandits shoot, tigers prowl, scorpions sting, heat sings, and malaria thrives — what workman would come here, even were the scale of wages raised by forty per cent? Well, he does come! One of his main reasons is enthusiasm for this economic battle. To understand this one must read the newspapers of the Soviet Union, which are full of economic communiqués.

For example: the coal-mine Donbass wires: today's output 139,068 tons, as against 138,802 day before yesterday! — Stalingrad has turned out 141 tractors, which is two more than the day before. — "Amo" dispatches: "Plan fulfilled one hundred per cent, completed two hundred trucks in the last ten days." — The peat district of Leningrad is twelve per cent behind the Plan! — The first furnace in Magnitgorsk has been fired! — . . . So run the headlines. Every Soviet citizen knows by heart

the figures of production. (Who, in other countries, knows more of the economics of his land than affects his daily needs?)

In the Soviet Union work is the great sensational event. No space is allotted to detective stories or murders; no articles are devoted to fashion, love, film-stars, nudists, or scandals — the only things worth reporting are examples of economic, social, political, and cultural advancement.

There are daily reports, too, concerning the Vakhsh-Stroi, which is to help the Soviet Union become independent of the cotton of capitalists in foreign countries; but, truth to tell, these items create misgivings on the part of some readers. Surveying on the spot the grandiose project being undertaken, one can visualize why the communiqués contain such painful items. This desert of stone is to be converted into ten thousand vast squares bounded by water, and on this chequer-board vast quantities of cotton are to be grown. To accomplish this miracle, men and raw materials are essential.

The nearest village is Kurgan-Tyube, twelve and a half miles distant. The nearest harbour is seventy-eight miles away. But even this harbour remains to be constructed, being as yet only a navigable stretch in the lower course of the Panj.

So storehouses, basins, and docks are being built, in a frenzy; also a narrow-gauge railway from the future harbour to the future works. All at the same time.

For there is no time to be lost. If within three years 296,000 acres of cotton-land have not been created, the

## IRRIGATION DIFFICULTIES

cotton-oil mills which will have been completed by then, as well as the cotton-refining and textile factories, will have to close down. In the land of the Plan all industries depend on one industry, each industry depends on all industry, and all men depend on all industries.

The automobile-factories of Moscow and Nizhni-Novgorod have, up to now, delivered only forty-one cars to the Vakhsh-Stroi; the Putilov works in Leningrad only sixty-six Fordson tractors; and the factory in Chelyabinsk seven Cley-Tracs. With these insufficient means the greater part of the transports of men and materials have to be effected; which means a hundred and twenty-five miles to the nearest railway station, and seventy-eight to the river Panj, daily.

Seven thousand navvies, metal-workers, masons, carpenters, locksmiths, beton-workers, tractor-drivers, dredgers, and chauffeurs are needed. Fifty-two thousand cubic yards of wood are needed, ten thousand tons of cement, thirty-nine thousand cubic yards of gravel, nearly two million cubic yards of sand, and 2,200,000 bricks. The need for engine fuel is enormous: 16,000 tons of crude oil, 3,500 tons of motor-oil, 5,000 tons ligroin, 5,000 tons petroleum, 4,000 tons benzine, and about 500 tons of various lubricating oils.

Up to such time as the narrow-gauge railway is completed, it will be necessary to use, for transport alone, aside from the automobiles actually at hand, something like 8,270 horses and 5,000 camels, a quantity of animals which of course could not possibly be fed here. So pressure is exerted on the inland automobile-factories

even more than on the foreign excavator-factories.

Distraught directors of the régime discuss with specialists, excitedly and at length, whether a given automobile is to be sent to one place or another, and how its return is to be managed to the best economic advantage. Similarly the shipowners and brokers of the Baltic Shipping Exchange wrangle over the route and cargoes of their ships on the high seas.

Singly and by various routes the parts of the machinery arrive; the compressors and oil-pumps arrived four weeks before the framework they were to be set up in; the repair-shops are waiting for spare parts, so that a mishap to a car or tractor may entail catastrophic results. When the crude oil is delayed, the excavators have a holiday.

There is a camp between the eleventh and thirtieth mile of the main canal, at Section Two of the Vakhsh-Stroi. On this site an electric power plant is being built with gigantic stone walls, and a cotton city is being planned, with concentric streets: one district for factories, one residential district, another for garages and storehouses, and one for club, theatre, cinemas, and schools. But now it is a city of tents. The manager's office is an elongated tent with tables, at which the draughtsmen work standing, for there are no chairs.

The first step is still being prepared. Once connection with the rest of the world is established, everything will move more rapidly: material and reserve materials will come more promptly, as well as labourers. Then the

## IRRIGATION DIFFICULTIES

water will only have to be turned on. The first step is always the hardest.

“Next year we shall have nearly seventy thousand acres of planted cotton to show for our pains.”

The man who says this can make the statement with confidence. Should there be unforeseen delays, an alarm will be broadcast. “Breakdown in the Vakhsh-Stroi” will thunder through the Soviet Union, and all the cotton-mills will take this works in tow — will tow it forward by dispatching some of their own workmen; Young Communists and schools will volunteer to assist; the Central Committee will send along specialists; the newspapers reporters who will telegraph bulletins each day; shock troops will jump into the breach; individual units will challenge each other to an economic duel, and the Vakhsh-Stroi will be completed. Which means that the billions with which the Soviet Union used to buy cotton from the exploiters of the fellahs and Negroes will remain in the country.





## IN THE AFGHAN JUNGLE



If you tell them you'd like to hunt tigers, they laugh at you.

“There aren't any more. Tigers and tractors don't get along together. Five years ago, yes! But now . . .”

“Really? How about that skin hanging on the wall? And the tiger cubs sent to Moscow last month? And the donkey that was pounced on in Sarai-Kamar? And the water-hole on the Vakhsh?”

“No one denies all that. Such things happen. But four years ago a pack of wolves appeared in Sokolniki — does that justify a statement that Moscow is full of wolves? How the citizens of Moscow would laugh if a visitor expressed a desire to go wolf-hunting! Yet in Sokolniki there was a whole pack of them; here only single animals appear that have strayed in, perhaps from the other side of the river — heaven knows how — because over there they *have* tigers.”

“Where?”

“On the other bank of the Amu-Darya, but that is Afghan territory. There you might come across tigers — especially at night.”

“Good. I'll go over there.”

“It’s harder to do that than to hunt tigers here.”

“Why?”

“There’s neither bridge nor ferry. Our sentinels see to it that no one crosses either way: spy, smuggler, bandit, criminal.”

“You mean to tell me no one ever crosses the frontier?”

“People used to go back and forth all the time. Some of them floated across on their burdyuks. All that has been stopped. Of course once in a while someone succeeds in crossing. The boundary line is so long: the Amu-Darya flows over six hundred miles between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. But when our sentinel sees someone swimming across, he shoots. The Afghan sentinel shoots even quicker.”

“The Afghan sentinel? Why should *he* shoot? All he has to do is arrest the swimmer.”

“Do you think they are stationed at every ten yards? Besides, no one can tell at what point the current will land the swimmer. And, once ashore, it is easy to vanish into the jungle. That’s why the sentinel shoots beforehand.”

“Well, I’ll risk that.”

“Don’t be so foolish. A foreigner in Afghanistan, in the border forest, with a Russian rifle . . .”

“But there *are* tigers over there?”

“Yes. Also thousands of snakes and scorpions.”

At first no one willing to act as interpreter for such an undertaking could be found — in fact no one who would

even tell where to find the burdyuk ferrymen. When I finally ran them down, they made excuses. They had no horse. (Why a horse? I would bring my own.) The nights were not yet dark enough. . . . I offered forty roubles. They finally agreed to do it for sixty.

No one knew why I rode out alone one evening to the outskirts of the village. From there we started out: five men armed with large sticks, with sheepskins slung over their shoulders, and I, leading my horse by the bridle. We passed some Tajiks at work on a canal. At the river's edge we all halted and retired behind a clump of bushes. Three of the five took off their chalats and their pointed shoes, turned up their trousers as high as possible, and finally even removed the tyubeteyka from their heads. I myself also began to undress, but they said this was unnecessary.

The skins they had brought along were dipped into the water, where they were left to soak for five minutes, weighted with stones. Then by means of small wooden tubes the men inflated each of the sheepskins, as one blows up a toy balloon. The flat skins turned slowly into bodies; they began to breathe, began to move. Stumps of legs, with tourniquets of stick and strings, like liverwurst, kicked impatiently as they woke to life; even the scrotum grew taut.

The more breathless the blower became, the more lifelike became the bodies. They glistened, moist, in the moonlight. The night was diabolically bright. I put down my rifle and stood behind a tree-trunk to reconnoitre.

The valley stretched away like a vast flowered carpet

in shades of mauve, broken by the geometrical ditches of the cotton-fields which ran in parallel lines almost to our feet. A few short years ago it was an impenetrable thicket full of wild beasts. Now the tractor makes its turn just short of the river itself. The pastel fields seem to stretch on endlessly; on the distant horizon a caravan moved like a silhouette, on its way to the harbour.

On the face of Khodsha-tau, the Holy Mountain, one could see yellow loops of the new automobile road, a little ribbon binding this distant corner to the outer world. No patrol was to be seen. Mosquitoes swarmed about us, but I refrained from lighting the cigarette which, being a soldier of experience, I had mechanically taken out of my pocket.

Just then they unhitched the horse and took off its saddle; it would have to swim across with us. "My horse" belonged, of course, to my host. I should not have abused his hospitality in such an irresponsible fashion; if something should happen to us, who would reimburse him? Had I not better write a will leaving him a horse? How silly!

The inflated skins were corked and launched. They formed a raft about a yard square. But the centre of the raft was made of water! Was that where they expected me to sit? Wait a bit: why are they bringing all those branches? Of course: to lay across the open space. "There, Comrade, sit down on that."

Beneath me and around me everything swayed and wobbled. At the best of times you can't make yourself any too comfortable on cross-sticks. One of the pelts gave

up all pretence of looking like an animal: you could see where it had been mended — it was more like the ghost of a football than the ghost of itself.

I was already on the river, but still moored to the bank. The current was trying to bear me off, but five men held the float fast by means of two ropes, which they tied to the horse. One man swung himself to the unsaddled back of the horse and drove the unwilling beast into the stream. At the same time two other men jumped into the water.

The current took charge of us. I had thought we would ride straight across to the opposite bank. One glance at the two Tajiks who had remained behind sufficed to show that we were racing downstream. We must have been doing over twenty miles an hour; at least so I judged. (There is no speedometer on a burdyuk.)

The horse was harnessed in front of the four-leaved vehicle and was itself buoyed up by three larger waterwings made of goatskins. Holding its head anxiously above the torrent, the horse headed across stream the shortest way, and was also being urged in that direction by his rider with the help of a stick. But all those efforts could not save us from being borne far downstream.

The steering was done by the two men overboard, who kept on the downstream side of the raft, holding on to my seat and kicking like frogs.

One of these men had an abnormally curved back, which at every stroke arched higher than his head, and



A champion swimmer blowing up a goatskin with which to ferry himself across the river. For centuries the natives of Tajikistan have been known as professional swimmers and ferrymen.

Crossing a river on a goatskin. This requires skill and prudence; if one tumbles, there is hardly a chance of escaping the foaming wrath of these rapid rivers.





made his pale blue eyes bulge. He reminded me of someone, but I could not think of whom.

The banks rushed by. Like a black pencil-mark on grey stood out one of the wooden watch-towers used by the sentinels, but it was gone in a moment, and a long row of bushes sprang up between us and the guard. On the Afghan side there was nothing but tall reeds. The moon shone blue on the eternal snow of the Pamir and Hindu Kush. . . . My rifle served as a balancing-pole. The sticks under me kept slipping till I was virtually sitting in the river.

Then three shots in rapid succession. Were they meant for us? Did they come from this side or the other? We neither saw nor heard the splash of bullets. The current swept us along.

The younger of the two swimmers yelled all the time; our outrider also shouted. I did not know whether these cries meant fear of the shots, whether they were directed at the horse, whether the men were at odds about the direction of our cruise, or, finally, whether we were threatened by some imminent and unforeseen danger. But with reassuring regularity the rounded back and blue eyes of my neighbour bobbed up. Of whom did he remind me . . . of Neuerl! Of course! Suddenly it popped into my mind! He looked exactly like Neuerl!

I had met Neuerl some thirty years before. At that time I was slated for a banking career, and had been recommended to a managing clerk in the provinces. Were



I to turn out a failure in the banking business, I could resume my studies, without anyone learning of it. Besides myself another young man entered the bank on trial. Whichever of us proved better at it was to get the job.

The other fellow was Neuerl. As soon as we met, he turned his pale-blue eyes on me, full of fear for his rival. We had to check totals and prepare statements of depositors' accounts. Neuerl was in the habit of noting the results of his arithmetical labours with a finely sharpened pencil; he added from left to right, and top to bottom, from right to left and bottom to top, before venturing to commit his own findings to ink or to place a check-mark against the totals of anyone else.

We sat facing each other at the same desk, and I can still see Neuerl's head appearing from behind the ledger, and then, behind his head like a concentric circle, his back. Then, one after the other, chin and back would sink again into the papers, just as the chin and back of the swimmer beside me now sank into the waves.

The inflated hides seemed to be snorting and puffing no less than the men and the horse. Beside me swam Neuerl, his legs making motions like a frog's, his watery-blue eyes bluer far than the waters of the Amu-Darya, which, as a matter of fact, are brownish. But the moon was blue, like a beryl brooch stuck into the cloudy bosom of the sky.

I had taken things much more easily than my colleague in those days, thirty years ago. I relied on the accuracy of the first man's figuring when I was supposed to check up on him. Everything went smoothly. I did not

for a moment doubt that the victory would be mine, and congratulated myself, for I liked the work.

Fräulein Freihofer, who had charge of the credit-book and shared our office with us, began to treat me as her protégé — ignoring Neuerl. Possibly, being the more cheerful of the two, I seemed to her a more desirable colleague than the timorous Neuerl. He grew increasingly timorous. For one thing, he saw the advantage I was gaining; for another he noticed that I had acquired a pace-maker. Awkwardly he tried to get into the good graces of Fräulein Freihofer. He would spring to her aid whenever she was about to lay the “Saldo” account-book on the shelf; and when she was unwrapping her lunch, he would seize the sandwich paper and throw it into the basket for her. But all this made little impression on Fräulein Freihofer. She handed over to me the straightforward deposits, such as consisted of nothing but coupons due in March, whereas it was to Neuerl that she gave all the accounts of speculators, big depositors like the Skoda and Kosmanos; and to calculate the deposit fees he had to keep watching the stock-exchange quotations, plunging into them and coming up again just as he was now doing in the moonlit river.

The odds against him had seemed to me unfair, and I began to grow slack. If in the beginning I had accidentally omitted the (really superfluous) remark: “Coupon, March 1” in the case of March dividends, I now omitted it on purpose, although the managing clerk never failed to return the statement to me. I even went so far as to come late to office. So after a fortnight Neuerl was given

the job, and for a while I cursed myself for my lack of endurance in the banking business.

And now, thirty years later, still flying in the face of authority — not to speak of bullets — being pulled and propelled from the Soviet Republic of Tajikistan toward the Kingdom of Nadir Khan on a mended vehicle made of bloated goatskins, abandoning the rationality of collective agriculture for the irrationality of hunting tigers in the darkest of primeval forests — who has a better right to bob up in my mind — than Neuerl? As this man who so strangely resembles him bobs up and down in the water beside me.

The rider and swimmers continued to shout at each other. I noticed that their cries referred in some way to the horse, or, to be more exact, to one of the goats' bellies that helped keep it afloat. This was deflating at an alarming rate, and the rider tried to push in the cork more firmly; the shouting man swam to give aid and shouted the while.

I was sitting in the water up to my navel, holding up my gun to keep the lock dry. Neuerl spread out his legs, drew them up, and kicked them out again. We were nearing the shore. The rider beat his horse, though he needn't have done so, as the horse was quite as anxious to reach land as we were; but the current seemed more determined than ever to prevent this fat booty from escaping its grasp. We were drawn to the left when we wanted to go straight ahead. Whither were we rushing? Out into Lake Aral?

Finally the rider got hold of a reed. He had to let it

go again, for the current was pulling on us. But he had managed to give us a shove in the right direction, and soon two of them were able to grasp reeds. The Amu-Darya tugged at us like mad. But it had lost the fight. The horse had ground under its feet, which was good ground for us to believe we should land in a few seconds. Neuerl was already standing, only on tiptoe, it is true, but his head with its pale eyes and the rounded upper body were above the surface. We waded ashore.

The horse was hitched to a bush, the goatskins were pulled ashore, the swimmers shook themselves, splashing water about them. I made a signal to Neuerl to come with me; he threw a branch over his shoulder, and the two of us started on our tiger-hunt.

At first we had to wade through swamps and puddles, as though this were a continuation of the river on land. When we had firm ground under our feet, we looked first into the trees, then toward the ground, seeking the monkeys and the snakes of the jungle, but saw none.

What we did see in the clear moonlight was hundreds of thousands of birds' nests. One in every forking branch; hundreds to a bush. Had we happened on the Riviera of the birds of passage, or was this but a junction on their annual journey? Or were they native birds, all of them, who built nests and brooded here? Truly, a more undisturbed sanctuary could not have been selected. Plenty of bugs for breakfast, and no passing humans. Only tigers slink through the underbrush at night, but that does not disturb the tenants of the nests, since tigers neither shoot nor fly. And so I knew I could

not count on the sympathy of the birds in the battle which was to ensue between man and tiger.

Dimly I remembered having read somewhere that for a tiger-hunt by night (or could it have been a lion-hunt?) native beaters set out with torches, and special projectiles were needed. What rubbish! If I shoot the beast in the forehead, between the eyes, right through the brain, what can it do but sink dead at my feet — ready to be turned into a bedside rug? Besides, I shall let off more than *one* shot; the chances are I shall shoot him again and again!

Was that something glittering in the bushes? I grasped my rifle tighter. Nothing was glittering in the bushes, not even a glow-worm. The rifle relaxed in my grasp. Was that something rustling in the bushes? . . . Nothing was rustling in the bushes, not even a grasshopper.

I remained standing, Neuerl at my side. I moved on, Neuerl at my side. No, not Neuerl. Only his Asiatic counterpart. The resemblance (assuming that it was not purely imaginary) was a freak of nature — it was grotesque!

And this Tajik who silently accompanies a foreigner into forbidden territory, who to satisfy a stranger's whim is penetrating the jungle at night, armed with a stick, on the alert for tigers — what a wealth of experience must lie concealed in *his* past! The Emir's downfall; the Revolution; bandit raids; smugglers and refugees; the advent of machinery; the miracle of reading and writing; collectivization; Marx and Lenin — the inhabitants of this border State on the boundary of the English col-

ony have experienced more in their own lifetime than their ancestors in a thousand years.

And what of the other, authentic Neuerl? Probably he is still sitting with sharp-pointed pencil in Leipa, Bohemia, adding up bonds and mortgages from right to left and top to bottom, from left to right and bottom to top. Perhaps he has long since become managing clerk and the husband of Fräulein Freihofer, convinced that *he* was her first protégé and the object of her first love.

For sure he has become managing clerk. I imagine myself working under him as apprentice. As of old, I have omitted the remark: "Coupon, March 1" and he sends for me. He looks at me reproachfully and bears down on the table with his pencil. If he is not careful, the fine point will snap off. He crouches there with arched back as if ready to spring like a . . .

Did something snap just then? Yes, something snapped, but stare as I might, nowhere could I descry the glowing eyes of a feline marauder. Well, after all, an Afghan king tiger isn't likely to accommodate one by taking a convenient pose to spring: that is, to receive one's bullet. One must creep up on him. I did not creep. I stepped forward, planting my feet firmly on the ground. I wished to leave footprints, to be sure of finding the way back to the budyuk. True, I kept heading due south, by my compass, but if it had begun to rain, I could not have seen the needle and would have had to spend the night where we were.

Was it perhaps nostalgia for Neuerl's settled condition which made me think of him so constantly? Or was it the

contrary? Was I glad that, during his office hours, I could roam through jungles? That, for certain, Neuerl could not do. On the other hand, how insignificant was my adventure compared to what the other Neuerl, the one at my side, must have experienced during the epic struggle for the soul of Central Asia.

Not a sign of spitting or snarling in the underbrush. Not a single beast of prey came out to be aimed at. We turned to go. There was no need to watch the compass, no need to look for our own footprints — before us, in the direction whence we had come, at the spot where we had landed, there was a conflagration. We hurried thither.

What did we see? What did we hear? Our trusty ferry-men had built themselves a bonfire and were singing their lungs out to frighten the tigers away. With complete success.

The burdyuks were lying in the marsh-grass all blown up and bound together. Branches were laid across, as before, diagonally. The horse was harnessed in front and driven to the water, and off we went. But not to land at our point of embarkation! The Amu-Darya dragged us still farther downstream. We had to row, drive, and balance for nearly two miles more before we touched the Soviet bank of the stream.

I gave one of my companions the sixty roubles; he handed them to Neuerl. So apparently he was the leader. I climbed up on the horse. (One of the Tajiks who had not swum with us had promised to bring the saddle back next day.)

“Todi-dana — good-bye!” I sang out, and they echoed my farewell in chorus. Only Neuerl mumbled something aside, while I put my horse into a trot.

I was stopped twice by patrols, who had quite understandable doubts about a man riding alone, bareback, with a gun, along the banks of the Amu-Darya, even though his papers were in order. My poor bottom was wet through and adhered to the horse’s back. The suspicious sentinels suspected many things, but certainly never suspected that I had crossed the frontier without leave and gone big-game hunting in Afghanistan.

But it was not the actual adventure that left me so strongly moved; it was a persistent doubt in my mind as to whether the words that the hunch-back Tajik had mumbled in farewell had really been: “*Servus*,<sup>1</sup> *Kisch!*” or merely something Asiatic that sounded like that. . . .

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<sup>1</sup> *Servus*: a popular term of farewell or greeting, typically Austrian, equivalent to “So long!” or “Hello!” — *Translator*.





## COTTON STATISTICS



We ask a young girl why she is the only person in sight.

“Almost everyone is at home now and asleep. We don’t resume work till evening. It’s a little cooler then.”

The young girl is an Armenian, graduate of the Timiryasev Academy in Moscow, working here as agriculturist.

We are standing in front of a curious steep hill. If it was built by human hands, it was cleverly worked into the landscape; if Nature herself was the architect, she turned out a clever imitation of a fortress.

Comrade Kasanian tells us that the peasants hereabout believe this elevation to have been a fortress of Alexander the Great and adds: “But that is nonsense.”

“Why nonsense?”

“Because there are no traditions here, no old inhabitants who could have transmitted such lore. Before our Sovchos came into being, the entire countryside was uninhabited. In Tajikistan it is customary to say of all old fortresses that they were built either by Iskander or by Tamerlane. Just as with us in the Caucasus every ruin is supposed to have been a castle of the Empress Tamara.

## COTTON STATISTICS

For that matter *this* is the country of Tamara."

Yes, Tamara came from here, even if she is only a mythical figure. According to legend she was Empress of the Iranian nomads; she defeated Cyrus the Great; she took a new lover every night, and next morning ordered him to be killed. Islam abolished the legend, because it seemed shameful to have had their ancestors ruled by a woman; so the neighbouring peoples took over the tradition of the nymphomaniac Empress and credited her with all their ancient buildings.

On the summit of the fortress elevation, whether it is one or not, whether it was built by Tamara or the twice-cuckold Alexander, an antenna is stretched in mid-air, and beside it a gong dangles, ready at any time to call people to work or to a meeting.

A troop of children run up, bringing to the young agriculturist a dead scorpion some four inches in length. The youngsters hunted it down in a field and built a little fire around it, whereupon the animal committed suicide by stinging itself in the head.

"Scorpions always do that when they feel themselves in danger — suicide out of fear of death."

"Are there many scorpions around?"

"Plenty. But they are not as dangerous as the 'fal-angs.' They eat carrion and when they sting a man after that, he dies, unless he can be treated at once. We have a physician here and a hospital. Today a woman was brought to the hospital who had been bitten by a copper-head."

Another girl joins the young person with whom we

are flirtatiously discussing the subject of poisonous snakes and deadly vermin. She, too, is an agriculturist; she, too, is barely twenty years old; she, too, is pretty; but whereas the Armenian has dark curls, the Russian is a red-blonde, and whereas the Armenian is head of the vermin-extinguishing department, the Russian is engaged in experimental planting.

“You must look at my collection of samples. Then you can have tea with us. It is cool at our place.”

Cool! Perspiration pours into our eyes and mouth, which is choked to the palate with salt and dust. “Couldn’t we go over to your place now, and go to the fields later on?”

“Oh, you’d better come right along now. It is only one little verst from here.”

One little verst! Another whole verst to tramp in the broiling noonday sun of Central Asia! The red-blonde looks at us imploringly. When we agree, she is happy. “You see, now everyone is indoors, because it is too hot to work; only the airplane is busy. But in an hour everyone will be wanting to show you his own work, and you wouldn’t have time for my plantation. But that is the most important work of all.”

“My laboratory is important too,” interjects the Armenian rather sharply. Fearing that a friendship and a collaboration are in jeopardy, we quickly promise to look at the laboratory too. And would keep the promise were it ten little versts away.

One verst is a little more than half a mile. On the Afghan border, in June, at noonday, it is an astronomical

distance. The sun seems to be wallowing in the dust. Over the fields, at an altitude of some hundred feet, the airplane is flying in circles, constantly emitting arsenic gases. Here poison gas exterminates insects and benefits the crops. Poison gas in the hands of armament-makers does exactly the opposite.

We walk an endless little verst through cotton-fields, past ditches, canals, plants, and blossoms. "Here *my* plantation begins." Marussya points to the meteorological station, which is fenced in with barbed wire: thermometer, barometer, rain- and wind-measuring apparatus. Behind this the field for experimentation. She looks at us triumphantly. Well?

Well, we see a cotton-field that differs from other cotton-fields in that here every plant is ornamented with a little wooden tag.

"You notice that every plant has blossoms of different colour? Some are not yet in bloom. You notice that they all have different foliage?"

"Yes," we reply, for now we can really distinguish all this.

"In our Sovchos we have planted American and Egyptian or sea-island cotton. But don't imagine that there are only two sorts of cotton here! I've planted fifty kinds, with 285 varieties. Egyptian and North American firms deliver the seed to us, and on every sack there is a number. We are trying to determine which kind is the most advantageous for us. I think I've discovered it: 38 F Sakellaridis will prove to be the best of the Egyptian sort. The length of its fibre is over an inch and a half;

just think what that means. Next year we will plant mostly this sort.”

The red-blond Marussyia knows each of her plants personally, jumps over ditches and ridges to show us that one plant, bearing the dark blossom of the American variety, has the same length fibre as the one belonging to the light-blossoming Egyptian sort. . . . We quite warm up to it, although we were, as a matter of fact, warm enough without this added interest.

Then we retrace the little verst. Coming toward us is one of those columns which one encounters often enough down here marching between Syr-Darya and Amu-Darya: the peasants of one big farm have completed their work, and now march on, in military formation, with flag and motto and music, to help along their less fortunate neighbours; at the head of the column a youth is dancing; the others clap their hands and sing in chorus.

Little Kasanian is waiting for us. “Come into my laboratory,” she says. “Comrade Petrov, the director of our Sovchos, is there too.”

The laboratory is a side-wing of the official tent. On the sail-cloth walls hang glass cases containing butterflies, bugs, spiders, locusts, and caterpillars, all of whom like to eat up the cotton-seed and the pods and the leaves, and who are therefore impaled as an object lesson to the cotton-workers — a sort of warrant of arrest. Out of alcohol-bottles helplessly furious scorpions and falangs stare at us; there are glass coffins containing larvæ and silk-caterpillars.



Testing out an American cotton-picker.

A shock-brigade worker at a cotton-picking machine in Uzbekistan.





## COTTON STATISTICS

Our young friend, Kasanian, tells us all about these ravenous enemies, which she, for her part, regards with a strange mixture of hatred and love. She speaks of the louse, named *Gophis gossipii*, of the butterfly called *Chloridea obsoleta*, and the green worm from which it emerges. She descants upon a certain spider, *Epithetricus altea*, and the *Pectinophera gossipera*. With a toss of her black curls this learned child bewails the persistence of parasites and explains how energetically and diplomatically one must proceed against them, by land, by water, and by air.

“We do everything — even bribe these creatures not to spoil our Five Year Plan. We sow peas right into the heart of our cotton-fields because they prefer peas to cotton. We plant no less than thirty acres of these peas, *Cicer orientinum*, but do you think that satisfies the brutes?” Whereupon she glances at her enemies with affection, woe to them!

She would like to show us all the formulas and literature and chemicals with which she wages war on the parasites, but Petrov, director of the farm, is sitting in the middle of the tent and is visibly impatient; we turn to him. Not only to mollify him. For, after all, we have not come here for the sake of either the young Russian cultivator or the young Armenian destroyer of vermin. The fact of the matter is: we spent yesterday at the great hydraulic station on the Vakhsh and would like to hear how their irrigation plant works out in practice — this phantasmagoria of turning into a cotton-garden a stony waste which has been drying out for thousands of years.



“. . . and on top of everything else, it must be accomplished rapidly,” Petrov says completing our own thought. “Three years ago the entire Sovchos consisted of only one village with 770 acres of plantable land. Now it consists of 27,180 acres of cotton-growing land, subdivided into seven chutors (sections). But this is to be increased to 190,000 when the Vakhsh-Stroi is completed; then this will be an agro-industrial cotton ‘Kombinat.’ We simply must succeed in . . .”

And he goes on to explain in the smallest detail all that they simply must succeed in accomplishing. We make an effort to listen, but the words seem to come from afar.

Be indulgent, Comrade Petrov! We come from more northern climes, and to gad about like this in the tropics is no child’s play for us. Up betimes, we’ve ridden on a horse, ridden on a camel, ridden in a car through a simoon, walked an interminable little verst with a red-blond agriculturist, learned in our old age to distinguish Egyptian cotton from American, and attended a lecture on parasites — truly that is too much to expect of a West European in a single morning. Petrov is doing his very best to make things clear to us. “We simply must succeed in . . .”

What must they *not* succeed in doing here! For reasons of selection they simply must cultivate one fourth of the entire growing-space at hand. “That means, in the case of twenty-two of the fifty sorts that Comrade Marussyia no doubt showed you?”

## COTTON STATISTICS

“Yes. She showed us. . . .”

“We simply must obtain more from the Egyptian cotton. I suppose you know that batiste is made from that, don't you?”

“We know! We know! What more must you obtain from Egyptian cotton?”

“. . . more than is obtained in Egypt. We simply must . . .”

“What else must you simply?”

“. . . secure longer fibre than they do either in Egypt or in America.”

“Why must you do that?”

“Our textile factories are not nearly so good as the American, and so we simply must achieve better raw material than America.”

America, you have an advantage over the old continent. For your much be-sung cotton belt needs almost no artificial irrigation. In southern Virginia it rains regularly, and it is much easier to work on a plantation that is not cut up by canals.

“We are always faced with the danger that the tractor will tear down the ditches we have built with such pains. We have to watch all the time. . . .”

America, you are better off. You have so much cotton that you destroy a third of it. We have read the Journal of the Department of Agriculture. It bewails the fact that the coming harvest is likely to consist of seventeen million bales of exceptionally good cotton, when the total world consumption amounts only to twenty million bales

a year, and the unsold balance from the previous year amounted to over nine million bales. This condition is described as an unheard-of catastrophe.

Unheard-of catastrophe! What can one do with so prolific a harvest, with seventeen million bales of five hundred pounds each? What is one to do with 3,855,600 tons of cotton when last year 2,063,880 tons remained unsold?

Unheard-of catastrophe! Egypt too has planted but 1,682 feddans with cotton, one fourth less than the year before, but still one fourth too much for the present market.

Even the boll-weevil, laments a New York cotton-exchange bulletin, that insect so dreaded in other years, but this year so ardently hoped for, has been ironical enough to spare the plantations!

Do you understand what that means, Comrade Kasanian? In America you would not be able to exert your talents for insecticide; you would have to look for another job. True, your profession exists over there as well, and is undoubtedly well paid, but I wonder whether you would be able to treat your victims according to the momentary requirements of the stock-exchange.

And you, Comrade Petrov, you tell me how you have to make this huge farm successful. Don't you know that it is an unheard-of catastrophe when the cotton crop is good? Crisis in America! Crisis in England! Indian textile boycott! Failure of the Nord Wolle Konzern!

“ It is now a question what the Federal Farm Board in Washington plans to do with the remainder of the stock. As

## COTTON STATISTICS

is known, at the last International Cotton Congress in Paris, the Farm Board was urgently asked soon to present a program for the liquidation of the supply. Texas has, as we know, decided to reduce the cotton-growing area seventy per cent this coming year. Mississippi has joined in this plan (the area planted this year was 4,033,000 acres). South Carolina (1,950,000 acres) has completely forbidden the planting of cotton for this year; the Governor of Louisiana has also decided to forbid the planting of cotton." (Bulletin of the Cotton-Exchange of Bremen.)

But even that does not suffice. Every third row must be destroyed when the rest is cultivated. Where this order is not followed, one third of the harvest must be burned. Since the plan to grant German spinning-mills long-time credits has not gone through, the greater part of the American stock will have to be destroyed anyway, in order to save the market. Already the price of cotton has fallen from 19.39 cents to 7 cents a pound. The cost of production is eleven cents, so that the farmer loses four cents a pound.

Is all this no concern of yours, Comrade? No. It is no concern of yours. When you raise cotton out here in the desert, then the decisions of the Federal Farm Board in Washington do not concern you, nor even the decision, made by Parisian dressmaking establishments, to bring cotton clothes into vogue — for one hundred and fifty million people are waiting for you to succeed.

“We really need nine thousand workers — we have hardly one third that number — two thousand steady workers and one thousand season workers, who come for September, October, and November after they have

reaped their crops at home. The Tajiks who live in the neighbourhood bring their families with them; the wives of the Uzbeks and Kirghiz remain at home. Only the workers from Fergana are experienced in cotton-growing."

"What induces them to come here and do this hard work, in the face of the heat, the snakes, the scorpions?"

"Oh, the scorpions," interjects little Kasanian, offended, "scorpions aren't dangerous. And besides, they have scorpions at home as well. . . ."

"The pay is good. Three roubles forty kopeks a day is the lowest wage (in the Sovchos wages are paid, in the Kolchos a share of the profits), but on a basis of piece-work a man can earn as much as five or six roubles. For clearing the ditches of reeds the workmen are paid three kopeks for every metre of length and every five metres of width; with the big scythes some of the workmen can clear as much as half a kilometre a day, which means that they earn fifteen roubles. They have a place to sleep, hot tea water, lighting and tools free; two of the native loaves of bread, *lepishka*, cost fifteen kopeks, the same as the Russian bread per kilogram; a noonday dinner costs fifty kopeks. Every five days we are given an eighth of a pound of green tea, which, of course, is not nearly enough for us; and after the harvest twenty metres of material—which last is the main inducement for the season workers. Next year railway conditions will be better and we shall have more tea and more tobacco."

In America, where things are easier than on the old continent, the condition of the cotton-farmers is quite

## COTTON STATISTICS

different. A long article in the *New Republic* entitled "Cotton Peonage"<sup>1</sup> is among material we have collected for data.

"At best Southern croppers and renters, Negroes and whites, exist under conditions of semi-peonage. The narrow margin upon which they operate was forcefully demonstrated in the drought country in 1930. Hundreds of thousands of tenants after a few weeks of drought faced actual belly-hunger starvation and had to raid stores or take pitifully small doles from the Red Cross. The horror stories sent out by that organization described the wretched little cabins, the corn-shuck or wheat-straw beds, the broken dishes, the crude furniture, the ragged clothes, the poor food and the illiterate farmers. Things had always been thus, but the Red Cross didn't know it. . . .

"If the tenant is rash enough to demand a check-up, or disputes the planter's word, he may become known as a 'vagrant,' or if a Negro, a 'bad nigger,' and therefore the legitimate prey of armed deputies. . . . In this time of unemployment many workers are being forced into involuntary servitude. The process is well shown by an Associated Press dispatch from Macon, Georgia:

" . . . The city police are rounding up loiterers and offering them jobs [as cotton-pickers] or the view of the passing throngs from the inside of the jail.'

"The average tenant is unlettered, untraveled and knows little of the outside world. He has no money, no clothes, no means of transportation; he knows no other work and has no other job. . . . The persons trying to entice tenants away are often shot or lynched.

"[During an investigation of peonage in Georgia] the notorious John S. Williams' murder-farm cases were exposed. At least eleven croppers were killed on this farm, because

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<sup>1</sup> *The New Republic*, Vol. LXIX, December 16, 1931, pages 130-2; "Cotton Peonage," by Walter Wilson.

they were 'too old to work' or 'because they knew too much.' . . .

"At Camp Hill . . . a meeting of Negro croppers was raided by armed men. The church in which the meeting was being held was burnt to the ground, one Negro was murdered in cold blood and four were 'sent out to cut stove wood' — a euphemistic term for lynching."

And America volleys forth abuse against compulsory labour in the Soviet Union! It would be a simple matter to raise the number of workers here if American methods were used. But the work progresses without such expedients.

Petrov continues: "We have planted 17,300 acres with Egyptian and 9,800 with Upland cotton, almost 7,400 acres with vegetables and fodder. Our harvest will be 800,000 poods, approximately. Cotton was the only agrarian product which Russia always had to import. Before the war the harvest, including Bokhara, amounted to fourteen million poods, that is 229,320 tons of pure fibre. Before the Five Year Plan, the cotton-planting had retrograded in comparison to what it had been in the time of the Czar. The bandit war went on here for a long while, you see.

"For two years the cotton production of the Soviet Union has been increasing:

	<i>Planted Area</i> (in acres)	<i>Raw Cotton</i> (in tons)	<i>Pure Fibre</i> (in tons)
1929	2,608,000	823,500	264,000
1930	3,775,500	1,076,000	327,000
1931	5,280,500	1,279,000	409,500

## COTTON STATISTICS

“So it is clear that within three years we have achieved twice as much as the Czar and the Emir after thirty years of cotton-growing, leaving out of consideration the fact that no one dared to experiment with Egyptian cotton. The planted area is three times as large as it was in the days of the Czar; unfortunately the crops per acre do not as yet keep pace with this increase. But the emancipation of the Soviet Union from the capitalistic cotton-market has been achieved. We do still import, but then we also export, and the value of the exported goods surpassed that of the imported by thirty per cent. That is merely a balancing of sorts and seasons in the world market.”

Whole textile regions of the U.S.S.R. await raw material, the schedules must be observed. On the wall of the sail-cloth tent hang calendars, and important dates are encircled with coloured pencil-marks. There are charts marked off in vari-coloured areas:

FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
the are cleaned	canals ploughing	weeding sowing

The whole cycle of cultivation is undertaken three times between May and August; from June to early September the plants are watered; in the middle of September the first crop is picked; in October and November the canals are cleaned out; in December occurs the second harvest. Which means uninterrupted work.



“With our small number of workmen we never could manage all that,” says Petrov, “were it not for the aid of the neighbouring Kolchos, the socialistic competition, and the shock troops.”

“Shock troops” — that seems to be a cue. During our conversation the tent has been gradually filling with Mongols and Iranians, eager to see the visitor from Western Europe. A delicate looking young man of some thirty years, wearing glasses, rather typical of a certain sort of book-keeper, speaks up at the word: “shock troops.” He desires, in the name of his group, to explain their activity to us; he is in a hurry, he must get back to work.

“*Nu wot* (Well!),” he begins, haltingly, and we are convinced that he is going to tell us how his group do home-work sums and compositions. Wrong. The slender little man is a soldier and speaks in the name of his troops: “We are the fourth company of the workers’ regiment for emergencies. Our regiment was formed three months ago in the Vilayet Khojent, by labourers and other employees, *nu wot*. We took it upon ourselves to combat the bandits. But when the bandit war was over, we decided to throw ourselves into the breach of the Five Year Plan, which was behindhand. *Nu wot*, that is all I have to say. We are forty-six workmen-soldiers, men and women alike, most of us members of the Party or Kom-somols. Our oldest member is forty. We have subdivided ourselves into four sections in order to be able to compete with one another, *nu wot*, that is all. Good-bye.”

## COTTON STATISTICS

“ One moment, please. Are you remaining here permanently? ”

“ No. We have to go back to Khojent, where we work; we are here only on leave. But we will remain in our formation, and when we are needed we will go out together. We have decided to work in the rice-fields the next time, *nu wot.* ”

“ Why the rice-fields, Comrade? ”

“ Because that is supposed to be the hardest work. Good-bye. ”

What would the world be like if the enthusiasm and readiness for sacrifice that was kindled everywhere in August 1914, for purposes of war, could be turned to productive work in the service of the common welfare?

What would the world be like full of such armies of workers who go pioneering into the desert and change its face out of sheer enthusiasm? And what is the world really like?

“ In 1927 . . . the Mississippi River flooded a vast territory, including much of the peonage country. Several hundred thousand white and black tenants became dependent on Red Cross charity. It is a matter of record that at first the planters refused to let their tenants be removed from the plantations, though their lives were endangered by the flood waters. The Red Cross obligingly promised the planters to return the croppers, even against their will, to the plantations whence they came. In the encampments the croppers were closely guarded by national guardsmen. No one could leave camp without a permit. Several croppers were shot. . . . When the waters receded, the Red Cross, the national guard and the overseers from the various plantations rounded up

the reluctant croppers, herded them into barges and returned them to their masters.”<sup>1</sup>

True, these slaves are mostly “coloured.” The twelve million Negroes in America have no representative in the Senate or in the House of Representatives in Washington;<sup>2</sup> and their civil rights are severely restricted, although they are supposed to be citizens; as are their human rights, although they are human beings.

A group of young Tajik boys and girls crowd into the tent. Their speaker asks us to tell their young comrades in foreign lands that the Komsomols on the Soviet plantation Vakhsh are fulfilling their portion of the Five Year Plan to one hundred and ten per cent and that they will continue to do so. “And now I should like to say one thing more. Of course we do educational work as well, not only among ourselves, but also among those who are not members of the Party. We also read German books that have been translated into Russian, and they interest us exceedingly. We liked *Paradise America*<sup>3</sup> with the exception of two or three chapters. We are glad you came. You are the first foreign writer we have ever seen, so we have decided to give our group your name.”

Outside the tent we had to have ourself photographed with our new godchildren. We exchanged addresses, but when we wished to return to the sail-cloth house, a Tajik, over six feet tall and with a beard in proportion, insisted

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<sup>1</sup> *The New Republic*, op. cit., p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> This was true at the time this book was written (1931-2); there is now one Negro in the House of Representatives. — *Translator*.

<sup>3</sup> By the present author. — *Translator*.

that we inspect the machine park. With a glance at his stature we immediately acquiesced. Here are 142 tractors, American and native, called "Fordson" and "International" respectively. We crane our neck, look up toward the giant, and inquire: "Which are the better?"

"Oh, as for mechanism, they are about equal," says the Tajik, "but the materials of which ours are made are not nearly so durable. It will be at least three years more before the Soviet Union can produce Pittsburgh steel. We also lent our machines to the neighbouring Kolchos and ploughed fourteen hundred acres for them, and we help out the Machine and Tractor Stations (the MTS) with tools and mechanics."

Triumphantly he shows us the movable vacuum towers that suck up the cotton from the plants through six hoses. "We are not yet able to produce machines like those, but in two or three years . . ."

And now more people come up to us. They urge us to inspect the ginning establishment where there is a brand-new gin. And the school workroom of the machine park, where cotton-combiners are just being mounted. The crèche too, is especially important, because through its establishment they hope to secure women pickers at last. And the hospital, where the woman who was bit by the snake is being cared for. And the illiteracy class, where there is a pupil sixty years old. And the Red Corner, where there is a German poster. And the Red tea-house, where you must bring your own tea. And the library, with Tajik and Uzbek books. And the club, with its stage. They want to show us everything, and they are proud of

## CHANGING ASIA

everything, and everything is still to be improved, and . . .

. . . and we think of Dixie, the cotton belt of America, where there are slaves, actually, just as before the time of Lincoln. We think of that country, where we saw figures in rags, hungry, plundered figures, where staggering drunkards jostled into us, children begged from us at every step, and white-haired Negroes "toted" the white burden, which thrives both here and there.



## PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE



One hundred and fifty-five days after sowing, the cotton harvest begins. Sowing takes place in mid-April; picking in mid-September.

And the camel caravans,  
and the horse-drawn carts,  
and the trucks

that make their way year in, year out, day in, day out, across the rocky ridge from north to south, carry the sacks filled with their white, fluffy, seed-laden contents. Their goal is the cotton-refineries of Central Asia. Of these there are now sixty-seven, with 43,327 rotary cutters. Last year 247,700 tons of pure fibre were sent to the textile factories; this year 527,800 tons will be the figure attained, which is an increase of 113.1 per cent.

Let us look at one such factory; there are opportunities enough to do this, on the Sovchos and in the cities. Everywhere workmen are busy getting machinery ready for the September harvest.

We fall into conversation with Comrade Galeyev, who was working at the hydraulic press way back in the days of the Czar.

“At that time,” he tells us, “there may have been four or five ginning establishments. The workmen were Russians, Tatars, and ‘Sartes,’ which last was a disparaging designation for Uzbeks and Tajiks.

“The Russians worked at the scales and at the motor. Those at the scales did a good business. They laid the goods to be weighed on the scales, shoved the indicator about with their pencils, and stopped it at will. Usually even this manœuvre was superfluous, inasmuch as the scale was turned toward the weigher. The peasants stood off to one side and waited for their written receipts. With every sack of, say, 250 pounds, they were cheated of five or six pounds.

“At the press and at the gin we were paid one rouble per day, working fourteen hours. All the Tatars worked there, but not all who worked there were Tatars. In the pressing-case one of us always had to stamp down the cotton coming from the gin, because at that time there were no machine stampers. More and more cotton was poured into the case and finally the workman was dancing on top. Then he stepped aside, the case was closed, and the bottom was raised by hydraulic power to the cover, pressing everything in between into cotton bales.

“One day a workman was stamping quite deep down, when fire broke out in a gin. The burning cotton fell into the press, and the man was standing in a sea of flames, but could not reach the top of the press to pull himself up. He screamed like mad. Finally we managed to pull him out—he was half burned already and died soon afterwards. He left a widow and two children, but they

received no compensation, because he was a Persian. We had to take up a collection so that his family could get back to Persia.

“ Another workman lost his arm at one of the circular saws, when a lid fell down. The accident insurance granted him a pension of three roubles a month.

“ Look at my hand: two fingers gone. I didn't even ask for compensation.

“ The Uzbeks and Tajiks were worse off than we were: they had to work eighteen hours a day for sixty or eighty kopeks. They carried the cotton to the scales as it arrived, then from the scales to the *ambar*, the storeroom, and from thence to the gin, into which they poured the pods.

“ Among these porters were many who had been cotton-farmers, formerly well-to-do. You know how that used to be among us, don't you? The Bey paid the farmers an advance on the crop. He himself borrowed the money from a Russian bank at twelve per cent interest, then re-loaned it at a hundred per cent. But Mahomet forbade usury. . . . So the Bey gave the farmer the money without interest, but the farmer had to 'buy' something from him to the same amount; one sheep, for example, which was in reality worth about seven roubles, or a pound of tea. For this the debtor, who had received a hundred roubles, signed a note for two hundred roubles: 'for money lent and articles purchased.' If he could not pay, the note was called in and his house and land seized.

“ Now, the farmer usually remained as *tasharakar*, a sort of serf, on his own former property. He was given cotton-seed gratis by the Bey, but had to attend to the



planting and deliver three fourths of the harvest to him. He was allowed to keep one fourth for himself. He ground the seeds in an oil-mill into fat and suet — with this he could smear the bread that he bought for the price of his share of the harvest, or from the sale of oil cakes, which he could no longer feed to his own cattle, since he had no cattle to feed.

“Whoever did not remain as a slave in his own home set out for the market-place with his cotton-rake over his shoulder, to hire himself out on some plantation. The younger and stronger men were hired for the period between September and February by a foreman of the cotton-mill. The foreman received money to pay all workers by the job, instead of which he paid them by the day, so you can imagine how he drove them.

“It was more than any man could stand. Picture working eighteen hours a day with upwards of two hundred pounds on your back! The men had sores on their backs and walked with a stoop, even when they were not carrying their burdens.

“*Nu, eto bylo!*”

Which means: Well, that is past.

Things are better now and will continue to improve. The electricity generated by the Vakhsh-Stroi will drive the machines; at present it is the airplane motors that do this.

Huge tubes suck up the stock of goods on hand from the storeroom into the factory-room, but these strange suction-tubes leave the dust on the cotton. It is only in

the separators that all the stuff that cannot be used for spinning is whirled off: left-over bits of earth, leaves and pods, dust and dirt.

Distributors bring the loosened and cleaned mass of fibre and seed to the ginning machine. Already Mr. Gin is gnashing his teeth, which are pointed and slanting. His indefatigable, insatiable jaws, forever in search of fodder, snap shut four hundred and fifty times a minute.

You tremble, soft, white fluff; you lie trembling on the table that is driving you toward the gaping, voraciously active maw full of teeth — you fear that you will be crunched, body and core.

Do not tremble! Man, who desires only your best (for himself), has pushed a thin-meshed wire grating between you and the monster, through which the teeth get at your fibre and tug at you, but do not bite you through or tear you. A toothbrush, moving with the same speed as the jaws which were sharpening their teeth in wait of you, brushes the fibres away.

Having escaped whole, you still have to undergo an ordeal: you are pressed in the hydropress under three hundred atmospheres, where you become one of those units with which ball is played on the exchanges of Washington, Liverpool, and Bremen. But you are not to be weighed in libræ and are not to be marketed in Washington, Liverpool, or Bremen, but weighed in poods and not marketed at all, but entrusted to the spinning-mills of the Soviet Union.

Let us not, while discoursing on the important fibre, forget the equally important seed that fell between the

rotating saw and the thin-meshed wiring, separated from the long bundle of wool with which for so long its destiny was united. On the moving band it was brought on to the linting machine, which plucked the rest of the fluff away. But even after all this the seed is no less valuable than the fibre. It is used for making margarine, artificial olive-oil, kerosene, and soap.

The huge electric vacuum does the work once done by the despised "Sarte": carrying the pods to the gin. There is now a safety cover over the grinder with its sixty rotating saws; even the most careless workman does not risk losing an arm.

Into the chamber of the hydraulic press the mortar fits — no workman now descends in order to stamp the wool into solidity, or, dancing on it, is burned alive. The factory no longer belongs to the Bey, it belongs to all; it pays advances to the farmers, but charges no interest, albeit the commandments of Mahomet have long since been dispensed with. The cotton has been weighed back in the Kolchos; the official who receives it need only check up on it. The representative of the Glav-Khlop-Kom, the Cotton Committee, writes down the weight and variety of the pressed bales, and puts the number on every unit that goes to the station, on its way to the thread-spinneries of Ivanovo-Vosnessensk or of Oryechovo-Suyevo.

The Uzbeks and Tajiks, who were once beasts of burden, are now mechanics; they no longer work eighteen hours, but eight; are not paid eighty kopeks, but at least five times as much per day's wage. They attend elemen-

tary courses, some of them the Normal School, in order to become engineers.

“Is it better to be here than it used to be?” we ask an old man who is busy oiling the valves of the vacuum tubes.

“*Nu, eto yest,*” he smiles.

Which means: It is.

Only the seeds of the first quality, the kernels of the lowest-growing fruit of the plants, which are open and white in September and plucked at the first harvesting, can be used for oil. What is brought in at the second harvest, the so-called minus quality; at the third harvest called “meshumok”; at the fourth called “seconds”; and at the last gleaning in December and January (closed pods) “thirds,” has kernels that can only be used for fuel and feed.

In the courtyard of the ginning institute whole mountains of kernels pile up. Among the mountains we recognize some of the very first quality. Should these not have been in the oil-mill in Andishan or in Bokhara long ago? In the meal-factories of the Sovchos and the kitchens of the restaurants we have noticed little hills of this valuable cotton-seed being used as fuel! Why is the unmanufactured oil simply burned up?

Those we ask simply shrug their shoulders. “The transportation.” For although a new railway has been built, as well as roads that cost millions, although automobiles drive from the foot of the Pamir to the minarets of Samarkand, from the farthest boundaries of China,

India, Persia, and Afghanistan into the very heart of Central Asia, into Tashkent, this does not suffice. The new Republics produce new wares and need new wares — machines and manufactured goods must go south, cotton and silk must go north — people who formerly scarcely got as far as the next *kishlak* on horseback, now travel by rail or by car to congresses and courses of study, to Moscow and Leningrad. Seed-goods and engineers, chemists and food-stuffs, gardeners and building materials have business in Tajikistan. Whole villages move into newly irrigated territory. Shock troops ride to the works, peasants go off on vacations, and working-men into sanatoriums. Could the means of transportation, reinforced a hundred times, suffice for the steadily growing life of millions? Over and over again one comes back to the same question, as one watches how beautifully the cotton shoots up out of the ground and how miserably the cotton-seeds are stamped into the ground.

“Transportation . . .” answer those we ask. Until the new railway to the neighbouring countries boasts a second pair of rails, the union between Europe and Asia will not be complete. The railway must be built out beyond Stalinabad up to the Afghan border; a stretch must be constructed from Termes to Kurgan-Tyube; one from Stalinabad to Sarai-Kamar — no district must be allowed to remain without connection with the outer world.

Why is it that all this remains to be done at this late day? Why has there been no railway all these years between Paris and India? Why should it be necessary, a whole century after the invention of the railroad, to

spend weeks on a boat bound for India, which is easily attainable by land?

Why? England did not wish the road to her colony to go through the realm of her rival, the Czar. England would not consent to give her Indian slave the possibility of getting into a train and running away from her. Isn't it all quite clear, why the whole world has to be cut up and cut off?

The means of transportation are insufficient. The mail comes late, the raw material and tools arrive late, the workers have to contend with difficulties.

We look at the mountains of good material which is going to rot and ruin because new railways are insufficient.

“*Nu, eto budet,*” the workmen say to us, as they see us depressed.

Which means: It shall be!





## INDEX



- Abd-al-Latif, 50  
Abdugafur, Mirza Nasrullah,  
56  
Abdul Hamid II, Sultan, 55  
Abdullah, 50  
Abu-Said, 50  
Achmed Muntaj, 11  
Ackersdorf, 124  
Afghanistan, 37, 39, 52, 59,  
60, 62, 70, 71, 83, 85, 95,  
101, 113, 122-3, 131, 138,  
143, 149, 150, 151, 152,  
171, 175, 180, 210, 221,  
226-7, 234-9, 266  
Aga Khan, 79  
Ajni, 56  
Ak-Mechet, *see* Kyzyl-Orda  
Ak-Pasha, 52  
Aksakal, Karshi, 137-8  
Ak-Turpak, 145  
Aktyubinsk, 9  
Alai Mountains, 36  
Alankuv, 49  
Alexander I, Czar, 4  
Alexander the Great, 31, 32,  
42, 71, 240, 241  
Ali Mohammed, Mullah,  
138  
Ali Riza, 85  
Alibai, 91  
Alimartar Dojo, 94, 95  
Alma Ata, 14  
Aman, Rafi, 186, 199-200  
Amsterdam, 79  
Amu-Darya, 16, 32-3, 71, 86,  
152, 218, 226, 227, 228-31,  
232, 234-9, 244  
Annau, 80  
Arabia, 62  
Aral, 147-62, 164-6  
Aral, Lake, 12, 16, 234  
Araslan Baba Khan, 61  
Archangel, 88  
Armenia, 79  
Ashkabad, 80  
Aul, 11  
Austria, 54, 81  
Aviation, 3-16, 31, 89, 97,  
167-9  
Azimov, 212-13  
  
Baku, 14, 80, 81  
Baldakavka, Kurbash, 137  
Baly, Captain, 81  
Bara-at, 91  
Barat Beg, 54-5  
Barbatak, 146  
Bashmakovo, 6  
Bassmachi, 73-6, 77, 80, 81,  
86, 87, 88, 94, 97, 100,  
101-2, 127, 132-3, 134,  
137, 138-9, 144, 145, 149,



## INDEX

- 150, 151, 152, 159, 171-2,  
191, 192, 196, 217
- Berlin, 4, 10, 14, 83, 89, 115,  
143, 163, 206
- Besprisornis, 34, 35, 202
- Bi-Dodo-Khudo, 213-14
- Böcklin, 64
- Bokhara, 42, 52-67, 68, 73,  
74, 82, 85, 87, 98, 114, 115,  
131, 143-4, 167, 173, 198,  
252
- Bokhara, East, *see* Tajikistan
- Bokhara, Emir of, 31; *and see*  
Olim Khan, Emir
- Boymat, Halmat, 160-1, 166
- Bremen, 164, 165, 249, 263
- Brest-Litovsk, 80
- Bubu-Khanum, 44, 45
- Burchan-Addin, Sheikh, 48
- Buri, Issai, 138-9
- California, 100, 221
- Camp Hill, Ga., 252
- Carpet-weaving, 115
- Chadshvan*, the, 20, 21, 38,  
196, 197-8
- Chanel, 211
- Charjui, 72
- Chelkar, 11
- Chelyabinsk, 223
- Chicago, 45
- Chimkent, 13
- China, 39, 80, 82, 83, 95, 180,  
210, 265
- Chustpap, 187, 200
- Collective farming, 7-8, 76-  
7; *and see* Kolchos
- Cologne, 208
- Communist Party, 19, 31, 36,  
45, 88, 91, 92, 94, 112, 123,  
124, 127, 142, 143, 145,  
171, 176
- Cotton, 38, 59, 68, 69, 74-5,  
76, 78, 134, 141, 142, 150,  
153, 158, 159-66, 174, 201,  
219-20, 222-3, 225, 243-4,  
245-66
- Coty, 209
- Cyrus the Great, 241
- Czar Peter Mountains, 111,  
179
- Czars, Priests, and Bolshe-  
vists*, 35
- Czechoslovakia, 80, 82
- Damascus, 186
- Darvas, 133, 170
- Dashnak-Zutjun, 79
- Dechkans, 127, 139-40, 141,  
142-3
- Degmay, 210
- Denau, 71, 77
- Detroit, 4
- Divan Begi, 140
- Djinghikishke River, 131
- Dmitrievich, Leonid, 10
- Dnyeprostroy, 4
- Donbass, 221
- Dostoyevsky, 184
- Dshizak, 39
- Dshumalitin, 40
- Dushambe, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89,  
90, 97, 99, 100, 131, 137,  
142, 199; *and see* Stalina-  
bad
- Dutov, Ataman, 80
- Dzerzhinsky, 20, 64
- Egypt, 74, 243, 247, 248
- Engels, Friedrich, 14, 36, 86

INDEX

- England, 59, 80, 81, 85, 86,  
87, 95, 140, 248, 267
- Enver Pasha, 50-1, 81, 85-7,  
94
- Exploitation, 203-4
- Fakrabat, 127
- Farina, 209
- Federal Farm Board (U. S.  
A.), 164, 165, 248-9
- Fergana, 19, 59, 74, 80, 115,  
116, 142, 149, 157, 158,  
159, 167, 171, 173, 175,  
187, 190, 200, 250
- First Whistle, The*, 19, 20
- Five Year Plan, 5, 7, 9, 46,  
62, 114, 117, 134, 142, 151,  
203, 221, 223, 245, 252,  
254, 256
- Ford, 4
- France, 24, 143
- Franz Josef, Emperor, 54
- Freihofcr, Fräulein, 233, 237
- Freud, 49
- Fruns, 73, 85
- Galeyev, 259-62
- Galileo, 50
- Garm, 150, 167, 168, 169-86,  
199
- Gaybov, Usman Dshon, 209-  
10
- Genghis Khan, 32, 49, 53
- Georgia, 251-2
- Germany, 14, 20, 24, 34, 65,  
71, 80-1, 86, 143, 149, 156,  
164, 249
- Gindin, A. M., 99-101
- Gissar: Khan of, 84; Vilayet  
of, 114, 127, 142
- Gorno-Badashanskaya Oblast,  
82
- Gorodok Selenskovo, 28
- G. P. U., 19, 20, 89
- Graf Zeppelin, 7, 9
- Grenage Institute, Tashkent,  
103, 105, 113
- Gusseynov, 92
- Gutfeld, 146
- Hakim-Said, Murid, 191-2,  
200
- Hamburg, 168
- Hamsa, Chakimsade, 18
- Heine, Heinrich, 168
- Hindu Kush, 231
- Hollywood, 18
- Hospitals and clinics, 18, 23,  
24-5, 154, 183-4, 206-7,  
257
- Hussein, Emir, 43
- Ibrahim Beg, 39, 50-1, 76,  
81, 86, 87, 95-6, 127-8,  
133, 134, 135, 136-7, 138,  
139-40, 145-6, 150-1, 154,  
172; proclamation of, 140-  
4
- Ibrahimova, 193-4, 197
- Ichkari*, the, 27, 28, 121
- Imamberdi, Chalmurad, 148-  
52
- India, 31, 39, 62, 79, 81, 82,  
83, 95, 133, 248, 266-7
- Irrigation, 154, 163, 215-25,  
245, 247
- Ishkabad, 145
- Iskander, Prince, *see* Konstan-  
tinovich, Nikolai, Grand  
Duke

## INDEX

- Ismail Samanid, 63  
 Issanbey, 145  
 Issan-Khodsha, 127  
*Isvestia*, 45  
 Italy, 143  
 Ivanovo-Vosnessensk, 68, 264
- Jacquard, Joseph, 118  
 Jadids, 53, 55  
 Jaldirkapee, 131  
 Japan, 143  
 Javan-su, 149  
 Jena, 208  
 Jews in Bokhara, 56-7, 157  
 Jigiti, 127, 145, 151  
 Josef II, Emperor, 54
- Kabul, 140, 171  
 Kafirnigan River, 82, 99, 125,  
 128, 136, 146, 168  
 Kagan, 56, 60, 64, 198, 199  
 Kalai-Khum, 174  
 Kara-Agach, 13  
 Karaganda, 11  
 Karai-Tagan, 170  
 Kara-Kalpaks, 16  
 Karatau, Mount, 151  
 Karki, 157  
 Karluks, 137  
 Kashgar, 80  
 Kashkadria, 157  
 Kazaks, 10, 14, 15, 24, 94  
 Kazakstan, 10, 14, 31, 140  
 Kemal Pasha, 85  
 Kerensky, 55, 56  
 Kesch, 48  
 Kharkov, 4  
 Khas-Tau, 171, 172  
 Khiva, 66; Khan of, 31, 52,  
 58
- Khodsha Sami Beg, 87  
 Khodsha-Bulbular, 94  
 Khodsha-Buly-Bulon, 145  
 Khodsha-tau, 229  
 Khodshayev, Faisullah, 72,  
 73-6, 85  
 Khodshibayev, Abdurakhim,  
 91, 132-5, 137, 139-40,  
 144-5, 146  
 Khodynka field, 3  
 Khojent, 117, 118-22, 123,  
 201-14, 254, 255  
 Khovaling, 87  
 Kiev, 211  
 Kirghiz, 10, 83, 92, 94, 100,  
 150, 168, 250  
 Kirghizistan, 31, 82, 140  
 Kokand, 191, 196, 200, 201  
 Kokander Autonomy, 58, 80  
 Koltash, 126-46  
 Kolchos, 26, 38, 75, 142, 150,  
 151, 153, 154, 156-62, 164-  
 6, 177, 178, 213, 250, 254,  
 257  
 Kollessov, 58  
 Kolomna, 5  
 Kommandir, Alek, 151  
 Kommandir, Sahib, 145, 146  
 Komsomols, 11, 21, 77, 127,  
 143, 254, 256; *and see*  
 Young Communists  
 Konstantinovich, Nikolai,  
 Grand Duke, 30-1  
 Kornilov, General, 80  
 Kowalski, 64  
 Krupp, 124  
 Krupskaya, 182  
 Kulaks, 19, 37, 100, 101, 139,  
 152, 159, 171, 173, 177  
 Kuljab, 66, 85, 114, 151

## INDEX

- Kuratik Beg, 94  
 Kurbashi, 94, 127, 151  
 Kurgan-Tyube, 85, 114, 222, 266  
 Kuropatkin, 17  
 Kussam ben Abbas, 43, 44, 45  
 Kuznetsk, 4  
 Kyzyl-Kum, 16  
 Kyzyl-Orda, 13-15  
 Kyzyl-Yuldus, 159  
 League of Nations, 72, 143, 144  
 Leipa, 237  
 Lenin, 15, 36, 38, 40, 64, 86, 89, 91, 122, 131, 133, 140-1, 142, 178, 182, 236  
 Leningrad, 32, 93, 206, 211, 221, 223, 266; *and see* St. Petersburg  
 Lincoln, 258  
 Liverpool, 164, 165, 263  
 Lokai, 145  
 Lokais, 126-7  
 London, 78  
 Loshkari Boshi, *see* Ibrahim Beg  
*Lords of Tashkent*, 17  
 Louisiana, 249  
 Luxemburg, Rosa, 182  
 Lyons, 118-19, 121, 122  
 Lyubertsy, 5  
 MacCartney, George, 80  
 Machallah, 57, 60  
 Machmudov, Mustapha, 41-2, 45-6, 47  
 Macon, Ga., 251  
 Magnitgorsk, 221  
 Mahomet, 27, 30, 43, 85, 86, 261, 264  
 Maksum, Fusail, 133, 171, 172  
 Maksum, Nasratullah, 91, 135, 137, 173, 182  
 Maksumabad, 151  
 Malmson, General, 80  
 Maly Sary-Tshagan, 12  
 Mamur, Bibitshan, 135  
 Mangites, 85, 127  
 Marx, Karl, 15, 30, 36, 38, 81, 86, 91, 236  
 Maveranar, 42, 86  
 Mazar-i-Sharif, 150  
 Mecca, 43, 46, 50, 178  
 Meshed, 80  
 Mesopotamia, 85  
 Milan, 107  
 Miller, Colonel, 55  
 Mirkulan, Khassyad, 186-200  
 Mississippi, 249  
 Mississippi River, 255  
 Mohammedans, 23-4, 27, 34, 38, 43-6, 50-1, 55, 57, 58, 61-3, 65, 75, 79, 85-7, 104, 161, 174, 175, 176-8, 202  
 Molotov, 149  
 Monaco, Princess of, 168  
 Morocco, 74  
 Moscow, 4-5, 15, 33, 45, 85, 89, 92, 93, 99, 106, 131, 184, 185, 210, 223, 226, 240, 266  
 Muchammed Sultan, 48  
 Mujinov, Mirza Bogadir, 214  
 Mumtas, 19  
 Mustapha Khan, Emir, 54  
 Nadir Khan, 234  
 Namangan, 158  
 Napoleon, 4, 49

## INDEX

- Negroes, 225, 251, 252, 255-6, 258  
 N. E. P., 37, 185, 202  
 Neuerl, 231-4, 235, 236, 237-8, 239  
 Neverov, 11  
*New Republic*, 251-2, 255-6  
 New York, 115, 248  
 Nice, 79  
 Nicholas II, Czar, 133, 140, 141, 142, 170, 252, 253  
 Nizhni-Novgorod, 4, 88, 223  
 Nur-Addin-Bassur, 48  
 Nyushakhar, 77
- Obigarm, 150, 168  
 Olim Khan, Emir, 52, 54, 55-6, 57, 58-60, 64, 65, 66, 71, 72, 74, 79, 81, 85, 86, 92, 93, 126-7, 131, 132, 134, 135, 136, 140, 141, 143-4, 170, 173, 175, 194, 236, 253  
 Orenburg, 8, 31, 80  
 Orlova, Anna Michailovna, 183-5, 186  
 Oryechovo-Suyevo, 264  
 Osh, 82  
 Ossipov, 80  
 Ouled-Nails, 183  
 Oxus, *see* Amu-Darya, 86
- Pamir, 32, 36, 82, 110, 112, 150, 167-78, 180, 218, 231, 265  
 Panj River, 87, 133, 172, 218, 222, 223  
*Paradise America*, 256  
*Parandsha*, the, 20, 183
- Pardshisai, 137  
 Paris, 78, 81, 89, 147, 210, 249, 266  
 Pasteur, 110  
 Pensa, 6, 11  
 Perfume, manufacture of, 207-11  
 Perovsk, *see* Kyzyl-Orda  
 Perovski, 14  
 Persia, 52, 59, 62, 70, 80, 143, 180, 261, 266  
 Petrov, 244, 245, 246, 248, 252-3, 254  
 Philadelphia, 163  
 Poland, 9, 20, 143  
 Prague, 79, 206  
*Pravda*, 4
- Rabat-i-Malik, 69  
 Rachmatullah Ishan, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 200  
 Railways, 6, 11, 12, 31, 32-4, 39-40, 68-9, 81-2, 89, 167, 201, 250, 265-7  
 Rakhimbayev, 92  
 Ramé, Professor, 10  
 Ramenskoye, 5  
 Red Cross, 251, 255-6  
 Red Sticks, 94, 95, 126, 127, 132, 134, 139, 171, 172  
 Reinhart, Peter, 65  
 Revat-Khodsha, 41  
 Rome, 64  
 Rostov, 4  
 Rumania, 20  
 Russia, 33, 59, 74, 82, 112, 140, 143, 146, 252; *and see* Union of Socialist Soviet Republics  
 Ryazan, 5, 88

## INDEX

- St. Petersburg, 53, 79; *and see* Leningrad
- Sajzev, General, 80
- Saka-Andishan, 124
- Saltykov-Shchedrin, 17
- Samara, 7
- Samarkand, 40–51, 98, 114, 115–18, 121, 123, 142, 157, 200, 265
- Samsonov, 17
- Sangimusul, 138
- Saragossa, 114
- Sarai-Kamar, 110, 226, 266
- Sarikhosor, 87
- Sariya-Assya, 77
- Savannah, 13–14
- Schaffhausen, 163
- Schlieffen, 81
- Schools, 14, 18, 24, 38, 55, 60, 89, 92–3, 154, 176–7, 212–13, 225, 257, 264–5
- Selim Pasha, *see* Khodsha Sami Beg
- Selmash, 68
- Seravshan River, 40, 66
- Shafteh-Michgon, 100
- Shatura, 5
- Shepetovka, 9
- Sherif, Mullah, 172
- Shirin-Beka-Aka, 43
- Siberia, 88
- Silk, 103–24, 201, 202
- Sokolniki, 226
- South Carolina, 249
- Sovchos, 243, 250, 259, 265
- Stalin, 36, 135, 149, 182
- Stalinabad, 31, 33, 83, 84–102, 125, 126, 135, 146, 158, 167, 168, 170, 199, 266; *and see* Dushambe
- Stalingrad, 221
- Storch, Adolf Cæsarovich, 124
- Storch, Cæsar, 124
- Sultanov, Mukkum, 145
- Switzerland, 86
- Syr boi*, 14
- Syr-Darya, 15, 207, 208, 244
- Tajikistan, 31, 60, 66, 73, 76, 81, 82, 85, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 97, 104, 105, 110, 113–14, 124, 126, 133–4, 135, 145, 149, 158, 167, 182, 186, 201, 210, 211–12, 218, 219, 234, 266
- Tajiks, 21, 24, 36, 39, 69–71, 82–3, 90, 91–2, 94, 96, 98, 100, 121, 124, 127, 130, 154, 158, 170, 175, 179–80, 186, 205, 206, 209, 228–39, 250, 256–7, 260, 261, 264–5
- Tamara, Empress, 240–1
- Tamerlane, 40, 43, 44, 45–6, 47, 48–51, 59, 68, 240
- Tashkari*, the, 26–7
- Tashkent, 11, 16–31, 33, 34, 37, 57, 80, 93, 99, 103–4, 106, 110, 113, 122, 124, 126, 142, 157, 163–4, 173, 191, 197, 198, 199, 201, 208, 212, 266
- Tataristan, 140
- Tatars, 260
- Termes, 71, 88, 167, 266
- Texas, 249
- Thälmann, Ernst, 15
- Tiflis, 4, 30, 124
- Tig-Jones, Reginald, 80
- Timur, *see* Tamerlane
- Tojikistoni Surch*, 91, 93

## INDEX

- Tokio, 7  
 Totsham Bashi Muchammed, 140  
 Tropical Institute, Bokhara, 65  
 Trotsky, 143, 203  
 Truyevo, 6  
 Tuglutekim, 43  
 Tunis, 18  
 Turdiyar, Haknassar, 130-2, 136-7  
 Turin, 117  
 Turkan-Aka, 43  
 Turkestan, 23, 39, 52, 57, 58, 72, 80, 115, 124, 140, 141, 143; Chinese East, 80  
 Turkey, 62, 79, 81, 143  
 Turkmenistan, 31, 73, 80, 140  
 Turksayob, 136  
  
 Uhland, 52  
 Ukraine, 80, 112  
 Ulema, 79  
 Ulug-Beg, 50  
 Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, 72, 73, 75, 76, 252-3  
 United States, 63, 74, 143, 164, 243, 247-52, 258  
 Ural, 8  
 Uzbekistan, 20, 31, 71, 72, 73, 76-7, 83, 87, 104, 140, 149, 157, 201  
 Uzbeks, 17, 20-1, 24, 25, 26, 28, 34-5, 36, 73, 83, 94, 100, 126, 127, 130, 154, 156, 158, 160, 166, 206, 250, 260, 261, 264-5  
  
 Vakhsh River, 111, 128, 147, 168, 179, 215, 218, 226, 245  
 Vakhsh-Stroi, 92, 219-25, 245  
 Vakuf, the, 60  
 Valeshev, 145  
 Varsob River, 99-100  
 Varsob-Stroi, 99-101  
 Vienna, 206  
 Virginia, 247  
 Volga, 6-7, 80, 202  
 Volsk, 146  
 Voroshilov, 149  
 Vyatkin, Vassili Lavrentyevich, 46-7  
  
 Warsaw, 30  
 Washington, D. C., 78, 164, 165, 248, 249, 256, 263  
 Weimar, 114  
 Williams, John S., 251  
 Wilson, Walter, 251-2, 255-6  
 Woman's Club of Tashkent, 18, 21-3, 24, 25, 26, 29  
 Worth, 211  
  
 Young Bokharist Party, 53, 55, 56, 58, 59, 72, 85  
 Young Communists, 14, 94, 143, 177, 197, 219, 225; *and see* Komsomols  
 Young Turks, 55, 85  
  
 Zdolbunovo, 9  
 Zetkin, Clara, 182  
 Zinoviev, 143  
 Zurich, 45  
 Zwet-Met Import, 68

