

PATHANS OF THE LATTER DAY

JAMES W. SPAIN



OXFORD

PATHANS
OF THE
LATTER DAY

James W. Spain

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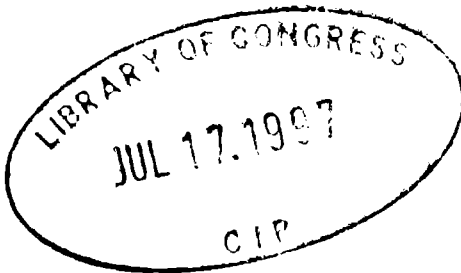
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TO

My grandchildren
Jeanne Sikandra and James Stephen

may they one day come to know and love the Frontier
as their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents did

and

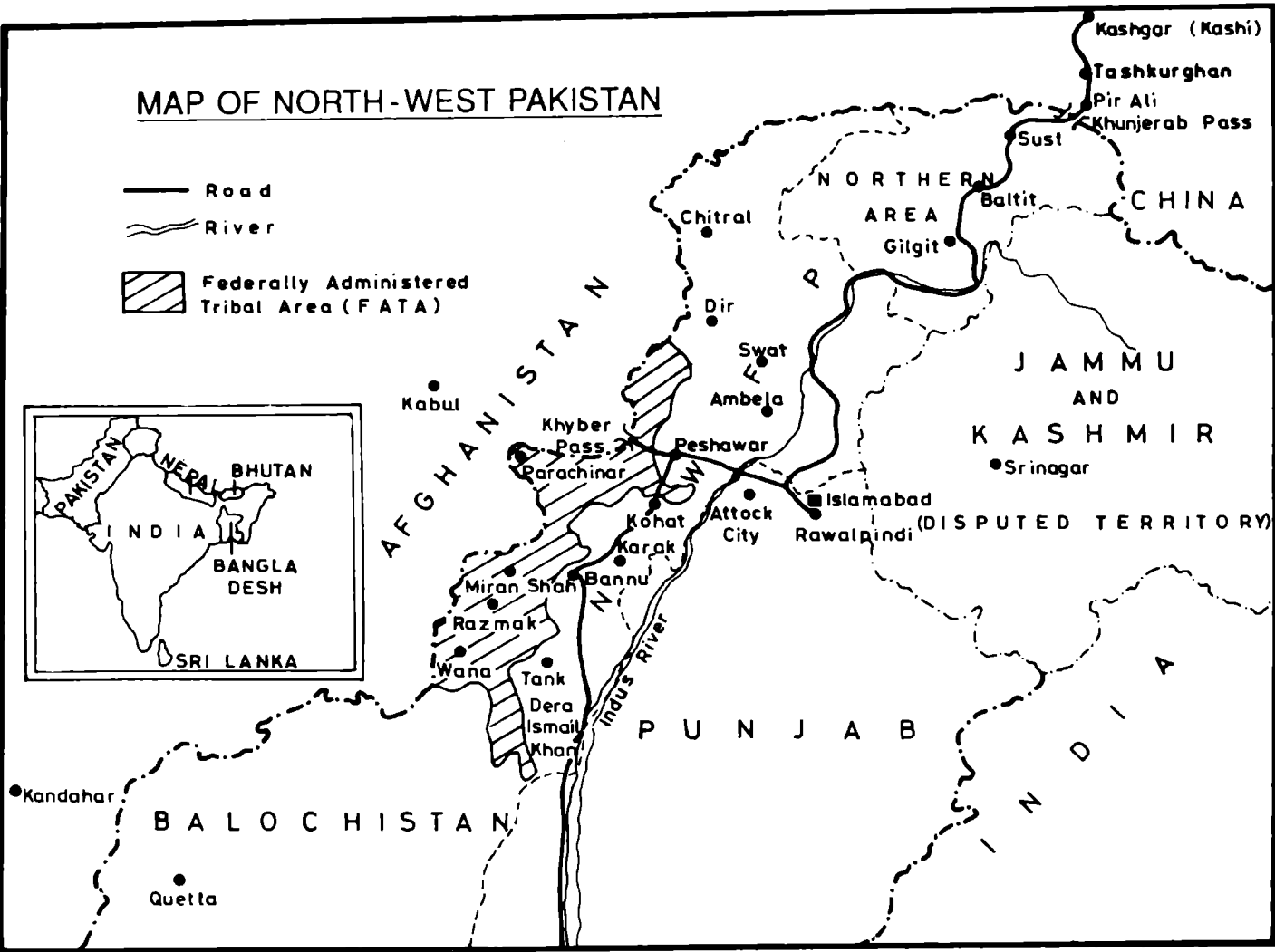
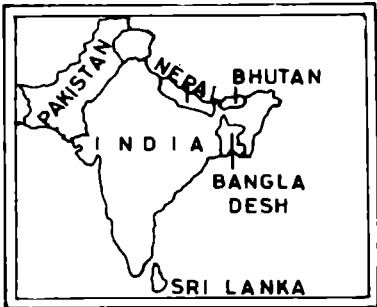
TO

the US Consuls in Peshawar
who have so ably maintained American honour there:

Gordon D. King	1958-60
Robert J. Carle	1960-61
LeRoy Makepeace	1961-62
William F. Spengler	1962-65
Stephen Winship	1965-69
August Velletri	1969-73
Stockwell Everts	1973-76
Peter S. Maher	1976-78
Douglas B. Archard	1978-82
Ronald D. Lerton	1982-84
Alan Eastham	1984-87
Michael E. Malinowski	1987-89
Gerald M. Feirstein	1989-92
Richard H. Smyth	1992-

MAP OF NORTH-WEST PAKISTAN

- Road
- ~ River
- ▨ Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA)



Map of North-West Pakistan

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Preface

Over the years an occasional writer or reviewer, emphasizing the fascination the Pathans exert on foreigners, has commented that a young American diplomat gave up his career to study them. As far as the dust jacket of the first edition of my thirty-three year-old *The Way Of The Pathans* is concerned that was right.

But, as it developed, I came back to that career and stayed with it for a quarter of a century—until I gave it up again in 1989 and went back to the Pathans. I am not sorry about either decision. Time and distance merely increased the fascination.

Whether or not they make for greater knowledge and understanding, I am not sure. During my decades in Turkey, East Africa and Washington I missed many events on the Frontier, and even though I continued to buy what books I could find, I missed some of them too.

This volume encompasses the more than forty years that I have known the Pathans. I have tried to make it self-contained. In addition to familiar haunts, in my own 'latter-days' I visited places that I had not known before and I do bring to this book bits and pieces that I did not have 'the first time around'. Still, I suspect that my contribution, for whatever it is worth, lies primarily in looking at the same things twice forty years apart. In most cases my conclusion is that more has remained the same than has changed.

That in itself says something about the Pathans.

Innumerable people have helped me during my long pursuit of the Pathans. I owe heartfelt thanks to my sons, Stephen and William, who accompanied me on several trips to the Frontier, (with the latter also helping to edit this book); to Dr Masoud Akram of the US Consulate in Peshawar, who offered unlimited assistance from his deep scholarly knowledge; to journalist Behroz Khan, who guided me on an unforgettable tour of Buner and the Darra; and to Reza Kuli Khan, who 'took me home' with him to the Khattak country.

In addition to that on the Dedication page, a special word of gratitude is due to Richard H. Smyth, the current US Consul in Peshawar, and his wife Janice. They contributed generously and effectively to both my welfare and that of this book during my later 'latter-day' visits to Peshawar.

Ms Ameena Saiyid, Ms Yasmin Qureshi, and Ms Shahbano Alvi of Oxford University Press, Karachi, gave unstintingly of their time and skill in the always onerous task of putting a book through the publication process.

New people keep teaching me new things all the time.

I am indebted above all to a few long-cherished friends who started me on 'The Way of the Pathans' so many years ago and taught me to love and appreciate the Frontier. Chief among them are:

The late Major-General S. Shahid Hamid, whose knowledge of the uniformed Pathans he commanded and whose ability to place their activities in the broader concept of local and world affairs was invaluable in everything I did; his wife, Begum Tahirah, who forty years ago took me into her heart and home, places of intelligence and warmth I have relished ever since; and two succeeding generations of the family who have helped me countless times over the years;

The late Abdul Sattar Khan Mohmand and Jamshed Khan Mohmand, who took a young tourist, let him stay in their village and homes and made something of a Pathan out of him; the next generation of their families, especially Iftikhar Mohmand, who took time out from his demanding duties as a Minister in the NWFP Government to plan and support an extensive 'latter-day' tour for me.

The Hon. Mohammed Aslam Khan Khattak, superbly well-informed about his people, civil servant, ambassador, governor, senior politician, and the first Pathan friend I ever made, has for four decades in dozens of circumstances been unfailingly informative, kind, helpful, and true. Whatever feel I have for the Frontier owes much also to his father, wife, sisters, brothers, and children.

One word more about the Pathans. This is not a scholar's book, and little attention is given to the subtleties of oriental languages and their transliterations. Pukhtuns, Pushtuns, Pakhtuns, Pashtuns, Pathans, and Afghans are all the same people.

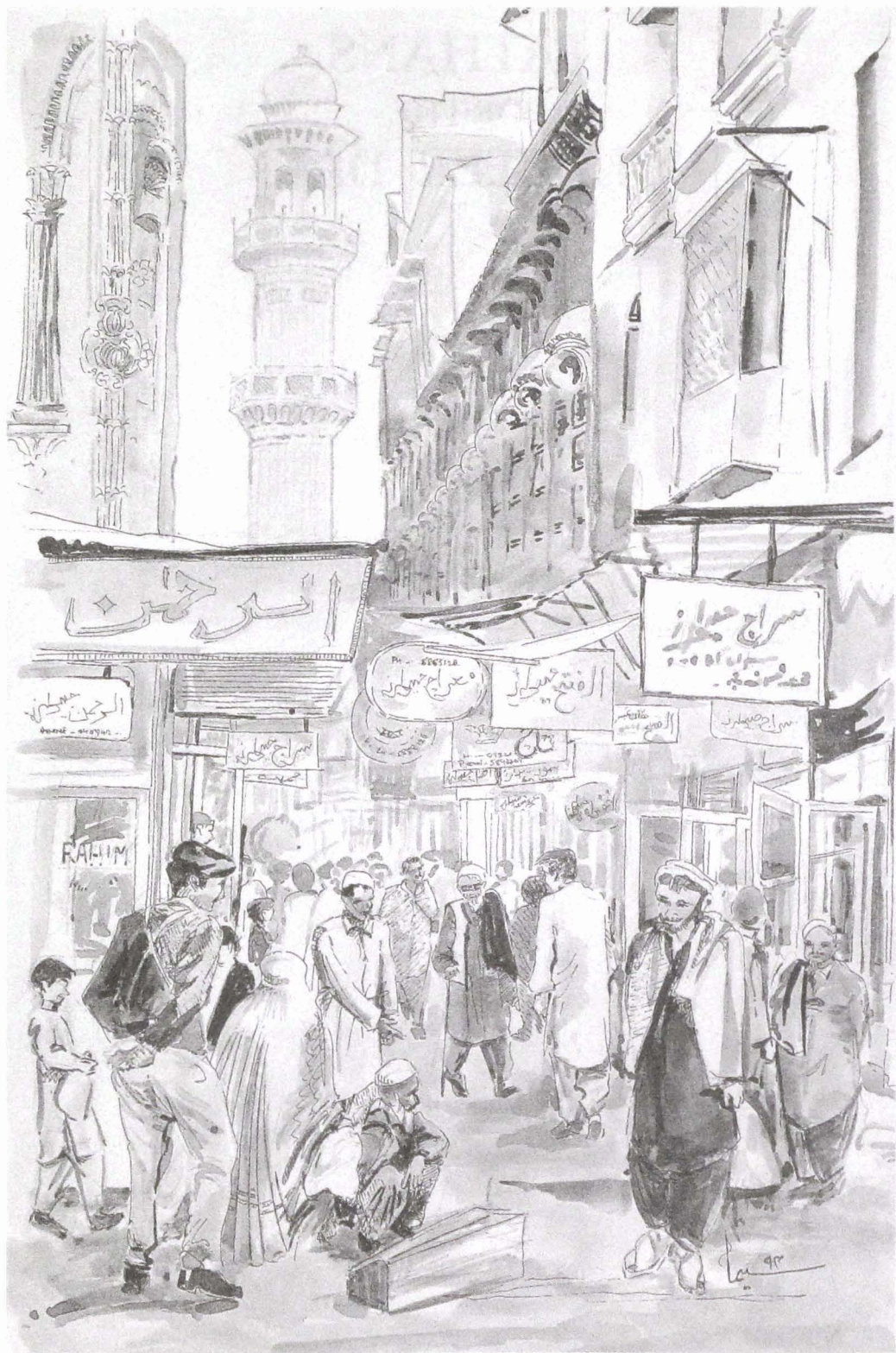
I learned about them first in English and in Pakistan, so I most often use 'Pathan'. When speaking directly with them, I tend to use 'Pakhtun', the pronunciation of the northern areas in which I first travelled, although in the south I try to remember 'Pashtun'.

In speaking among themselves and with outsiders, they are equally catholic, and the reader can safely be so too.

James W. Spain

Colombo, Sri Lanka
5 December 1994

**PATHANS
OF THE
LATTER DAY**



The Vertical Architecture of Old Peshawar

Chapter 1

Together Again

The Pathans and I go back a long way. I first learned about them as a boy in the 1930s in Chicago from the pages of Rudyard Kipling. My wife and I met them in the 1950s during a first diplomatic assignment in Pakistan which, happily, coincided with my Montana father-in-law's undertaking of a land and water survey there for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. He brought my mother-in-law with him. They too were lovers of Kipling and all four of us spent as much time as we could on the country's North-West Frontier.

Then, during a scholarly interlude at Columbia University, I went back alone for a prolonged stay in 1954. I visited frequently again in the 1960s while back in the State Department on various Washington assignments having to do with South Asia, at the end of which Edith and I were again stationed in Pakistan. Off in far places in the 1970s, I came back in the 1980s and 1990s when I was assigned to the Embassy in Sri Lanka and after I settled in that country upon retirement.

My first book, *The Way of The Pathans*, abounded in tales of romance and heroism, honour, violence and death. It started with a 1952 anecdote about an American teacher's introduction to the Kashmir jihad through a tale that almost certainly began with the killing of nuns and innocent civilians. This book of the latter-day is also full of such stories. They are still an integral part of life on the Frontier.

On the day in 1994 when I arrived in Peshawar on my most recent trip to the Frontier, the newspapers front-paged accounts of a twelve-year-old local boy who shot and killed his grandfather for making a slighting remark about the morals of his mother. When he surrendered to the police, they took him into custody only reluctantly. The next day the headlines announced the kid-

napping of a bus-load of school children by three Afghan refugees demanding ransom and the opening of roads into their country. After a two-day stand-off during which the children were rescued, security forces cold-bloodedly shot the kidnappers to death.

Peshawari opinion held strongly that both kidnappers and grandfather got what they deserved. In the former case, a few—very few—protests from human rights activists were ignored. So were diplomatic protests by the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad and violent demonstrations against the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul. ‘What do you do with people like that other than kill them as soon as you can?’ a Pathan ‘man in the Street’ asked me.

As to the boy’s case, his question was, ‘What kind of a man would say a thing like that about his own daughter-in-law, even if it was true? Now one of the kid’s relatives will have to kill him. And then some other relative will have to kill that one. Why should the police get mixed up in all that trouble? That’s not what we pay them for.’

On a visit a few years earlier, I called in at the compound on Hospital Road near the Cantonment exit to the Khyber which houses the residence and office of the American Consul. There had not been an American Consulate in Peshawar when I first knew it, and for some years my principal ambition in the Foreign Service of the United States was to have the job when one was opened. Unfortunately, by the time that happened, I was a rank too high in the hierarchy and had to settle in the 1960s for a vicarious role in its activities from posts in Washington and in the Embassy in Islamabad.

The place had changed almost unrecognizably. Originally laid out in a large garden open to the street behind a low wall, the residence and the office (the latter in what had once been the gatehouse) had in the 1960s and 1970s the placid Victorian flavour of the rest of the cantonment. It was manned by one or two Americans and a handful of local Pathans. Its moments of excitement were rare and modest, e.g., the gardener’s taking advantage of a new consul by rushing through a small opium poppy crop in the back garden before the neophyte was able to recognize the plant.

Now it was surrounded by a high wall with entry only through an electronic gate controlled by locks. Barbed wire ran along the top of the wall and armed guards clustered around the gate.

Inside, housed here and there where room could be found, was a variety of US Government agencies, USAID, DEA, and, according to whispers in the town, a whole battalion of CIA people. They were all busy dealing with the war in Afghanistan, liaising with the Mujahiddin, supplying humanitarian, development, and goodness only knew what other kinds of assistance.

My first reaction was that change had ruined everything. It looked like a jerry-built prison in a rapidly-expanding crime area in a backward American state. Then came the realization that it was only natural. From 1979 onward, with the war in Afghanistan casting deep shadows across the Frontier, Peshawar had merely reverted to a familiar state of siege. If the electronic barriers and bustle were less appealing than either the Victorian stability of Peshawar Cantonment or the romantic medieval mud forts of the countryside as I had first known them, we were after all living at the end of the twentieth century.

An old friend, a retired Pakistani General who was with me, exchanged reminiscences with the Consul. (This one had been taught to recognize an opium poppy before ever he left Washington.) On another visit a year or so earlier, the General and I had been having dinner with him when a servant had come rushing in to announce that a guard outside the Consulate had been shot. (It wasn't fatal, just a leg wound.)

'Who did it?' I asked, relishing my return to a place where such incidents, if common, were never commonplace. The General called the servant back.

'What tribe is he?' he inquired.

'Wazir,' was the reply.

Although not of Pathan blood himself, the General had commanded many Pathan troops during his career. 'A Wazir! Probably it was his brother,' he remarked. 'With Afridis it's usually a cousin.'

We finished our dinner while various authorities gathered outside to investigate the shooting. Eventually one came in to report. The guard admitted that he had fallen asleep, rifle locked and loaded, and inadvertently shot himself in the leg. There was no reason to be concerned over tribal or political involvement.

The General, with a Frontier soldier's sure sense of tactics, grabbed the initiative before we could begin to tease him. 'That

could have happened,' he said, 'but I wonder if it did. Good soldiers don't shoot themselves and the officer-in-charge wouldn't have put anyone but a good man on duty at the Consulate. I still think there's something fishy about it.'

Much later I found out that there was. An always well-informed Pakistani employee of the Consulate told me privately that the soldier had not in fact shot himself. His soldier lover, another Pathan, had fired the bullet, and the victim had risked his military career by lying to protect him.

On the Charsadda Road out of Peshawar lies the Bala Hissar, the great fort which has bristled for centuries over the old city. Opposite it, on the second floor of a dilapidated corner building, had been located the original American Consulate office. Some time in the 1960s the office had been abandoned after a high level visitor from the State Department in Washington had slipped in a permanent puddle of expectoration on the stairs and, while getting himself up, had been importuned by the beggarwoman who lived on the landing. I found it a pity that the place was no more. I was fond of it and usually remembered to wear rubber-soled boots while visiting.

One hot summer day, I set out on the Charsadda Road for lunch at a famous kebab restaurant with another long-time Frontier friend, Col. Khushwaqt-ul-Mulk. Born a prince of Chitral, 'Khush' spent most of his life in the Frontier Scouts, irregular troops who patrol tribal territory. A mainstay of the US Consulate in its early days, he knows more about Pathans than most of them do about themselves.

When we arrived at the kebab place and sat down, a waiter thrust two cups and two pots of fragrant green tea at us, together with a plate stacked high with thick round *nan* bread. A horde of flies circled in with the same self-assurance that the waiter had. He didn't even try to wave them off.

'Meatless day!' he proclaimed happily. 'No kebab!'

The practice of selling or serving no meat, fresh or cooked, on one or two days a week is a well-established one in Pakistan. Designed to encourage personal austerity and to make supplies go further, it has never been popular on the Frontier, an area of devoted carnivores. Indeed, in the old days, when what is now Bangladesh used to be part of Pakistan, the idea was denounced as 'a Bengali trick.' 'All they have over there is rice and

fish, so they don't want us to enjoy ourselves!' East Pakistan was no more, but meatless days were still a stern reality in Peshawar.

'We'll have chicken instead!' the Colonel said firmly.

The chicken was crisp and spicy. It tasted as good as any meat I ever had. As we ate it, we watched the busy road alongside. An occasional bale-laden camel plodded by. Horse-drawn tongas (which certainly had not changed since I'd had my first ride in one forty years before) clip-clopped past taking families back to their villages after a morning's shopping in the Kissakhani Bazaar. A dozen or so men in turbans with bandoliers crossed on their chests, a platoon of Mujahiddin heading for Afghanistan, strode briskly along. At their rear came a pair of young men pushing handcarts at the same fast pace—rifles given into group custody while they were in Peshawar.

A convoy of military trucks filled with soldiers came next. On the Frontier every man is his own military analyst, and I tried to relive the role. 'Something going on beyond Malakand?' I asked. (The famous pass into the high country lay above Charsadda.)

It seemed that I had not mastered the art. Khush studied the passing column for a moment. 'I doubt it,' he said. 'August's too hot. Not likely to be any action for a couple of months yet. Just part of the Peshawar Brigade on a routine training exercise.'

After lunch we cut back further eastward along the old Grand Trunk Road, already famous a hundred years ago when Kipling put Kim and his Lama adventuring along it. Developed in the sixteenth century by the Mughals and the Afghan chief Sher Shah Suri, it was the most modern highway of its time. For centuries it provided smooth passage from Peshawar to Calcutta.

When I had first seen it, the Grand Trunk had been a meandering two-lane road paralleled in many places by a tree-shaded dirt path for travellers on foot, camel and horseback. Now it was six divided lanes carrying high-speed traffic with turn-offs here and there resembling the cloverleaves of American inter-state highways. The bridge of boats that had been such a pleasure to rumble across at Nowshera was no longer in use. The highway soars across a new structure over the Indus at Attock, technically vastly superior to the old bridge but providing only a quick glimpse of Akbar's famous fort. The armed guards and

barred gates to which travellers had to present themselves a few decades ago are gone.

At many points there was a new sight: roadside food stands selling fresh produce (according to my companion often bought in the town market that morning) and honey. The latter trade seemed to be exclusively in the hands of Afghan refugees.

On the outskirts of Peshawar on the way back, we stopped to visit a mobile veterinary van. The Colonel, in his seventies and no longer much given to playing polo, exercises his energies and love of horses by directing the British-financed Brooke Hospital for Animals programme to provide free first-aid treatment and inoculations to the long-suffering horses that draw the Frontier's many tongas (a high two-wheeled vehicle straight out of Kipling's drawings).

There were three or four tongas lined up waiting. A helper struggled unsuccessfully to get a piece of iron out of the hoof of a horse. Major Zahoor, an ultimately competent retired army veterinarian, completed the job. Colonel Khushwaqt ran his hand along the animal's ribs and directed: 'Give him a bag of feed before you have the shoe put back on!'

We left our vehicle and worked our way into the central part of the old city through the maze of narrow streets behind the Bala Hissar. I reflected that my original escort into the city forty years before had been a young student of my own age. Now, a retired diplomat, I was again in the hands of a contemporary.

We came into a torn-up Chowk Yadgarh, the main square, for centuries the political and social heart of the city. Here Afghan amirs have been greeted in state and Sikh overlords have marshalled their military bands while hanging rebel Muslims from the minarets of the adjacent Mosque of Mahabat Khan. In the nineteen thirties the 'Frontier Gandhi,' Abdul Ghaffar Khan, assembled his 'Red Shirt' forces here and started them on a revolutionary march through the town, only to find that the refreshing cool drinks they had been given while waiting contained a powerful purgative, which speedily broke up the procession. This had been arranged courtesy of a shrewd civil servant, one Iskander Mirza, who decades later was briefly President of Pakistan—until he in turn was purged and replaced by an even shrewder soldier, Mohammad Ayub Khan.

I had once before seen the Chowk Yadgarh in a state of

disruption. It had been in the late sixties, when a memorial to a British Colonel, E.C. Hastings, who had died in 1884, had been replaced by one to those who had given their lives in the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War. Now this had been carefully lifted aside as excavations proceeded for an underpass and subterranean parking lot. The Chowk Yadgarh was a vast and chaotic hole in the ground. The modern earth-moving equipment in and around the excavation, surrounded by narrow, towering multi-storied buildings of tiny Mughal bricks which had stood for centuries, had all the elements of a surrealistic painting.

As if testifying to the need for the new facility, perched precariously here and there on what their owners obviously hoped were solid fragments of pavement, stood automobiles which had brought shoppers into the square. Around, and sometimes over, them on what level ground was left swirled a vast crowd, constantly in motion but remarkably quiet and graceful for a South Asian urban scene.

Apart from that, the Chowk hadn't changed a bit—except to become even more exotic. In the old days, when one of my delights had been studying faces and costumes, most were Pathan, and I tested myself by trying to distinguish between Peshawari and Qizilbash, Wazir, Afridi, Mohmand, and Mohammadzai. Now a third or more of the passers-by sported other features and adornments, those of Hazaras, Tajiks, Turkomans, Kirghiz, and Uzbeks, part of the three million refugees who had been driven from their homes by the war in Afghanistan. I mentioned my observation to Khush.

'I expect you're right,' he said. 'It's been ten years now and we just don't notice any more. And,' he added, standing next to my African-tailored safari suit in his neatly-pressed shirt and gabardine slacks, 'who do you think looks exotic to them?'

We struggled our way to a little street off one side of the square on an obligatory errand. Over the years I must have acquired at least two dozen pairs of Peshawari shoes and slippers. I still have most of them, but I obviously couldn't leave without another pair.

The six-foot-wide, hundred-foot-long 'Street of the Shoe Makers' had twenty or more shoe shops, intermixed with a few tea stalls, on each side. I spotted a pair of tan-suede, pointed-toed slippers with what struck me as a quietly elegant amount

of gold embroidery. The deal was soon completed—for something less than the equivalent of five dollars.

I could have done better. The proprietor was intrigued by the pair of American Florsheim loafers I was wearing and offered to trade me the slippers—and any other pair of shoes in his shop!—for them. Being far from home and replacements, I declined, but wondered to Khush what on earth the man wanted them for.

‘Probably just an exotic souvenir,’ he suggested.

We slithered and squirmed our way back around the square and up the long dusty ‘Street of the Silversmiths’ with its high, narrow buildings to the Mahabat Khan Mosque. This had always been a favourite place of mine. It is not just the sixteenth century Mughal origins of the edifice (some say that it was built by Shah Jehan, creator of the Taj Mahal; others insist that it is the work of Aurangzeb, after he had overthrown and imprisoned his father). Nor is it alone the peace, quiet and coolness its open courtyard presents in the middle of what is surely one of the most bustling cities in the world. I had in my early days discovered in one of the labyrinthine warrens adjacent to the mosque the inevitable ‘little man’ who dealt in bits and pieces of sculpture from the Graeco-Buddhist Gandhara period (encompassing roughly six hundred years surrounding the beginning of our current era). I was sure that I, alone among foreigners, knew him, and was convinced that very few Peshawaris did either. Like the pilgrimage to the shoe-maker, a visit was obligatory, even if a purchase was not. Indeed, I understood that in these later, law-abiding days such a purchase would be blatantly illegal. I thought I would be showing something new and different to my escort, who was otherwise so knowledgeable about Peshawar.

After a few false starts, I found the place. The little old man was gone, but his son, or grandson, or nephew, or somebody, was there. After only the most minimal of explanations, I was greeted as an old family friend and shown a framed snapshot of myself and the original proprietor. On dusty shelves and in piles on the floor were piece after piece of mostly shattered Gandhara sculpture.

The excitement dimmed when Khush, who had wordlessly seated himself beside me, asked ‘Is my ring ready yet?’

‘This fellow has a good goldsmith,’ he explained. ‘A lot of

us use him for repairs on family jewellery. A lot of foreigners come to him for other things,' he added guilelessly.

The repaired ring was presented, accepted, and paid for, and the floor was left to me. I dutifully inspected and admired the stone and terracotta Buddha heads and 'genuine Greek gods' on display, but somehow the attraction was gone. I shivered at the prices asked, explained truthfully that there was no room for any more decorations in my modest flat, and left empty-handed. Khush seemed to approve. On the way out, he led me through the labyrinth by a different route, pausing to point out a small courtyard in which a young man chipped away at pieces of schist in a corner, while a row of cast terracotta Buddha heads stood drying in the sun.

'Another part of the shop,' he explained.

Edging our way back around Chowk Yadgarh, we passed a row of money-changers crouched over their baskets of coins and piles of notes of every nationality and denomination under the sun. These too I knew. In the old days they had sold coins by weight, bronze, silver, and gold. Bactrian and Seleucid tetradrachms two thousand years old lay side by side with American quarters of recent vintage. In those days it was legal, and one early American Consul cushioned his retirement by picking them up by the kilogram.

Looking cautiously around, one vendor offered me a basket filled with what appeared to be mint-condition specimens of coins from the time of Alexander. 'Only a thousand rupees each, Sahib.'

Khush grinned and walked on. So, this time, did I. As I caught up with him he remarked wryly, 'Once we counterfeited only guns. Now we can fake anything!'

Another day I prowled through the Cantonment. In the old days there had been three or four Chinese boot-makers who for a hundred years had turned out to order for the British sahibs lovely jodhpurs and full boots, requiring only a day or so to make to order and a very modest amount of rupees to own. I couldn't find any of them and asked a likely-looking passer-by for directions.

He scratched his head. 'Hmmm...I think there may still be one in the Saddar Bazaar.'

'What happened to the others? There was a great one on The Mall. He was even mentioned in one of Kipling's stories!'

'Their children didn't want to work with shoes. They all opened Chinese restaurants!'

The boot-maker I found was Chinese all right. He even professed to remember me. But the sign outside his shop said 'Best Bata Shoes', and among the rows of shining plastic there were only a few sad dusty pairs of handmade boots. (I thought I recognized one mismatched set I had refused to accept when they had been made for me a quarter of a century earlier.)

Spotting a sign, 'Sehrai Travels and Tours', outside Green's Hotel in Saddar, I stopped in to arrange an onward flight to Karachi. The name is a natural for a travel agency. 'Serai' means, literally, a 'stopping place', ('caravanserai'). It also conjured up happy memories. Abdul Qadir Sehrai, long since dead, was a friend from the beginning. A Peshawari born and bred, in 1920 he joined the Hijrat movement, Muslims who were abandoning life in India in protest against British treatment of Turkey after World War I. They were welcomed in Tashkent by M. N. Roy, a longtime Indian Communist, and enrolled in the University of the Toilers of the East.

After a year or so Qadir went on to Moscow. Soon concluding that Marxist ideology was not what he had left home for, he walked back across the deserts and mountains, getting himself shot in the leg by a Bolshevik soldier in the process. Imprisoned by the British in Peshawar in what came to be called the 'Tashkent Conspiracy Case', he was eventually rehabilitated, and worked for the British Broadcasting Corporation in New Delhi and London during World War II. After Independence in 1947 he spent some time in New York promoting Pakistan's claim to Kashmir. In 1950 he came to Karachi with his prize possession, a 1949 green Buick Roadmaster convertible. Rumoured to be a spy (British? American? Afghan?), he was in trouble with the law again. And again he was rehabilitated—as Director of Tourist Information for the North-West Frontier Province. When a shift in politics eliminated that job, Qadir, who lived alone at the Peshawar Club, set up a small tourist office of his own. Eventually, laden with years and with friends all over the world, he died.

When my ticket was completed, I asked the proprietor of Sehrai Travels and Tours, an impeccably dressed man, whose

desk nameplate proclaimed him to be Zahoor A. Durrani, about the name of his agency. He responded that it was a 'complicated story.'

'Complicated' like 'Abdul Qadir Sehrai?' I inquired.

'You knew my uncle?'

'He helped me write a book forty years ago.'

'He helped me learn this business. He had been everywhere and seen everything but he was a true son of Peshawar.'

Nostalgia is demanding work, and by the time we finished reliving Qadir's life, I found myself with an acute headache. What I needed now was a pain-killer.

I crossed the street and turned a corner. Sure enough, there still was the incredibly well-stocked and obliging hole-in-the-wall chemist's whose medications had helped me through several illnesses when I was in Peshawar in 1954 researching my first book. At first both the proprietor and I were wary. He looked vaguely familiar but was much too young to have dosed me in my youth. To him I must have appeared to be just another foreign tourist.

His impression was probably not improved when I asked for the best pain-killer he had, 'some real strong dope.' We started looking over various brands of aspirin.

Then that extraordinary extra-sensory perception that seems so common on the Frontier appeared. 'Ah, yes,' he said, 'you have been sick in Peshawar before. My father took care of you.'

He rummaged on a shelf behind him and handed over a dozen tablets encased in a plastic and silver foil-covered card. Pointing at a machine in the corner, he explained 'We wrap them ourselves now.'

When I left he refused to take any payment, telling me instead, '*Pa mukha dai khuh*', 'May goodness go before your face!', the traditional Pushtu benediction.

'Goodness' was there all right. The stinging headache was gone in an hour. I went to sleep that night with the pills (I still don't know what was in them) and the slippers my only acquisitions of the day. And with wonderful reawakened memories! I was sure that as I went on my latter-day rounds of the Frontier, Kipling's Kamal, Mahbub Ali, Yar Khan, and the Afridi cattle-lifter—or at least their contemporary personifications—would turn up again.



The Sphola Stupa in the Khyber

Chapter 2

An Old, Old Story

The forty years that have gone by since I first got to know the Pathans are not many, perhaps only one-twentieth of their known history as a people. The fraction is even smaller for the Frontier itself, a mere one-sixtieth of the twenty-four hundred years since Alexander the Great passed through on his way to India.

Yet momentous things can happen to a people and their land in less than forty years. Democrat and Republican, Labour and Conservative parties turn each other out. Kings and emperors give way to prime ministers and presidents. Corporals and sergeants overthrow colonels and generals. Systems of government rise and fall. Whole peoples appear and disappear, grow or diminish, change or reinforce their cultures, religions, languages and alphabets. Rivers shift their courses, flood, or dry up. Lakes and mountains come and go. Roads are made and abandoned.

All of these things have happened to the Frontier. As in the Book of Genesis, the land came first. Next the people. Then they made history together. The Frontier's history was exciting for those generations who participated in it, and in one way or another it had its influence on those who came after them.

According to traditionalist Pathans, their history begins, as does that of all of us, with Adam. It flows through the Patriarch Abraham and down to King Saul along conventional Old Testament lines. It diverges with a grandson of Saul's named Afghana, whose remote descendants in the sixth century BC fled from Babylonian captivity to the high plateaux in far-off Afghanistan.

Those interested in this fascinating saga would do well to consult Sir Olaf Caroe's *The Pathans*. Sir Olaf may give undue attention to the story but he fully cites the chronicles and genealogies behind it. From his long service on the Frontier

(he was once its Governor), he certifies the deep belief Pathans have in it and describes the many facets of their lives with Old Testament connotations. And he is by most estimates this century's greatest writer about the Frontier.

We come to more solid history with the great Persian Achaemenian Empire and Herodotus' recounting of the doings of Cyrus, Xerxes and Darius. The historian credits the last as the 'discoverer' of the area and its principal city, Kaspaturus (which may be modern Peshawar or the mound of Pushkalavati at Charsadda nearby or neither). According to modern linguists, Kharoshthi, the ancient alphabet of the Peshawar Valley, grew out of the Aramaic used by the Persian court and over a wide area down to New Testament times. Be the details what they may, there is no doubt that the Frontier was controlled and acculturated by the Persians from the sixth to the fourth century BC and that they left a deep impact on it.

Then in 327 BC the 'Young God' appeared. Consolidating his conquest of the Persians and pressing on to India, Alexander of Macedon passed through Kabul and by the junction of the Kabul and Kunar Rivers. He did not come down through the then unknown Khyber. Turning north near where Jelalabad now stands, according to the historian Arrian, he cut a great arc through the wild mountains of Bajaur, Dir, Swat, and Buner, winning notable battles at Massaga and Aornos, and coming out at Shahbazgarhi near Mardan. He probably passed through the village of Lahor and crossed the Indus at equally tiny and ancient Hund, a few miles above Attock. He didn't find an 'Alexandria' anywhere in the area. For him the Frontier was just a brief interlude on the path to world conquest. In less than a year he was gone on to India. He returned to his death in Babylon by a different route.

It is tempting to give him credit for the Graeco-Buddhist civilization which flourished on the Frontier in subsequent centuries. Its remnants dot the countryside and fill the museums even today. But this was almost entirely the product of the successful expansionism of his Seleucid and Bactrian successors, most of them remote, such as the two Diodotuses and the several Eucratideses, Meanders and Demetriuses who established themselves more securely in Iran and Afghanistan.

Yet his glory lives on in the popular memory. Iskander, Sikander and Sikandra (the last feminine) are still common names on the Frontier. When asked by visitors about any ruin (even that of a hundred-year-old British telegraph post), the locals attribute it to 'Iskander the Two-Horned'. Renowned modern archaeologists and historians (most notably Sir Aurel Stein and Sir Mortimer Wheeler) have spent months and years in the most inhospitable country trying to identify the sites of the battles of Massaga and Aornos. My wife and I named our daughter after him—and I have spent three paragraphs in this highly condensed history on his single year on the Frontier.

Alexander had hardly departed India to return to the West when the indigenous Mauryan Empire drove the few followers he left behind from the Frontier. Founded by the Hindu King Chandragupta, the Mauryan Dynasty came to its apogee with his grandson Asoka. This ruler embraced Buddhism. The edicts he carved in the rocks may still be seen at Shahbazgarhi, Mansehra, and his great university city of Taxila. He and his successors ruled throughout the third century BC and were the first to introduce representational images of the Lord Buddha, who had hitherto been portrayed by symbols such as a footprint or a lotus.

Thus the way was opened for a remarkable school of art. When the Seleucid and Bactrian Greeks came back early in the second century BC from the strongholds they had retained further west, they added images of their gods and great men and the classic proportions of Greek sculpture to the oriental iconography of the Mauryans. Thus was born Graeco-Buddhist Gandhara art, undoubtedly the Frontier's greatest contribution to aesthetics.

This tradition was carried on for the next six hundred years, during which one wave after another of wild tribesmen, Scythians, Sakas, Parthians, Kushans, Ephthalites (White Huns), etc., poured out of Central Asia onto the Frontier. They drove away the Greeks, laid waste the fields and burned the cities, but embraced the art, bringing to it a charming penchant for the depiction of daily life, for example a tiny stone figure of a soldier with the chicken he has just stolen under his arm. In fact most of the Gandhara sculpture extant today is from their time.

The Ephthalites were overwhelmed by a combined force of Sassanian Persians and newly-emerging Turks at the end of the sixth century AD. The new rulers lasted a scant fifty years, withdrawing in the first half of the sixth century under pressure in the West from the Byzantine Emperor Heraclitus and the rise of Islam among the Arabs. (The Holy Prophet [PBUH] died in AD 632.) The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang on his visit in AD 644 found the Buddhist shrines and monasteries in bad repair and Brahminism reclaiming the minds of the people. For the next four hundred years local rulers, principally the Hindushahiya dynasty, held such control as there was.

It took that much time for Islam, already established in areas as far apart as Spain and Sindh, to reach the remote Frontier in full force and glory. But once established it never left.

It is hard to choose a single hero to give credit to for bringing Islam to the Frontier, but the honour most likely belongs to Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni (in east-central Afghanistan, not far from today's border with Pakistan). In the year AD 1000, in a battle close to Peshawar, Mahmud defeated the Hindushahi King Jaipal. A few years later he overwhelmed the combined forces of Jaipal's son Anandpal and his Rajput allies and established control over the Frontier. Undoubtedly there were Pathans with him on his frequent 'idol-smashing' raids into Hindu India between 1000 and 1025, forerunners of the many who in the next several centuries were to carve out for themselves kingdoms large and small in what they still refer to as 'Hindustan'.

Mahmud's descendants ruled for a hundred years but none of them had his strength and dynamism. Defeated by the great Seljuk Turkish Sultan Alp Arslan on one of his eastern excursions from Asia Minor, the Ghaznavids gave way to the tributary princes of nearby Ghor, one of whom, known as 'Jehansoz', the 'World-Burner', destroyed the city of Ghazni in 1150. Forty years later another Ghori, Mohammad, led an army all the way to conquer Delhi. After he was assassinated in his tent on an expedition back to the Indus, power in Delhi was seized by his Turkish slave Qutbuddin Aibek, who built the red sandstone Qutb Minar which still towers over the southern suburbs of that city.

Power had shifted to the East beyond the Indus, and amidst constant feuding among obscure groups of Central Asian warriors,

principally the Turkish Khaljis and the mainly Iranian Khwarezmis, the affluent and cultured civilization that had developed around Ghazni and extended into the Peshawar Valley deteriorated.

Its downfall was completed in the third decade of the thirteenth century. In response to an attack by the Khwarezm Shah on one of his caravans, Changez Khan, leader of the Mongol horde, swept down, destroyed Ghazni for the second time in seventy years, and gave the area to his son, Chughtai. It had still not recovered in 1398, a hundred and fifty years later, when the Tartar Timur repeated the performance, slaughtering the indigenous tribes and replacing their leaders with his own Mongols, by this time Muslims. According to local history (questioned by modern anthropologists), the result was today's Afghan Hazara tribe.

The Lodhi Sultans of Delhi (1451-1526) who came after the Turks paid little attention to the Frontier, despite their Afghan origins. Their rule was ended in 1526 at the Battle of Panipat near Delhi by a fourteenth-generation descendent of Changez Khan coming down from Central Asia. This was the first of the Great Mughals, Babur, with whose arrival, in Olaf Caroe's words, 'light breaks on the homelands of the Pathans.'

Babur inherited the fiefdom of Kabul and never tired of its delights. After conquering all of Hindustan he returned there and his simple tomb lies there today. In his memoirs, the *Babur-i-Nama*, he writes charmingly about his five campaigns on the Frontier: the fascination of camp-fires twinkling at night around Ali Masjid in the Khyber, where 'due to the beauty of the scene, every time I halt here, I take wine'; the joy of hunting rhinoceros near Swabi and Peshawar (he matched one against an elephant but it ran away); the plundering of Kohat 'about lunch-time'; the raising of a pillar of his foes' heads at Hangu and the accepting of submission from those still alive who came to him with grass in their mouths proclaiming, 'We are your cows'.

He mentions most of the names of tribes known today: Afridis, Orakzai, Mohmands, Turis, Bangash, Wazirs, and Mohammadzai. He married a Yusufzai woman from Mardan called Bibi Mubarika because he needed an ally among the tribes and promptly tucked her away in a fort in Bajaur while bestowing honours on her father, who went off to the wars with him.

Babur's idyll lasted only four years until he died, and in 1539 his gallant but unfortunate son Humayun lost the empire to a new challenger. The grandson of an Afghan who had come down to serve the Lodhi Sultans and obtained a rich *jagir* (land grant) in Bihar, one Farid, killed a tiger and became Sher Khan. According to legend, invited to a banquet by Babur, who criticized his table manners, he developed an undying hatred for the Mughals. After Babur's death, he organized the Afghans in India who had served the Lodhi Sultans, playing on their contempt for the delicate, Persianized Humayun. With victory he became Sher Shah, then, with the addition of the name of his own tiny tribe, the Sur, Sher Shah Suri.

Most of Sher Shah's activities for the next sixteen years were concentrated on consolidating his holdings east of the Indus. He established a reputation as a fiscal genius and 'hands-on' administrator. Some of the most beautiful buildings in Delhi are of his creation. Realizing the importance of transportation and communication, he built roads and garrisons to support his troops and probably deserves credit for the original Grand Trunk Road. If he did not penetrate very far into the Frontier, he laid down the model for what the Mughals, Sikhs and British were to do later.

In 1554, shortly after Sher Shah's death, his ineffectual sons killed each other off, and the almost forgotten Humayun came down again from Kabul at the head of an army and took everything all the way to Delhi. Two years later he too was dead, having fallen down the steps of the library in his palace. But this time the Mughals were there to stay—until 1848, when after the 'Sepoy Mutiny' the British abolished the by then degenerate dynasty.

What Humayun left behind, however, was a line of geniuses, the 'Great' Mughals Akbar, Jehangir, Shah Jehan, and Aurangzeb, whose intimate and intricate relations with the Frontier can be followed in detail in Caroe and numerous other authors. Suffice it to say here that from the Pathans' side the relationship ranged from one of respect and even co-operation under Akbar (who instituted the instrument of subsidies to control them), to one of hatred and revolt under Aurangzeb, to one of indifference and occasional raids, reprisals, and subsidies under the later emperors.

In the eighteenth century Mughal sovereignty yielded to brief but real power at the hands of the Turkoman Nadir Shah, who ruled from his saddle between 1739 and 1747, and the Afghan dynasty founded by Ahmad Shah Abdali, 'Dur-i-Durran' ('Pearl of Pearls', from which was derived the name of the last ruling family of Afghanistan). The Durrani in one form or another lasted well into the twentieth century in Kabul but held Peshawar only until 1818, when they lost it to the Sikhs who were expanding from the Punjab under Ranjit Singh, the only truly 'Indian' ruler since Asoka to wield power on the Frontier. So for the moment ends our history. The activities of the Sikhs and later the British are dealt with in other books.

It is the eight hundred years between Mahmud of Ghazni and Ranjit Singh that count most to the Pathans. Dynasties rose and fell, cities were built and destroyed but Islam always flourished. Frequent contact with the great centres of learning in Bukhara and Samarkand, and even Baghdad and Cairo, gave the people of the Frontier knowledge of the wider world of Islam. Long before the end of the period, society was entirely Muslim. This is important. To try to understand the Pathans without recourse to Islam is like interpreting the Irish or Italians without reference to Catholicism, Swedes and Norwegians without Lutheranism, or Sri Lankans and Thais as if there had never been a Lord Buddha.

To turn to the land in which all this history took place—on my later visits, I found little sign of change since I first saw it. The sketch map made by my late wife when a bride for the frontispiece of *The Way of the Pathans* could be used for this volume too. No deletions are necessary and only two additions: the Karakoram Highway to China, and Pakistan's capital of Islamabad. Neither existed in those days.

To me the Frontier in the late 1980s and early 1990s is very much the same as the one I knew in the 1950s. Some change there has been. So, without undue repetition of what can be found in other books—or even in my own—I take a few pages now to tell what seems to me important about the land and the people.

First of all, the area that I am reminiscing about centres on the Pakistan-Afghan border, commonly known as the Durand Line after the English official who demarcated it in 1893—to

the consternation of all Afghans, many Indians, and not a few Britons. In the north, among the mountains of truly Himalayan stature called the Pamir Knot, the border almost touches what was the Soviet Union (now Tajikistan) and does connect with China over the 16,000-foot Kunjerab Pass, a couple of hundred miles west of the Chinese city of Kashgar.

The North-West Frontier has been known as such for a century, first in British India and then in Pakistan (before that the land of the Pathans was called 'Yaghistan', 'the Land of the Unruled'). It ends in the south in high stony desert in the Pakistani province of Balochistan, still a good way from where the Pakistan border changes to one with Iran on its way down to the Indian Ocean.

The central area stretching between Mardan and Tank, bounded by the Afghan border on the west and the Indus River on the east, comprises two sections, the North-West Frontier Province next to the Indus, and Tribal Territory along the Durand Line—where the fiercest Pathan clans live, often on both sides of the international boundary.

Despite fertile valleys watered by the Indus, Kabul and Swat Rivers, a few additional small rivers, and some major new dam and canal systems, the roughly 50,000 square miles of the Frontier are mostly barren and unproductive. Rainfall is modest. Except for pockets in Hazara District and Khurram Agency, nowhere does it exceed twenty inches a year. Outside the northern mountains, flora is minimal. A few trees adjacent to a village (often in the process of being destroyed by goats) are a treasure. In the absence of nature's bounty, people have had to live off other people (caravan raiding and inter-village cattle and land stealing) or from subsidies paid to them by governments eager to keep the peace.

The Frontier is remote. From the south there are daily flights between Karachi (Pakistan's main entrepot) and Peshawar and a few additional flights through connections in Islamabad and Quetta. The thousand miles can also be covered by train, bus or car, but it takes a long time and a tough skin.

To the north-east, the road to China has been open for more than a decade, but you have to cross a 16,000-foot pass. The traditional easy road to Kashmir and India through Abbottabad and Muzaffargarh has been closed for forty-five years, since the Pathans swept up it in an almost successful attempt to take

Srinagar shortly after Partition and Independence.

To the west and north-west, for a while in the 1960s and 1970s, you could go into and through Afghanistan on good roads, built co-operatively, if not jointly, by the Russians and Americans, from the Frontier to Kabul and on to Termez on the Oxus River, entrance to the USSR. But in the 1980s and 1990s to try to do so is to risk being shot or blown up by one or another warring faction.

As for the people, the barrenness and remoteness of the land they inhabit, like their history, explains much about their characteristics, but it is often difficult to pin them down as to numbers and identities. A *khel* (clan) of one tribe may have the same name as a separate major tribe. There are true nomads, tens of thousands of whom may turn up at one time in one district or agency and at another somewhere else. Seasonal migrations are also common, albeit generally within a confined area. Reasonably reliable statistics exist only for the North-West Frontier Province itself. In 1954 its population was given in the official NWFP Yearbook as 3,252,747, with an additional 3,466,356 people estimated for Tribal Territory and the then existing states. By 1994, this total of 6,719,103 had become an estimated 21,000,000.

Probably the best way to try to quantify is to begin with the Pushtu-speaking portion of the population. After long efforts in the 1950s to come up with a hard number, I gave up and settled for an estimate of eleven million—probably the largest tribal society in the world. I guessed that about half of these, generally called Pathans, lived on the Pakistani side of the border and about half on the Afghan side, where they refer to themselves as Afghans, Pukhtuns, and Pushtuns (not to be confused with the additional five to ten million Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkomans, etc., who are also Afghan in citizenship).

My current 'guestimate' is that the total number of Pushtu-speakers has increased by a million or two, and it is clear that with more than three million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and a lesser number in Iran, the proportions on either side of the border have shifted at least temporarily. These events have had an effect also on the ethnic ratios in the countries concerned. The percentage of the population speaking Pushtu in Pakistan has grown (especially in Balochistan Province), while that in Afghanistan has declined.

Then, if one continues to strive for precision, there is the problem of how to add in the numerous Kohistani clans of the high mountains in the north and the Punjabi-speakers along the eastern edge of the area. And what is to be done about those Pushtu-speaking people, Sayyids, Mians, Chaudhris, Qizilbash, Gujars, Awans, Peshawaris, and even Hindus and Sikhs, who insist as vigorously as their Pathan hosts that they are not Pathans?

Interestingly, concerning the last of the above, I noted in later visits one change. After Partition many of the Hindus and Sikhs who had served as accountants, mechanics and such in the tribal area left Pakistan. A significant minority remained, but for the next few decades they were all but invisible, never leaving the villages where their Pathan *maliks* (chiefs) could protect them from the almost universal hostility generated by Pakistan's troubles with India.

Now readily-recognizable Sikhs, young men as well as old, can be seen on the streets of Peshawar and the provincial towns, and of the tourists from India to the Frontier, perhaps the most numerous are Sikhs. The cause for the change, one suspects, lies in the Sikhs' own increasingly acute problems within India. That 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' is a principle long recognized in this part of the world. Even so, it is heartening to see that in a single generation bitter enemies can sometimes become cautious friends.

Faced with realities like these on my latter-day rounds, I came again to the conclusion that trying to count Pathans was not the best way to understand them. Numbers had meaning, of course. That the Afridis, Mohmands, Wazirs, Mahsuds, Yusufzai, and Khattaks were the biggest tribes accounted in part for their reputation and power, but attitudes and relationships signified more. Here things didn't seem to have changed very much since I constructed my own lay-out of tribal structure forty years ago.

To me, the most important fact is that the Pathans are basically the same now as when I first met them. They live in the same places and share the same values. They remain concerned above all with religion, land, lineage and honour (*pukhtunwali*). Their conviction that they are descended from the tribes of Israel and their devotion to Islam are unshaken. Their fierce dedication

to individuality and self-sufficiency has not wavered. Global tranquility would undoubtedly suffer if the whole world adopted their way of life, but they are still a good thing to have with us in the late twentieth century.



Afridis Armed with AK-47s

Chapter 3

Still Guarding the Passes

The Afridis are perhaps the best known of the Pathan tribes. Their territory centres on the inaccessible Tirah Valley, the sanctity of which has been breached only once, in 1898 when the British sent a 40,000-man punitive expedition into it. A few miles to the north is the Khyber Pass, one of the best-known places on earth, filled over the millennia by a host of cosmopolitan travellers, from Darius the Persian's royal satraps to today's busloads of European and Japanese tourists. Not far to the south is the Darra, site of numerous arms factories, which with primitive equipment produce copies of sophisticated weapons. When I first saw these in the early 1950s, the British Enfield .303 bolt-action rifle was just giving way to the American .30 calibre gas-operated carbine. On my most recent visit to Darra in 1993, the AK-47 was the weapon of choice, but the workshops are also turning out mortars, small artillery pieces, and the most ferocious locally-designed automatic shotguns I have ever seen. Those perennial favourites, single shot .22 calibre pen guns and cane guns, are still available, but one young man showed me the prototype of a combined surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missile that he was working on. He hopes to have a production model ready soon.

There are almost half a million Afridis divided into eight *khels* (clans): Adam Khel, Aka Khel, Kamar Khel, Kamar Khel, Kuki Khel, Malikdin Khel, Zakka Khel, and Sipah. All live in the immediate vicinity of the Khyber Pass. As demonstrated by their arms factories, their first business is war. Their men have served as mercenaries under every conqueror of India since the Mughals. They have a major interest in the carrying trade, originally herds of camels, horses and mules, now fleets of gaily-painted trucks. They are consummate smugglers. Despite a

reputation for impiety, *mullahs* (priests) tend to have more influence among them than among most of the other tribes.

Such experts as Olaf Caroe and Aurel Stein suggest that the Afridis may be the original inhabitants of the Gandhara area rather than an integral part of the great family of clans allegedly descended from the tribes of Israel. A people very like them living in the same location, the Aparidai, are noted in Herodotus. Be that as it may, the sixteenth century Pathan poet, Khushal Khan Khattak, devoted considerable time to writing of their unsavoury character, (e.g., 'My carnal heart is an Afridi, who cares nothing for religion. Its good thoughts are few, and it is very much given to wickedness.')

The Afridis also have a reputation for a sense of humour. One old tale, possibly true, has a travelling *pir* (saint) upbraiding them centuries ago by pointing out that they did not have a single shrine-tomb of a holy man in all their territory. They promptly killed him and since then have had their shrine. Olaf Caroe, British Governor of the North-West Frontier Province, got a taste of their thinking in 1947. Trying to bring order out of the chaos of Partition, he was hearing the Muslim League, the Congress, and a score of other organizations making high moral arguments for their roles in the new state of Pakistan. When the Afridis' turn came, they told him simply: 'We own the Khyber Pass and will bargain on that basis!'

I had visited the Khyber often in the old days and wanted to see if it had changed. In the mid-1980s, a good while before the Russians gave up in Afghanistan (and when few thought that the Mujahiddin could ever make them do so), an old friend, a retired General who had once commanded the Peshawar Brigade, took me out again. He picked me up in a venerable Mercedes, dismissed his driver, and got behind the wheel.

'No *bunderbust*,' (fuss, ceremony) he announced. 'Just a couple of old coots rubber-necking for their lost youth.'

There was plenty to look at and much change for me to wonder at. On the edge of the Cantonment, where once barbed wire concertinas were rolled across the road at night to guard the route to the Khyber, there was now only a traffic light. The road beyond it, which in former times stretched away to the Khyber unpopulated except for the University of Peshawar and the village of Takalbala, was now a heavily-built-up extension of the town.

Opposite the airport we had to stop before I could discern in the built-up area the remains of the long runway that once caused secrecy-shrouded road closings while American U-2s, including the ill-fated one flown by Francis Gary Powers, took off on their high-altitude missions over the Soviet Union. Nearby, a row of roadside stands manned by stalwart Afghan refugees in turbans and bandoliers offered for sale various kinds of honey, gathered from the blossoms of jasmine, guava, orange, lemon, pomegranate and poppy. We got a jar of orange to take back to the General's wife.

'Damn fellows are great at handling bees,' he remarked. 'Make much better honey than our own chaps. Price has dropped fifty per cent since they showed up!'

As we arrived at Fort Jamrud, the official entrance to the Khyber, the General, my friend and escort (not himself of Pathan blood, as he reminded me), ducked into the Assistant Political Agent's office 'to let him know that we'll be up in the Pass for a couple of hours.'

'You can wait in the car,' he told me, 'or, look, there's some of your friends over there. Why don't you go talk to them?'

I recognized the bench outside a low, whitewashed adobe building where a handful of young tribesmen were sitting. In earlier days it had usually been occupied by a handsome aged Kuki Khel Afridi who resembled nothing so much as an Old Testament prophet. Cynically suggested by some to be a hireling of the Tourist Bureau, he posed for pictures while regaling visitors with dramatic tales of Frontier history. One such, a vivid piece of socio-economic history revolving around the Afridis' progress from robbing camel caravans to owning fleets of trucks, was imbibed and repeated almost verbatim by the distinguished historian, Arnold Toynbee, in one of his weighty volumes.

The venerable Afridi was long since gone. One of the young men now in possession had fragmentary English and identified the group as Shinwaris from near Jalalabad in Afghanistan. Pointing at the AK-47 rifles and the bundles of ammunition clips they all carried openly now that they were back in tribal territory, he said they were waiting for some more of their clan to come up from Peshawar. Then they were going home.

They had the guns with them, he pointed out. The other group was bringing food. Meanwhile, the Assistant Political Agent

provided them with tea and *nan* (bread) and had allowed them to stay on the bench. They had been here three days and expected to have to wait two or three more. Asked what they would do when they got home, they said simply: 'Kill Russians and traitors.'

How long had they been in Pakistan?

Two years. A Pakistani 'friend' had given them the rifles and two ammunition clips each. They had worked on a sugar-cane plantation near Mardan to earn rupees to buy more ammunition. When they had enough money, they had gone to the Darra for the bullets. Now they were ready to cross the border again.

Would they be able to kill enough Russians and traitors to win their jihad and recover their country?

Yes. That was why they had to work to buy many bullets.

What would they do then?

The spokesman had been betrothed before he left Afghanistan. His father had been killed while he was away. He had heard that the girl and her father were still alive. He would have an orchard and a melon patch from his father. Perhaps his wife's father would give him some more land.

Had the Russians harmed his land?

Yes, they had 'poisoned' it and killed many animals. When he had killed the Russians, he would clean everything up.

I could elicit few specifics on the 'poison', but finally concluded that the incident involved, not chemical warfare, but some kind of 'scuttle and burn' raid on the village along a pattern established for Frontier reprisal by the British a century before, but with the added inhumanity of land mines and booby-traps left behind. Some of these, according to the tribesman, were disguised as cooking pots and children's toys.

The General returned to announce that we were 'checked in' to the Khyber but only for as far as Michni Rock, a few miles short of the actual Afghan border at Torkham. The latter was 'closed' today, but, never mind, we'd be able to see it from the Rock. The Shinwaris politely refused the offer of a ride up to Michni, and the two 'old crocks' in the venerable Mercedes were off again.

We drove slowly up the thirty-mile-long Khyber. The physical geography had not changed much. The abandoned pickets which dotted every hilltop had crumbled a little more. In places curves

in the concrete road had been straightened out and an extra lane added. The Afridis strolling along the roadside or sitting in tea houses admiring 'their property', the Khyber, looked a little more prosperous. A few new houses and compounds had been built—of adobe in the traditional style with blank walls, watchtowers, and small enfiladed entrances.

Qadam, the place of the Buddha's footprint, where the Pass begins to climb, is still a pilgrimage spot. Shagai Fort, flying its Pakistani and military flags, remains a massive presence above sheer cliff-faces in which the insignia of the British regiments which served there are deeply cut (and freshly painted). Just before Landi Kotal, at the mid-point in the Pass, the ancient landmark Buddhist Sphola Stupa dominates all around it, as it has for two thousand years. It was here in 1951, in return for a few rupees to a small boy, that I acquired my first piece of Gandhara Graeco-Buddhist art, a small damaged terracotta head—which I still have.

In Landi Kotal, the Afridi metropolis of the Khyber, we did a quick tour of the 'Smugglers' Bazaar', where the shops were piled as high as ever with the latest luxury consumer goods to be had both from stock and on order. My impression that the shops were fewer in number now than they had been a dozen years earlier was confirmed by a merchant. For one thing, the Afridi explained, several new 'smugglers' bazaars' had opened elsewhere in tribal territory in places where 'police and soldiers are not right next door.' And the fighting in Afghanistan delayed delivery time of articles from the Persian Gulf. His last shipment of refrigerators had had to come on camels all the way along the Indian Ocean coast and up through Kandahar.

We stopped in for a cup of tea at the renowned Khyber Rifles Mess, my fifth or sixth memorable visit there. It certainly didn't seem to have changed. The stones that marked the paths glistened brightly in the sun, still freshly whitewashed weekly. Inside, faded photographs, war trophies, and the Mess silver gleamed somberly against dark wood panelling.

The major who hosted us was warmly hospitable but seemed nervous and rushed. We had scarcely sat down when the tea appeared. We had barely finished it when he was on his feet again leading us to the door. He said something about the

Colonel being waiting, but the Colonel never appeared. I mentally attributed his anxiety to the presence of a retired General.

Back on the road westward we began to drop down the roughly two thousand feet that separate the summit of the Pass from the low points at each end. Gazing out over the gradually-widening defile and stopping here and there to talk, I found that the Afridis were the same, serene and self-confident. But many others were passing up and down, Mujahiddin like those I had talked to at Jamrud, Khyber Rifles troops, and a small detachment of Pakistani Army Regulars.

The forts, pickets, blank-walled villages, fortified tunnels and bridges and inevitable armed men were the same too—and so were the ‘dragons’ teeth’ tank traps set up against a German invasion in World War II. But on my earlier visits, the Khyber had had a solid feel of peace and stability under its aura of romance and excitement. It reminded one of a huge electric train lay-out from childhood or of a gigantic three-dimensional model of a university or industrial complex—accurate to a millimeter but unreal, something to play with and enjoy but not for real use. Now a strain hung over it, the heady, deadly flavour of war when men and their creations expected to die or be destroyed.

Michni Rock, several hundred feet of perpendicular stone located just where the terrain begins to flatten out to the high plains of Afghanistan, appeared ahead. ‘Far as we can go this time,’ said the general, and we got out to stretch our legs.

Heels slammed together a few paces away, and a tall slim soldier stepped out from The Rock’s shadow to offer a salute, to which the General responded easily and I clumsily. The Colonel Commander of the Khyber Rifles had indeed been waiting.

Chatting of how his uncle and I had once known each other and of the days when he had served with the General’s son, he led us on a steep path up The Rock. We ended on a ledge well up on the west face. There, under a *shamiana* (canvas canopy), overstuffed chairs awaited. In front of them, set up on a carpet, was a sand table reproducing in miniature the roads, trees, hills and valleys that stretched to the horizon in front of us.

It was unthinkable that any visitor to the Khyber would be uninterested in military disposition, and the Colonel picked up

a pointer. He indicated on the model the locations of the Pakistani installations at Torkham, the line of trees on a rise beyond it that marked the actual Durand Line (the border), a scattering of tents on a ridge off to the right ('our forward posts'), a crumbling mud fort a hundred yards further east ('their command post for directing helicopters: AN-12 gun-ships, Russian pilots mostly'), and a gorge which hid a Pakistani artillery battery. ('Haven't had to use it yet.')

As the briefing began, a natty sergeant of almost identical height with his Colonel appeared and took up a position at the edge of the rock ridge. He carried an old-fashioned cavalry lance and in a series of sharp military turns used it to point out the actual terrain features the Colonel designated on the mock-up.

After the Colonel had finished and sat down to general conversation, the sergeant suddenly coughed and clicked his heels. He held the lance pointed at a distant hill where a string of figures on foot could be discerned moving rapidly westward.

'Mujahiddin trail over there,' said the Colonel, and binoculars were handed round. 'Poor devils,' he added. 'They keep going back whenever they can scrape up a few rounds of ammo.' He scanned the sky. 'They're lucky today. No AN-12s up.'

I asked if the Russians or their Afghan support troops ever came into Pakistan.

The Colonel thought a moment. There were regular fighter-aircraft flights up and down on the Afghan side of the border, he said, and there had been a few cases of their violating Pakistani air space. He'd heard from the Joint Intelligence Directorate recently that Soviet ground troops had come to Loe Dacca, ten miles or so east of Torkham, to try to cut off the Mujahiddin.

'But I don't think they'll try to come through here,' he went on. 'Come around and have a look.'

We walked halfway around the Rock until we were facing east, back toward Peshawar. As I'd noticed four decades earlier on the separate legs of my first round-trip bus ride from Peshawar to Kabul, the Khyber looks very different when viewed from the west rather than the east. On the way up, heading west, one passes the forts and fortification but has to crane the neck and peer up and around shoulders of hills to look at them. On the way down, facing east, from Afghanistan to Pakistan, they glower down on the traveller, row after row and tier after

tier of them. There is hardly a hundred square feet anywhere in the Pass that isn't covered by one or more lines of fire. Looking back from Michni Rock, we could see the defences stretched out for miles. It is hard to imagine anyone reckless or foolish enough to try to fight his way eastward.

'No,' said the Colonel pensively. 'I don't think the Russians will try to come down. The Germans didn't in World War II. Neither did the Japanese. The Chinese don't want to. Babur the Mughal made it this way but that was five hundred years ago. The British went up to Kabul twice, but they didn't get back with much, once with only one man left out of ten thousand.'

'Please do not misunderstand me,' he went on with a grin. 'I have trained with the American Army and I have the greatest respect for your forces, but, if it were you rather than the Russians who were in Afghanistan, I don't think you would try to come down either.'

Our drive back to Peshawar was mostly silent. The lowering sun was directly behind us and its rays outlined every *sangar* (bulwark), cul-de-sac and firing platform looking down on us. As we slowed to 'check out' of the Khyber at Jamrud with the massive Sikh fort glowing orange in the setting sun, I remarked, 'They were real nice to us up there, weren't they? That was quite a performance at Michni Rock, wasn't it?'

'Oh, yes. Good show,' replied the General, 'but no more than a former Commander of the Peshawar Brigade and an old Frontier hand had a right to expect.'

When I and my son Bill visited the Khyber in 1993, things had changed again. There was no *bunderbust* at all this time. We simply stopped by the office of the Khyber Political Agent in Peshawar, picked up a *khassadar* (militiaman) to accompany us and a permit to go all the way to Torkham, rented a car and drove up. Little groups of Mujahiddin still plodded westward through the Pass. Refugees from the civil war were still coming eastward, including a large band of Sikhs fleeing the intensified fighting in and around Kabul, but the atmosphere of the Khyber had pretty much reverted to normal. Another round in the 'Great Game' was over. The Russian Bear had been foiled again. Pakistan was safe.

When we got back to Peshawar, we voted on 'the most fascinating new sight' of our day's trip. Bill, who had last seen

the Khyber more than twenty years before when he was seven years old, opted for the smugglers' bazaar, the 'New Bara,' not far from the entrance to the Pass, and the gun and hashish shops clustered near Fort Jamrud. (He bought a bottle of fancy French after-shave lotion at the former and limited himself to a combination switch-blade knife and brass knuckles at the latter). I chose Ayub Afridi's establishment near Landi Kotal.

A virtual Pathan Joseph P. Kennedy, Ayub is one of the richest men in Pakistan, a thorn in the side of everyone in the traditional Afridi leadership, the Pakistani Government, and the American Drug Enforcement Agency. About sixty years old, he rose from obscurity to build a twenty-acre palace-fortress fronting on the main Khyber road. Surrounded by a high wall of reinforced concrete topped with barbed wire and steel gun turrets, the grounds are lavish, with grass lawns, pools, and rose gardens in an area where water is scant and precious. The main house and the mosque are panelled and floored with fine woods and marbles. Out-buildings are modern and substantial. As many as five hundred retainers live permanently in the compound, and their arsenal is the envy of every Afridi in the Pass.

Ayub wields considerable power as a Member of Parliament, even serving at one time as a Member of the National Assembly, but, as with the late Boston magnate, it is hard to say where his wealth comes from. In June 1993 he told the *New York Times* in an interview that all he did was import crockery from Afghanistan and tyres from Japan. Some have their doubts about that. No one has ever pinned a heroin charge on him, but the *New York Times* correspondent noted that he was a target of both the Pakistani Narcotics Control Board and the US DEA, and that he was convicted in 1985 of one charge of smuggling a small amount of hashish while another charge involving 17.5 tons of the same product was dismissed.

Another Afridi *malik* (chief), who understandably chose not to be identified, described Ayub to me: 'Our best-known people used to be warriors, poets, and religious leaders. Now we have Ayub. He buys for a little and sells for a lot—everything! If he isn't making enough money that way, he robs—anything!'

Officialdom would undoubtedly agree with this characterization. But I thought I detected a tinge of admiration in the *malik's* voice. After all, how else should an Afridi behave?

In 1969, when I was Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy in Pakistan and the Spains last lived there as a family, we had several exciting visits to the Afridis' 'other' pass, the Darra, between Peshawar and Kohat. Weapons were displayed and demonstrated. I was given a 'one of a kind' long-barrelled .32 revolver with my name engraved on it. Sons Steve (11) and Bill (7) were shown cakes of raw opium and hashish but sternly lectured that it was 'bad stuff', not for children or foreigners. Impressed, they settled for a gift handful of stationery from a shop. The letterhead proclaimed 'Best Afridi Arms and Hashish Store'. They used it to titillate their grade-school chums when they returned to Washington.

Naturally, when we came back in 1993, Bill (now aged 30) had to see his old friends at the 'Best Store' again. On our first effort we forgot that you had to have a permit to stop in the narrow strip of Afridi tribal territory that crosses the road between Peshawar and Kohat and a vigilant scout wouldn't let us get out of the car. Our second try was equally frustrating. We got a permit easily enough at the political agent's office and were assigned the usual accompanying *khassadar*. He was nervous and irritable and wouldn't let us talk to anyone. (Our driver later explained that the newly-assigned Political Agent had sent the 'wrong kind' of Afridi, a Zakka Khel, into Adam Khel territory and the man was afraid for himself rather than us.)

For our third try I proposed to go and see the Home Secretary to ask for greater latitude. Bill had another idea. He and two California friends with him were all journalists and had got to know a young Pathan member of the profession in Peshawar. This friend knew everyone and everything about the Darra. He would take us out. Again we got our permit and our *khassadar* (this time the right kind of Afridi) at the Political Agent's office. It was 'roses, roses, all the way' at the Darra.

We were greeted by a prominent *malik* of the gun-making fraternity, formally introduced and our bona fides vouched for. He took us through the shops. Prices and models of weapons were explained to us. A Russian-made AK-47 cost the most; a Chinese-made one, less, a Darra-made one was cheaper still. Pen guns were \$10, cane guns \$20. Reflecting the Pathans' love of guns for their own sake, one shop displayed a de luxe, chrome-

plated specimen of a classic American Colt. It cost almost \$2,000. Several potential customers were saving up for it.

Next we toured our host's factory. Men and boys from eight to eighty sat on a dirt floor turning and perforating barrels, carving stocks, and assembling trigger mechanisms for AK-47s.

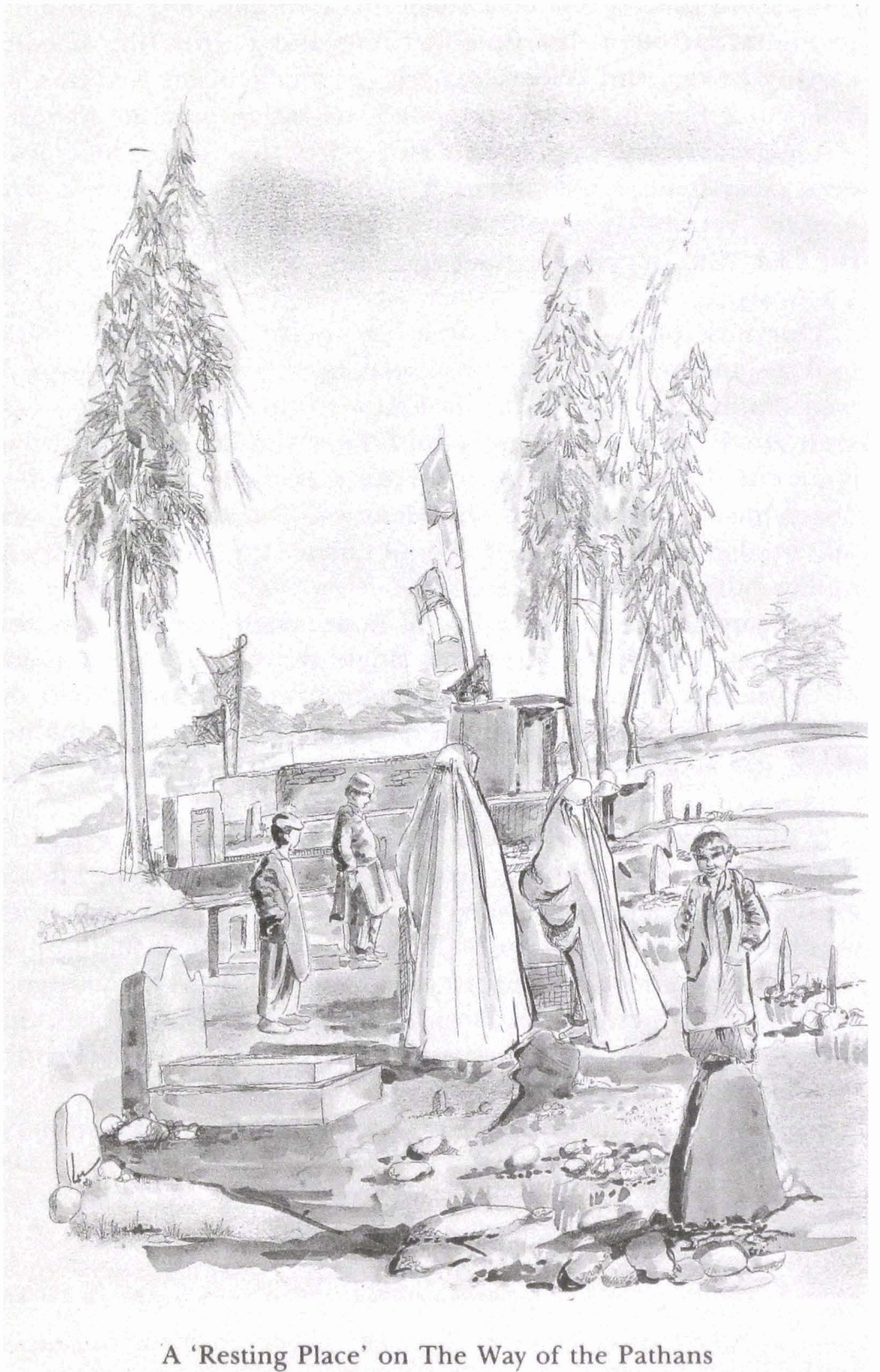
For our benefit, one lad opened the trigger case he had just put together and slapped it. Tiny parts flew out. Then, with eyes closed, he reassembled it in a matter of minutes. The exercise reminded me of what I had been forced to learn for the M-1 rifle during my long-ago days in basic training in the US Army.

Our host picked up a couple of newly-finished AK-47s and took us to the roof of his house nearby. As with the tops of most Pathan houses, it was designed so that one could not be seen on it. However, one could hear, and it soon became apparent that test-firing into the air was going on atop half a dozen other buildings in the vicinity. During an occasional lull in the noise I fancied I could hear the thump of spent bullets falling back to earth.

We were each given a clip of ammunition, and, under the *malik's* careful tutelage, fired first single shots, then on automatic when the rifle fired a steady round or two a second, then on rapid fire during which the whole clip emptied in the twinkling of an eye. We emptied our cameras almost as quickly, taking pictures of ourselves playing at being Afridis.

With an appointment awaiting back in Peshawar, we had to fight off the *malik's* urgent invitation to stay for lunch, but we took with us a few empty brass cartridge cases as souvenirs (they were confiscated weeks later by Karachi airport security authorities when our bags were gone through as we were leaving Pakistan.) Somehow we forgot entirely to try to find the 'Best Store', the supposed purpose of the expedition, but we went back fully satisfied with our adventure.

It proved that when you do things right, the Afridis can make your efforts more than worthwhile.



A 'Resting Place' on The Way of the Pathans

Chapter 4

The Way of the Pathans

That the Pushtu word *pukhtunwali* translates well into English as 'the way of the Pathans' is universally agreed.

That *pukhtunwali* has long been established is also clear. The Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone, in the first English-language writing on the Frontier, uses the word in his *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* published in 1815.

As far as I have been able to discover, no one has been able to trace its origins back to a single time, person, and place, in the way so much of the Christian world's law can be connected to the *Digesta Iustiniani Augusti* set down on 30 September, AD 533, in Constantinople.

My own guess, and it is no more than that, is that the vigorous, ethnocentric *pukhtunwali* emerged in the early seventeenth century (the time of the great Pushtu poet, Khushal Khan Khattak) as a deliberate alternative to the softer, cosmopolitan *mughalwali*, 'the Mughal Way' of Akbar and his immediate successors, to reaffirm not only a more orthodox view of Islam but the individuality and uniqueness of the tribes.

We are still left, however, with two questions: What is *pukhtunwali*: law, customs, manners or mind-set? And what are its subjects: criminal, civil, or social?

I opt for all seven, and perhaps this is why talking about *pukhtunwali* is so complicated.

It is law inasmuch as it is enforced by *maliks* and *jirgas* (officials and representatives) and was accepted as such by the British Frontier Crimes Regulations. It is custom insofar as every Pathan knows what to do or not do under it in the circumstances of daily life. It is manners because a 'true *khan*-like' Pathan never departs from it. It is mind-set because all Pathans accept it.

It is criminal because it deals with murder and injury. It is

civil because it has provision for inheritance, theft and adultery. It is social because it sets standards for everyday behaviour.

It is, I might add, as ancient as the Old Testament in its concern for 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. Yet in its constant emphasis, as Caroe puts it, 'on the satisfaction of the aggrieved rather than the punishment of the aggressor' ('All crime is a tort!'), it is as modern as the latest interest of Western law in 'victims' rights' and liberal sympathy for the idea that society is collectively responsible for the actions of ghetto products in 'a world they never made'.

It is entwined in a series of abstract concepts set forth, in more detail than anywhere else in English, in a pair of thirty-year-old books called *Afghanistan* presided over by Donald N. Wilbur of Princeton and published by The Human Relations Area Files of Yale University in 1956 and 1962, and in *Millenium and Charisma Among Pathans* by Cambridge Professor Akbar S. Ahmed. Yet it can be concerned about the most minute details of daily life, e.g., the immemorial diktat that Orakzai traders from the village of Darband, near Hangu on the edge of the Tirah, can go into the sacrosanct Afridi Valley only on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays without becoming *hamsayas* (dependents) of the Afridis.

Tureh, the literal meaning of which in Pushtu is 'sword', was personalized and exalted in the songs of the seventeenth century warrior poet Khushal Khan Khattak to mean individual bravery and steadfastness in war. As he put it, 'There is either dependence on One God or on *tureh*. Nothing is accomplished by talk and assemblies.' The sentiment can still often be heard in the tribal areas of the Frontier.

Nang, *ghayrat*, or *izzat*, personal and collective honour, is another fundamental principle. So is *Ahd*, living up to promises.

But what are the nature and contents of *pukhtunwali*?

Jehanzeb, the last Wali of Swat, told the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth, (*The Last Wali of Swat*) that it was just 'a matter of old-fashioned honour...of *khan*-like qualities'. In speaking of Abdul Ghaffar Khan's decision at Partition to remain loyal to the Congress Party, he added, 'That again is *pukhtunwali*; if a Pathan makes a mistake, he is stuck with it.'

Miangul Abdul Wadud Badshah Sahib, Jehanzeb's father and the founder of the State, was more explicit in his autobiography

(*The Story of Swat*). He said *pukhtunwali* is 'the name given to the valour, sense of honour, and *lex non scripta* of the nation...hospitality, generosity, bravery, truthfulness, straightforwardness, keeping of a promise, patronage of the weak, giving of shelter to all including enemies, moral courage in claiming one's rights, sacrificing one's life for personal as well as national honour, dying in the name of religion, and a number of other desirable attitudes and worthy traditions.'

Away back in 1815, Elphinstone described 'the *Pooshtoonwalee*, or usage of the Afghauns,' as 'a rude system of customary law, founded on principles such as one would suppose to have prevailed before the institution of civil government'. He notes that, 'It is every man's right and duty to do himself justice and to revenge his own injuries,' and that, '*Jirgas* are more rarely employed in ascertaining guilt than in judging of the circumstances justifying the offence and in determining compensation to the injured party.'

In a fascinating two-hundred-year-old footnote, the high-born English gentleman comments: 'The Afghaun notions on this subject are illustrated by those of our own nation on the practice of duelling, which is only a generous and well-regulated mode of private revenge.' (*Pukhtunwali*, it may be noted, has lasted longer than the *Code Duello*.)

About the tenets of *pukhtunwali*, Elphinstone, as most writers after him, is specific about *badal* (revenge). He gives numerous examples of compulsory hospitality, *melmastia*, without actually naming it. Travelling in the grand manner of a seventeenth century aristocrat, he hardly notices *nanawati*, the right of sanctuary, though it is implied here and there in his *Account*.

Most later nineteenth century writers followed Elphinstone's example. Charles Masson, the pseudo-American, produced a three-volume *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan and the Panjab* in 1842. English Captain John Wood did *A Journey to the Source of the River Oxus* in 1837. Both accounts are full of examples of *badal*, *melmastia* and *nanawati*, but these are never named, the authors preferring to comment on the nature of the Pathans rather than on their beliefs.

The trend continued among British writers until World War I. Such authors as Bellew, Biddulph, Curzon, Edwardes, Holdich, Pennell, Ridgway and Warburton contributed enormously to

knowledge of the Pathans but dealt lightly, if at all, with *pukhtunwali*. As Dr T.L. Pennell, the medical missionary who spent sixteen years among the Pathans, put it in 1913, 'What honour consists in, an Afghan would be puzzled to tell you.'

Official reports of the Government of Great Britain and the Government of India paid little or no attention to the subject. Even the numerous handbooks for recruiting Pathans written by and for military officers ignored it.

As C. Collin Davies, the Oxford don, put it in 1932 in *The Problem of the North-West Frontier*, the first modern book on the Frontier: 'Few writers have dealt fairly with the Pathan. With rare exceptions all have depicted him as a villain of the deepest dye, treacherous, pitiless, vindictive, and bloodthirsty... "Afghan *be iman*", "The faithless Afghan",' (as the Gurkhas called them.)

Davies gave *pukhtunwali* its due, dividing it into three main tenets, which have persisted in the literature ever since: *badal*, revenge; *melmastia*, hospitality; and *nanawati*, submission or asylum. In the 1950s I asked as many Pathans as I could about this definition and they all confirmed it. In the 1980s and 1990s, I asked again and they said the same thing in almost the same words, although one cynic added, not altogether untruthfully, that the best *badal* is 'to have your servant shoot your enemy in the back'.

They confirmed also the main instruments of enforcement of *pukhtunwali*. One is the *jirga*, or assembly, which among the Mahsuds consists of every adult male in the tribe and among the Yusufzai and Mohmands tends to be limited to the *maliks*, or chiefs, of *khels* (sub-sections of the main tribe). Another is the decision of a *malik* or elder. The ultimate is the individual Pathan himself, who feels few inhibitions if his personal honour requires him to defy the judgment of *jirga* or *malik*.

Handicapped by having to communicate through an interpreter and to be discreet on the delicate subject of religion, I probed on the role of *mullahs*, priests, in *pukhtunwali*. One thing seemed to come out fairly clearly. The *mullahs*, unless endowed with their own high degree of *tureh* and *nang*, seem to have little to do with decision-making, albeit they do have influence on such matters as certifying a legitimate Jihad (holy war) or resolving questions of personal piety.

No one would admit that *pukhtunwali* was anything other than the Pathan part of the law of Islam, but all conceded that Islam had other laws too. To the question as to what happened if these other laws of Islam and *pukhtunwali* conflicted, I got only smiles and frowns.

There was recognition of most of the subtle or specific supplements to the three great commandments which Western writers have uncovered over the years. Yes, *nanawati* had two parts. One is sheer refuge and asylum. You had to give it to anyone who seeks your protection, even to sending a *badragga* (escort) with him to see him safe home or to his chosen destination.

But there is also the case of someone who has no home or destination. He comes in, if an enemy, to offer apology and submission; if unknown, he seeks welfare as well as protection. You cannot turn him out, but you can put him to work as a *hamsaya* (domestic, bodyguard, mechanic, accountant, etc.). If he refuses or fails at that, you can get rid of him by any convenient means.

Tor (literally 'black'), matters concerning infringement of female modesty, which first came to my attention in Geoffrey Moorhouse's *To the Frontier* was familiar. So was *sharmana*, shame-money, compensation for deprivation of honour in a case arising over a woman, mentioned by Sir Olaf Caroe in one of his strangely few references to *pukhtunwali*.

The venerable English-speaking *malik* whom I was questioning on this sensitive subject didn't seem very interested in establishing the place of *tor* in *pukhtunwali* as equal or inferior to *badal*, *melmastia* and *nanawati*. 'We don't have much trouble about that any more, since the British left, Sahib,' he said, dismissing the subject.

At first the idea that the traditional trinity of causes for *badal* on the Frontier, *zar* (gold), *zanna* (women) and *zamin* (land), had lost a member struck me as unlikely. And, as far as I knew, the British did not have a particular reputation for randiness, at least in their latter days. Then I realized what the *malik* had in mind.

In the later days of Empire, British soldiers and officials were under increased pressure from top authority to respect native customs. The Pathans learned the value of a *burqa* (head to foot veil) as concealment for a male fugitive from justice, a brace

of stolen rifles, or whatever they did not want a search party to find. A police or army patrol often had to decide instantly whether the moving tent scuttling out the back gate of a village was female or contraband. They made mistakes. Indeed, the story of the kidnapping of Mollie Ellis, the Colonel's daughter, and the chases and hangings that followed it, told in *The Way of the Pathans* and in many other books, began that way. Now Pakistani officials don't take chances. Pathans never did.

Most of the other adjuncts and accessories to *pukhtunwali* that I had picked up over the years also struck a chord with the tribesmen I spoke to on my latter-day visits to the Frontier.

Of course, everybody knew what a *lashkar* (war party) was. If a man hadn't been on one, he hoped to be. *Dareh*, a night surprise attack, was recognized. So were *barmateh*, the taking of people or property as hostages for a debt or insult, *barumpta*, the expedition which goes to do so, and *badragga*, the all-purpose escort given to a guest or traveller regardless of purpose.

Some villages had non-Pathan *hamsayas* (dependants) and some did not, but all defended the concept. All were proud of the Hindus and Sikhs still remaining unmolested among them and told of how, at Partition and various times thereafter, they had defended them from other Muslims. One old man boasted of having fought off fellow tribesmen in the notorious ambush of the Shahur Tangai in Waziristan while evacuating Sikh and Gurkha troops from Wana in 1947.

The subject of holy war was more complex. Pathans couldn't have a jihad among themselves, it was agreed. A jihad was a war with non-Moslems. There was less unanimity on whether or not it was required that the non-Moslems be trying to harm Islam (a question that many Pathans never settled about the British). The current war in Afghanistan by the Mujahiddin against the Soviets was offered as an example of a proper jihad.

But what about the fact that many of the Soviet soldiers were from Muslim peoples and that the Afghan Army supporting the Soviets was entirely Muslim?

According to a forceful and articulate dissenter, the war in Afghanistan was really a *ghaza*, a total war to defend religion and righteousness (*imandari*) against non-believers and bad Muslims alike. Women and children, as well as men, should join, and the immunity usually accorded to enemy women and children

(ironically, especially by the ferocious Mahsuds and Wazirs) did not apply.

I left it at that, but it struck me that I had read somewhere of an earlier conversation among Pathans about Russians. Looking it up, I found it in Dr Pennell's 1913 account. In response to a question then as to which side the Pathans would take in the event of war between Russia and England, a *malik*, after having ascertained that his questioner really wanted 'the white word', the truth, not what would please, explained, 'We would just sit up here on our mountaintops watching you both fight, while we saw one or the other of you utterly defeated. Then we would come down and loot the vanquished to the last mule. God is great! What a time that would be!'

Some things had changed over the years.

Then there is *wesh*, the ancient Pathan custom, often noted by British writers in the nineteenth century, of periodically redistributing the land held by each section of a tribe for the purpose of maintaining equal prosperity among them. In the south, among the Wazirs and Mahsuds, who have so little anyway, the idea was virtually unheard of. In the north, among Mohmands and Yusufzai, tales were extant of exchanges that had taken place in their fathers' and grandfathers' time.

Among the Turis of the Kurram Valley there was still, in the 1990s, a living memory of an exchange that took place in a village called Jallandur in 1955. At that time land had been rotated but the assignments of it had been extended from four to thirty years and children born during that period were not entitled to inherit a share. What had actually happened now that the thirty years had passed, no one in the group seemed to know, and I was never able to get to Jallandur to find out.

All in all, *wesh* seems to be one of the few established things that have almost disappeared from Pathan consciousness. Being only remotely concerned with *tureh*, *nang*, *badal*, *melmastia* and *nanawati*, it is academic as to whether or not it was ever a proper part of *pukhtunwali*. My own guess is that it was not, being more a matter of social customs, such as the birth, marriage and death rituals, and the ghosts, charms and divinations mentioned by Wilbur as translated from a Pushtu book which he unfortunately does not name.

Be the legal niceties what they may, *pukhtunwali* is best understood in the actions of the people who observe it. In *The Way of the Pathans*, I recounted the story of Motamar and Shabeena, who defied to their deaths the dishonourable wishes of the Nawab of Dir. I also told the Gothic tale of the two friends, Nur Khan and Fateh Khan, and their ill-fated wives, Sharif Khatoon and Nur Jehan.

This time I tell two more stories. One, well-known even today among the South Waziristan Scouts (one of the para-military units stationed in tribal territory) is told in greater detail in Charles Chenevix Trench's *The Frontier Scouts* (1985). It is of the Mahsud Sepoy, Kabul Khan, who shot his British officer at the militia post at Sarwekai in 1904. The other, known only to a few and with the characters scrambled and anonymous, is of an old Pathan family and an American schoolteacher more than half a century later. The parallels are notable.

It was hot in South Waziristan in September 1904, and a British officer, Captain J. B. Bowring, was sleeping on the roof. A shot was heard. He was found dead. The nearby sentry, Kabul Khan, had disappeared. As a search got underway more shots came from a tower within the post, which were returned by other sepoys. Firing was suspended for the night. In the morning British and Pathan sub-officers held a conference. If they stormed the tower, other Scouts would be killed. Kabul Khan's clan would have to seek *badal* on them and, if they were killed, their clans would have to strike at Kabul Khan's. The harmony and integrity of the whole of the South Waziristan Scouts would be destroyed. (Perhaps the only useful by-product of the deadly blood-feud is everyone's reluctance to start it.) So, a solution to the dilemma was found when it was discovered that Kabul Khan's brother was a corporal in the unit. Upon the urging of the other Mahsuds, he agreed to serve as executioner. In a parlay, Kabul Khan accepted the decision and explained why he had killed Captain Bowring: 'He was sleeping with his feet toward Mecca.' Kabul Khan asked for water to wash, a clean turban cloth, and kohl to make up his eyes. He wanted to appear at his best when he met the houris of Paradise. At an agreed moment, with all the Scouts looking on, Kabul Khan stepped out on a parapet, threw down his rifle, and shouted '*Allah-o-Akbar!*' His brother shot him and he fell into the courtyard below. He was buried as a

ghazi, a martyr for the faith, with a dip set into his grave for the recording angel to sit. It soon became a place of pilgrimage. Candles were lit about it every Friday night. Young Mahsuds of all clans came to pray that they too might have such great *tureh* and *nang*. The paradoxical British didn't interfere.

Some six decades later an American high-school teacher who had done a year's Fulbright work elsewhere in the sub-continent stopped to see Peshawar on her way home. Planning only a few days' stay and on a modest travel budget, she arrived at the Cantonment Railway Station by train. Not being sure whether she could afford the famous Dean's Hotel, she had made no reservations. On the platform she was approached by a pair of polite, well-dressed, English-speaking young men who described themselves as college students and offered to help her find a place to stay. When she got in a car with them, she was forcibly detained for several hours and finally taken to a deserted house and raped by one of them. Following the crime, they both ran off and left her there. Not seriously injured physically, the teacher found her way into the dark streets and eventually located a policeman, who led her to an officer, who took her to the American Consul's house. Asked if she could identify the house where she had been assaulted, she took the officer to it, and returned to the Consul's where she was put up to recover, prepare for an identification of her assailant, and await justice. A senior official showed up promptly to apologize profusely for the violation of common decency and Pathan honour and to promise generous reparation. But the police investigation never seemed to get started. Eventually, word crept back that nothing was going to happen. The culprit was the wild youngest son of a prominent Pathan family, and the deed had been done in the servants' quarters of his parents' house while they were abroad in Europe. He simply could not be brought before a court. The scandal to the family would be too great.

Next another senior official appeared, the boy's eldest brother, it turned out. He offered first double, then triple, then quadruple, the usual *sharmana* ('shame-money' in the case of deprivation of honour of a woman). The victim would have none of it. She wanted justice according to the law. She insisted that punishment was necessary to deter the young criminal from doing the same thing again.

Punishment? He was already in the hospital, having been beaten by his brothers to within an inch of his life for the shame which he had brought on the family.

It was not enough. The victim wanted legal justice: a charge and a trial, even if it all ended in acquittal. That was the one thing which could not be, replied the brother. He wished she could understand that.

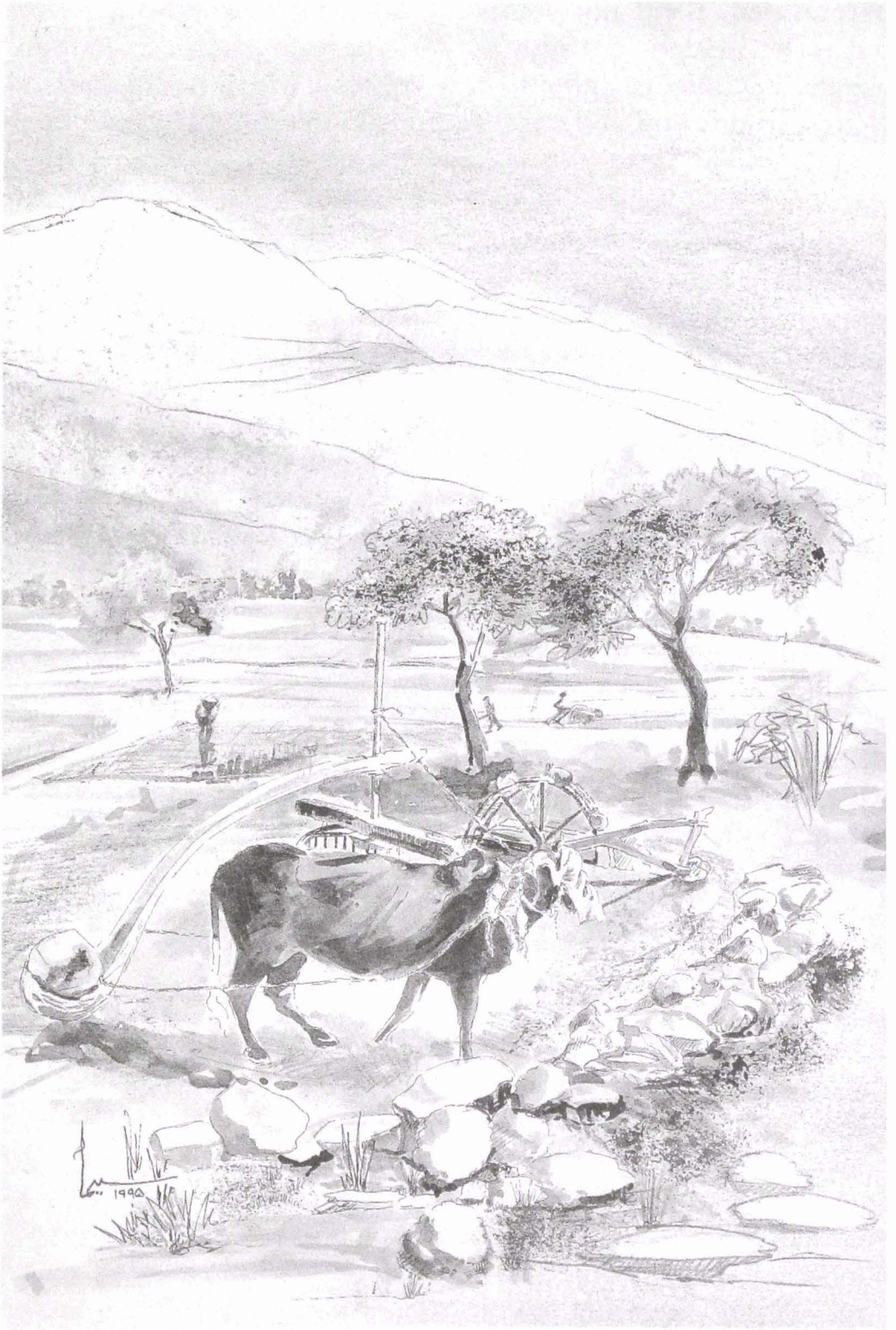
Under pressure of time to get back to her school for the beginning of the next semester, the teacher, accompanied by the Consul, tried to file a complaint with the provincial Director General of Police. His car disappeared through the back gate on a two week tour of the province as they entered. The pile of complaint forms on the sergeant's desk was gone when they asked for one on the way out. In an effort to see the Governor of the Province, they were assured by an aide-de-camp that, if the visiting lady would sign the calling book, His Excellency would be delighted to invite her to a social function within the next month.

She tried telling her story to a local journalist, less in the hope that he would print it than that he would pass on her threats to stop in Karachi on her way out of Pakistan, tell the Central Government and call a press conference for foreign correspondents.

In response to this move an envelope arrived addressed to her, with an inner envelope containing a much smaller sum of money than she had originally been offered. This in turn was addressed to an unknown name in the old city. The mystery was interpreted by a friendly Pathan. The sum was the standard for a killing. The name was that of a notorious professional assassin. The intention was that it be sent to him and he would kill the offending youth. Aghast, the teacher returned the whole package and made ready to leave. Then came a final brief note from the family: 'Say so, and we will kill him.' At last aware that some kind of law was at work with which she was not familiar, she gave up and went silently back to school.

There, reader, is all that I have to offer about *pukhtunwali* after forty years. It is a shame that it is so little and so uncertain. Perhaps it will inspire someone else, fluent in English and Pushtu, familiar with Islamic and Western law, possessed of knowledge and experience among the Pathans, to do a proper book on

the rich subject that is *pukhtunwali*. If that work should make reference to any distortion or misrepresentation that I have perpetrated, I will not complain. For this is a book that cries out to be written, not only to describe *pukhtunwali* in its pure vigour, but also to offer to the Western world its insights on victims' rights and collective responsibility.



The Garden of the North

Chapter 5

In and Around the Peshawar Valley

The Peshawar Valley is full of wonders. References to the city itself, Lowell Thomas' twentieth-century 'Paris of the Pathans', and to its predecessor, Pushkalavati, a huge mound near Charsadda a few miles away, appear in the Vedic literature of the sixth century BC. It was the capital of the Gandhara Satrapy of Darius the Persian's empire.

The city and the valley have played host, usually unwillingly, to all the great conquerors of Asia: Porus, the Hindu king; Alexander the Macedonian who defeated him; Chandragupta Maurya, the first Emperor of all India; his Buddhist son, Asoka; Meander of Balkh, Greek ruler of Alexander's successor kingdom of Bactria; the Kushans, Kadphises and Kanishka; the Persian Sassanid Ardeshir; the Huns, Toraman and Mihirakul; the Turki Shahis (who may or may not have been Turks); adventurer Arab captains; the Afghan Ghaznavid and Ghorid Sultans; Changez the Mongol.

Next came Timur the Tartar; the Afghans Ibrahim Lodhi and Sher Shah Suri; Babur the first Mughal and his successors Humayun, Akbar, Jehangir, Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb; the Persian Nadir Shah (who, according to local history, almost lost the Peacock Throne he was carting back from Delhi to Pathan raiders near Peshawar); another Afghan, Ahmad Shah Abdali, whose assumption of the title *Dur-i-Durran* ('Pearl of Pearls') gave a new name, Durrani, to the ruling family of Afghanistan; the Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh; and finally the British 'Paladins,' Edwardes, Nicholson, Cavagnari, and the rest.

Eminent historians, the Greek Herodotus, the Chinese Fa-Hien, the Arab al-Beruni, the English Olaf Caroe (to cite just four names spread over two thousand years), have chronicled the conquerors' victories and defeats. And, despite all the sackings

and burnings, marks of the hands of the great historic figures still exist. The Peshawar Fort, the Bala Hissar, built out from the city wall, is largely of Sikh and British reconstruction but its foundation stones are almost certainly two thousand years old.

On the Gor-kathri, an elevation in the centre of the city most recently occupied by a police station, there are pipul trees which are very likely twentieth-generation saplings of the great tree under which thousands of Buddhist pilgrims gathered in the sixth century, hordes of Hindu ascetics in the ninth, Muslim mystics in the sixteenth, Sikh savants in the nineteenth and American and European 'hippies' expelled from Afghanistan and awaiting deportation from Pakistan in the twentieth. Nearby remnants of masonry are probably from the great stupa that contained the holy relic of the Buddha's alms bowl.

The beautiful intact Mahabat Khan Mosque in the 'Street of the Silversmiths' opposite Chowk Yadgar dates to the time of the Mughals. The city's trademark, crowded vertical buildings lining narrow winding streets and converging here and there on *chowks* (squares), open gathering places since time immemorial, intermix ancient brick and wooden buildings with modern concrete and glass ones. Somehow, they all harmonize.

Incomparable 'blood oranges' bursting with sweet crimson juice that leaves an indelible stain, succulent melons ranging from pale yellow honeydews smaller than a grapefruit to huge dark green *sardars* of a size and taste to be encountered in the US only among the prize exhibits at state fairs, and an incredible variety of other fruit in season are displayed in piles everywhere. And there are wonderful restaurants, ranging from single kebab sellers in tiny stalls whose product must be eaten standing in the street, to the celebrated 'Seleteen', a multi-storey establishment behind Qissa Khwani ('The Place of the Story-tellers'), where heaping trays of flat golden bread accompany sizzling platters of broiled lamb, beef and chicken.

The whole cantonment with its 'Soldiers' Bazaar', thick-walled Victorian bungalows, grand official residences, pillared shops, double-storied stone barracks, artillery parks, classically-styled Assembly building, golf course, polo fields, grass tennis courts, and sprawling, green-lawned Club, remains a monument to the British Raj at its zenith.

The Club, off the Mall, alone among them has deteriorated noticeably. Forty years ago, having driven down from Kabul on Christmas Eve (and spent a good part of the night broken down in the Lataband Pass), I was almost forcibly taken off to the Christmas Ball by the Pathan friend with whom I was staying. He was convinced that it was what all Christians did on their great day. Enchanted then by this remnant of the holiday gaiety of another time, I was saddened in 1993 and 1994 when I stayed there for a few days to find that the kitchen opened only in the evenings, the bar never opened at all, and the great wood-panelled dining room/ball room was closed in favour of a small chamber with oilcloth-covered tables. (Of course, it was in Ramazan in winter.)

Pakistan's ban on liquor for Muslims and its meatless days, and inhibitions about Pathan women socializing in public, had, I was told, brought about a change in habits. With the hordes of expatriates who had flowed in during the Afghan War, the establishments catering to foreigners in University Town have become the 'in' places in Peshawar. There, in heavily guarded, brightly-lit compounds, the technical assistance and refugee relief workers can have music and refreshments to their tastes. Despite the hospitality afforded me, I found the in-bred atmosphere of these places as depressing as that at the Club on the Mall.

The British Cemetery is just outside the Cantonment, on the Khyber Road not far from the American Consulate. Here the later history of the Raj is inscribed in stone above the dust of its makers. I have never known a visitor who wasn't touched by one headstone or another. Behind them all lie stories: the deaths of mothers in childbirth, the deaths of children from endemic diseases, the deaths in battle of men in their prime. My own favourite is a pair of headstones, side-by-side, which summarize the first quarter of this century. The two were almost identical in age; they graduated from school and the British Military Academy in the same classes; they were both majors; they were killed ('Murdered by Pathans' as the inscription bluntly puts it) in the same fight in the Khyber.

Perhaps they and their comrades are not as far separated from the life around them as we sometimes think. Not long ago I was riding past the Cemetery in the back of a car with one of Pakistan's most distinguished political leaders, a devout

Muslim who played a role in the foundation of the country, and as formidable a Pathan as I have ever known. I noticed that he broke off our conversation briefly to turn his hands upward and silently speak a few sentences. He sensed my curiosity and explained: 'It was our people who killed most of them, of course, but they were all brave and some of them were good. I ask for Allah's mercy on them, as I do for my own ancestors when I pass their graves.'

Peshawar, in addition to Pathans of the blood, is full of indigenous Sayyids, Mians, Arbabs, Chaudhrys, Qizilbash, etc. There are also, and pretty much always have been, resident Afghans, Arabs, Persians, Parsis, Hazaras, Sikhs, Hindkis, Punjabis, Baloch, Kashmiri, Tajiks, Turkomans, Uzbeks, Kirghiz, and various kinds of Chinese. (This ethnic listing plucked from a book that happened to be open on my desk gives a good flavour of the city's exotic cosmopolitanism.)

Away from the city, Asoka's two-thousand-year-old inscriptions are still legible on the rocks at Shahbaz garhi in Mardan. Not far off in the same district is the great ruined Buddhist monastery at Takht-i-Bhai. The classic Mughal stone fort at Attock on the Indus, where the spirits of Akbar and Aurangzeb can be felt, is less than twenty miles downstream from the massive modern Tarbela Dam, a monument to deposed President Ayub Khan.

Below the massive walls of Attock fort the Grand Trunk Road splits briefly to preserve a square domed tomb which has left no mark in recorded history but is, according to local legend, the final resting place of the Mughal Emperor Jehangir's favourite dancing girl. At the other end of the Valley the eclectic mud-brick Sikh castle at the Jamrud entrance to the Khyber still, they say, shelters the ghost of the infamous Hari Singh. And so it goes, on and on and on!

The number and variety of Pathans in the Valley is impressive. The current estimate is almost four million souls. The Yusufzai spill over from their tribal domains in the hills of Swat, Dir, Bajaur and Buner to hold most of the land north of the Kabul River; the Khattaks dominate along the Indus from Attock down into and across their own hills which mark the southern boundary of the Valley. Elsewhere are Utman Khel, Muhammadzai, Gigiani, Mallagori, Daudzai, Khalil, and Mohmands. In the south-west individual Afridis and Orakzai

extend their interests from their fiercely-held hills down into the edges of the Valley.

In the midst of all this, it is easy to focus on specific people, places and events, while forgetting that the explanation of them all lies in the nature of the Valley itself. The Kabul River comes out of Afghanistan running east from the hills just above the Khyber Pass. It breaks up and meanders over gently-sloping land before depositing its brown, silt-laden waters into the clear blue Indus at Attock fifty miles away.

The intervening plain surrounded by mountains, so perfect a circle that it jumps out at the observer on a physiographic map, stretches another fifty miles from north to south. Its soil is as fertile and its climate as conducive to agriculture as any on the subcontinent. Time and again it has recovered from the worst devastation a conqueror could inflict, to feed its people again within a year or two. This is why powerful men and great events have always been the heritage of the Peshawar Valley.

Olaf Caroe, who first saw the Valley almost eighty years ago, describes it ably: 'The genial winter sun shines, the breeze blows clean and sharp from the snows, it is a joy to live. In a land of streams and rivers, villages nestle half hidden in groves of sheltering trees. Broad stretches of verdant wheat, barley, and clover, alternating as the seasons change with giant crops of sugar-cane and maize, spread a picture of rural plenty, to be equalled possibly but never surpassed in the length and breadth of Asia....Close under the hills, and side by side with canal irrigation, the old indigenous well-cultivation proceeds, the shaded wells, the creaking wheels, the plodding oxen—dear, familiar places, lending the countryside the charm peculiar to this ancient form of husbandry.'

He goes on to talk of improved strains of cereal brought from Australia, great fields of tobacco, 'once grown only for snuff spread far and wide over the canal lands, now the base for a major industry, orchards, winter and summer, spread for mile on mile across fields covered by thorn-bush fit only for goat and camel. In spring, groves of peach and apricot shed their pink and ivory sprays and later flaunt their bright fruit; a month passes and the vales are sweet with the scent of orange blossom, to ripen in mid-winter to a glory of golden lamps as bright as the apples of the Hesperides.' He concludes that the Valley is the 'garden of the north.'

In fact, the mosaic of the Valley is so rich and strong that it is hard to select a pattern by which to study or tell about it. Accident dictated my own approach. While in the Karachi Embassy in 1952 I had been involved in the selection of a young Muslim League Member of the North-West Frontier Provincial Assembly for a visit to the US. Abdul Sattar Khan Mohmand made the trip in the summer of 1953. Back home on leave, my wife and I took him through the mountains and Indian reservations of Montana. When I returned to the Frontier to work on my book in 1954, I stayed for some weeks at his village, Abdul Matin Khan Killi, near Takht-i-Bhai, in Mardan District.

It was a good place to learn about Pathans. Sattar's father had been a Mohmand *mullah* come down from the hills to claim land along the newly-built Swat Canal half a century earlier. His younger brother Jamshed ran the agricultural activities while Sattar promoted Mohmand political interests. The family ties with the hills were still strong. The *hujra* was regularly filled with relatives and retainers from tribal territory. Relations among the handful of Mohmand clans that had become rich and powerful along the Canal were close and friendly. They worked together on the ground and in the Frontier Assembly to hold their position against the hereditary Yusufzai *khans*, who for three hundred years had dominated the area politically and economically and still did so socially.

The weeks I spent living in the *hujra* in Abdul Matin Khan Killi in 1954 brought me closer to the Pathans than I have ever been before or since. I described the experience in some detail in Chapter 9 of *The Way of the Pathans* and do not intend to try to give a latter-day version here. There wouldn't be all that much new to depict if I did. Sattar and Jamshed are gone from this earth; some of the men of the next generation have scattered to far parts for work and education. The oldest son of the oldest son, Iftikhar Mohmand Khan, holds his father's seat in the North-West Frontier Assembly; he's been a minister in the cabinet and probably will be again. Another brother with an advanced degree from a US university worked for years in the USAID agricultural development programme and now runs the family farm.

The village has divided into two clusters to accommodate the extended families of Sattar and Jamshed's descendants. Fruit

trees have replaced sugar cane in many of the fields. When I lived in the village, it was common for a specially-designated worker to come running to the *hujra* with word that fragments of the Buddhist era had been found in the fields. Then the *malik* raced out to prevent the devout Muslim labourers from smashing them up as 'heathen idols'. (In typical Pathan fashion they were prepared to take his word as to when religion should be subordinated to common sense.)

New Gandhara remnants turn up only rarely now, but the ancient monastery on a hill, where we had a shooting match so long ago, still dominates the countryside. Little further excavation has been done, but it has been well preserved, and the tourists and the pilgrims still come and go. In 1993, for what was the third and eighth time respectively, my youngest son and I prowled about the mellow ruins escorted by members of the same family. For him, at age thirty-one, the climb up was the same each time. For me, it had become more strenuous with the years.

My friend of *hujra* days, Ghulam Sarwar Khan, is gone, but his prosperous village of Salim Khan, a few miles from Abdul Matin Khan Killi, still cherishes the distinction it achieved when Dichter chose it for a sample study for his 1967 book and reported on it in glowing terms: 'Individual holdings average about 100 acres per family...seventy-five per cent of the total crop is sugar cane...the remainder devoted to maize, wheat, and barley...the other families residing in the village work generally as labourers in the sugar factories at Takht-i-Bhai and Mardan...enough money is earned to enable the villagers to buy all their additional needs from the outside.'

There is no scientific or scholarly reason for considering Takht-i-Bhai either a microcosm or a bellwether of the Peshawar Valley. The transplanted Mohmands who live along the Swat Canal are not going to determine the future of the Frontier (although it would be unwise for Peshawar and Islamabad totally to ignore their views on the subject). I and my family keep going back to them (1976, '85, '87, '89, '91, '92, '93, '94), because we know each other so well and have shared so much over so long a time.

When, in the early 1950s, I left the Embassy and ended up not long afterwards living in Abdul Matin Khan Killi on a

completely legitimate Ford Foundation/Columbia University grant, a not-unreasonably suspicious Pakistani Counter-Intelligence Division in Peshawar sent an agent out to keep an eye on what I might be doing for the CIA. The Khan let the man stay in the area and gave him room and board on two conditions: he was never to see me or let me know about his interest, and, if he did come across anything suspicious, he was to tell the Khan before his masters in Peshawar.

Apparently it all worked out all right. Fifteen years later when the Spains were back in the Foreign Service and back in Pakistan, the families had a picnic together at the monastery on the hill. Sattar's ten-year old informed my ten-year old (the two had not met before), 'Your father is an honest and trustworthy man. He and my father are brothers. That means we are brothers too. We must be ready to die for each other.' Second son Steve agreed, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. The two haven't seen each other for twenty-five years, but I am willing to bet that the commitment stands.

Another place in the Valley to which I find myself returning regularly is the village of Utmanzai, almost within sight of the ancient capital of Pushkalavati near Charsadda. It is not that I know the people there nearly as intimately as I know the Mohmands, but that Utmanzai is the home of what is probably the last Pathan dynasty and the centre of a unique cultural and political dream.

The story of the two Muhammadzai brothers from Utmanzai, Khan Sahib and Abdul Ghaffar Khan, has been told in many books and articles, although I have never found one that told it all in a single piece. In *The Way of the Pathans* I described my meeting with an ageing Abdul Ghaffar Khan in Karachi in 1954 when he was briefly out of prison. His role in 'Pushtoonistan' is touched on later in the part of this book dealing with the Frontier's relationship with Pakistan. What I want to note here is the remarkable nature of the man and his movement in the context of the land where it all began.

The Khan brothers were born into an affluent land-owning family before the turn of the century. The older, Khan Sahib, was educated in England as a doctor, took a wife there, and returned to service in the army medical corps. The younger, Abdul Ghaffar, known as 'Bacha Khan,' largely self-educated,

was interested in farming, and resigned without ever taking up a commission in the Guides Cavalry. In 1919 he led the local agitation against the Morley-Minto constitutional reforms which he considered inadequate. At this time and for the next ten years, Bacha Khan's politics can probably best be described (in American terms) as Jeffersonian: liberal with a touch of agrarian utopianism.

In 1928, repelled by what he saw as an alliance of the British Raj, wealthy Muslim landlords, and the Muslim and Hindu religious establishment, Bacha Khan founded the *Khudai Khidmatgars*, ('Servants of God'). Members pledged themselves to serving God by serving his creatures, to forgive those who had done them wrong, to give up old feuds, to work without expecting a reward, and to treat every Pukhtun as a brother. Devout in philosophy, non-sectarian in practice, revolutionary in their own culture, but moderate in goals, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* would today be considered no more radical than European social democrats.

As a mark of their commitment they dyed their normally white clothes red with brick dust or tanning solution. Their Pathan opponents dubbed them 'Red Shirts' and pronounced them Communists. The British followed suit. I have never been able to find any substance in the charge. But Bacha Khan was off on a stormy opposition course. His Pathan followers found the non-violence and non-sectarian doctrines particularly difficult and often violated or found a way around them. One theory current at the time was that it was they who incited the unashamedly violent Afridis into Peshawar in 1930 in what now seems likely to have been the last attempt to sack that city—in this century, anyway. In any event, there is little doubt that the Red Shirts were responsible for more than their share of alarms and excursions throughout the 1930s.

Bacha Khan himself joined the All-India Congress and became friends with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, embracing homespun clothing, non-sectarianism, and non-violence. In the years before Independence he was a national figure in India as a Congress leader while remaining a 'Pukhtun of the Pukhtuns' on the Frontier. He and his brother, Dr Khan Sahib, were in charge of a Congress government there as the time for Independence approached. This left the departing Raj with a

problem. A Muslim majority area ruled over by a Congress government? Which way should it go at Partition: to the Muslim League and Pakistan or to the Congress and India?

A decision was made to hold a referendum. Realizing that the Hindu-dominated National Congress didn't have a chance against the Muslim League, Bacha Khan demanded that a third choice, 'Pathanistan', be included. When this was refused, he called for a boycott of the referendum. It was but a short step from there to support of an independent 'Pushtoonistan' and political oblivion in Pakistan. His brother, Dr Khan Sahib, was less intractable. Before being assassinated in 1958, he served as head of the short-lived 'One-Unit' Province of West Pakistan.

But Bacha Khan was adamant. Recognizing that his dreams were beyond realization, he took advantage of one of his periods of freedom from prison to move to Afghanistan. He died in 1988 in Peshawar, having completed, depending on whose version of his birth date you accept, a little more or a little less than a century of life. According to his wishes he was buried in Jalalabad in Afghanistan. But till today he is still loved and honoured by many Pathans throughout the Frontier for his great heart.

Visiting Utmanzai these days, one finds little reminder of its stormy past. Wali Bagh, the spacious new compound, is presided over by Bacha's eldest son, Wali Khan, and his wife Begum Nasim, who have inherited his political base among the Muhammadzai and the respect almost all Pathans hold for the grand old man. From spirited conversation over tea, it is obvious that they remain devoted and reasonable social democrats, but they collaborate with other parties to take their turn at running the North-West Frontier Province.

My last call on Wali Khan took place in 1994, in the middle of a political crisis in which his National Awami Party was resisting an attempt by new Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's Peoples Party to overturn a fragile NWFP coalition government which the NAP supported. The courtly old gentleman turned aside probes as to what was going to happen next, explaining that Begum Nasim (who was conveniently absent) handled that kind of thing now. He responded graciously and in detail to my queries as to how old his father was at his death (his estimate was 104), whether his uncle had any other name than Khan Sahib (no), and whether the *Khudai Khitmatgars* had collaborated with the Indian

National Army, which fought on the side of the Axis in World War II ('No, but we admired those who fought for our freedom.')

Asked to elaborate on a remark he had once made, 'We have been Pathans for three thousand years, Muslims for one thousand, and Pakistanis for forty,' he smiled and said that the history was accurate and the arithmetic simple. You could put both the thousand and the forty into the three thousand and still have a lot left over. It is a good encapsulating of the nature and history of his people.

Not far away in Mardan District, the great Yusufzai landlords among whom I walked so happily in the 1950s, the Khans of Hoti, Topi, Toru, Zaida, Ranadheri, and Hund, are represented now by their next generations. Despite land reform they retain more than their share of the Pathans' most precious commodity. Their political influence continues too. Many of the Chief Ministers of the Province have come from their ranks.

Some things have changed, however. Forty years ago it would have been unthinkable for non-Yusufzai to go in numbers into the *khans'* traditional territory without the most carefully obtained and conditioned permission. Forty years before that they would likely have been shot on sight. During a visit with my youngest son in 1993, we and a group of our Mohmand friends decided on the spur of the moment to go boar-hunting on the islands in the Indus near Ranadheri, Hund and Lahor where Edith and I had gone off on a shoot with a Yusufzai *khan* so long ago—and which had produced the memorable picture of her with a shotgun on a raft of inflated skins which appeared in my first book.

This time, perhaps because my Mohmand friend was himself a government minister, no one thought anything about going into the aristocratic Yusufzai heartland, bringing along a dozen or more bodyguards and retainers for a planned picnic. The ancient village of Lahor (this Lahor was a famous and felicitous place long before 'The Queen City of the Punjab' existed) was still a tumble of mellow masonry. The neatly-dressed stone Gandhara walls on which we parked our vehicles at Hund (where Alexander and Changez Khan are said to have crossed the Indus) had not changed a bit.

Human habitations in Hund today are small and shabby and the comforts of life minimal. The local men still pan for gold

in the river, laboriously earning their dollar or two a day, as they did forty years ago when my Montana-bred wife offered suggestions for improving their equipment and techniques. The mother lodes in the vast mountains above remain undiscovered. It is a far cry from the Muslim traveller Muqaddasi's tenth century description of Hund quoted in a translation by Khurshid Ahmad Faruqi: 'It is a capital city of great glory...it has many gardens clean and attractive. The river is full of water. We also get rains. The fruits of both summer and winter seasons are plentifully available...walnut, almond, banana, and date. Bread and milk are cheap. Pestilent insects are absent, people are free from incurable diseases...It could match with the best cities of Iran.'

There are some new things. This time we crossed the river in sturdy modern boats. The weapons passed out were AK-47 and even more sophisticated rifles capable of automatic fire. And we got a boar—or at least one of the guards did. (In accordance with Muslim custom, none of them would touch it, although they seemed to expect me to butcher it and roast kebabs on the spot.) Mission accomplished, the whole party gave itself up to a shooting match, using bursts of automatic fire to knock stones out of the islands' banks. This was followed by an elaborate hot lunch cooked and served in a dug-out sheltered by a piece of canvas against an unexpected downpour of rain. It was a good Pathan outing.

As one proceeds down the valley from the west on the Grand Trunk Road, as Kim and Mabub Ali did, one passes through Pabbi, now a peaceful and prospering village, though made famous in Kipling's writings of a century ago as a sink of iniquity and criminality. A little further on is Nowshera, still a major military post. Just above it is Mardan, home of 'The Queen's Own Corps of Guides', who claim to have invented the khaki uniform a full forty years before it came into popular use during the Boer War in Africa. Many of M.M. Kaye's unforgettable fictional characters in 'The Far Pavilions'—as well as her own ancestors—were associated with the Guides.

At the far east end of the valley at Attock is Akbar's great fort, totally denied to outsiders in my days of residence, but now open occasionally to tours by friendly military attaches from the embassies in Islamabad.

In geographical terms, here is the end, or the beginning, of the Frontier, although some argue that in cultural and historical terms the division between Central Asia and 'Hindustan' is in fact beyond the river at the pleasant Mughal city of Hassan Abdal, where the more or less legendary Lala Rukh built his pleasure gardens (still intact). Others would push the divide further east to where the hills end and the plains begin, the Margalla Pass marked by a soaring obelisk commemorating Nicholson, the hero of the battle for Delhi in the Great Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. Margalla, not far from the ancient Buddhist university city of Taxila, is less than an hour's drive from modern Pakistan's capital of Islamabad.

Wherever the Frontier begins and ends, there can be no argument that the Peshawar Valley has seen more than its share of great men and events and inspired a remarkable literature.



A Salt Mine

Chapter 6

Khattaks

Few peoples are entirely without chroniclers but some are fortunate in having perceptive and articulate ones. On the Frontier the latter is true of the Mahsuds, whose ways and exploits Sir Evelyn Howell recounts so graphically in *Mizh*. The Khattaks fare even better. They have not only the *Divan* of their own seventeenth-century master, Khushal Khan Khattak, but also *Life among the Pathans* by twentieth-century retired Colonel Buster Goodwin, which deals exclusively with them. The two works are very different in style and outlook but they give the reader a rare opportunity to see how little life among the Khattaks has changed over three hundred years.

My fascination with Khushal Khan led to a whole chapter in *The Way of the Pathans*, 'The Warrior Bard', in which I quoted extensively from his work. It would be duplication to repeat this here. Besides, I was criticized (probably rightly) by a distinguished British scholar for the mishmash I made of Raverty's and Bidulph's nineteenth-century translations and my own feeble attempt to reconstruct Khushal Khan's language. In this regard, there is good news. A later version by D.N. MacKenzie for the Translation Collection of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (London: Allen and Unwin, 1965) seems to please everyone, although I personally found the translator's occasionally converting the names of Islamic heroes such as Qais, Wamaq, Farhad and Khusrau into Paris, Tristan, Lancelot and Romeo, disconcerting. MacKenzie also turns the Iranian king Jamshed into the Israelite Solomon and the Arab sage Luqman into the Greek Socrates. The Old Testament/Koran figures of Joseph and Nimrod he leaves alone. (Until I found acknowledgement of this sleight-of-hand in footnotes, I gave Khushal Khan credit for a wider knowledge of world history

and literature than in fact there is any reason to believe he had.)

Most of us have our own way of checking out an impressive but unfamiliar library when we first enter it. Over the decades mine has been to see what it has on Khushal Khan. I had a special purpose in mind. The breadth, depth and intensity of his mind is readily evident from his works. But what did he look like? Was he a large, strong, fair, grey-eyed man? Or was he slight, dark, wiry and black-eyed? There are Khattaks of both varieties.

Human portraiture was in disrepute among Khushal Khan's Muslim contemporaries and neither he himself nor those who wrote about him seem to have gone in for physical description. The only thing I have ever been able to find is a painting reproduced in Sir Olaf Caroe's utterly comprehensive *The Pathans*. This shows an aged, robust man with long white hair and beard in conical helmet and cuirass, carrying a hefty lance. Alas, a footnote reveals that it is 'an imaginary portrait drawn by the Afghan artist Ghulam Nabi in 1930'.

Nonetheless, one has a feeling that the artist prepared well for his representation. Khushal Khan's writings are full of love for wine and women, death and battle, the nature of God and man. The strong fleshly features drawn by Ghulam Nabi radiate sorrow and experience while at the same time combining intellectualism, bravery, and sensuality. The picture serves well to satisfy the visual imagination until something more authentic comes along.

Sir Olaf points out perceptively that in the punctilious Mughal Babur's account of his invasion of the Frontier in 1525-6 he names all the Pathan tribes we know today—Afridis, Orakzai, Bangash, Turis, Mohmands, Yusufzai, Wazirs, etc.—except the Khattaks. Were they a minor clan not worthy of the great Emperor's note? Were they known by a different name? Were they living somewhere other than in their present homeland along the Indus between Peshawar and Bannu where their unique treasure of salt deposits has been a prize for generations of rulers?

Whatever the answer to the riddle, little more than half a century later, in 1586, Babur's grandson, the Great Mughal Akbar, at Attock on his way to Kabul, is recorded as having given the

right to collect ferry and road tolls and a *jagir* (land grant) for the territory between Attock and Nowshera to a Pathan *malik* named Akorai, who celebrated his rise in the world by building the town of Akora and establishing Khattak supremacy in the area, which has been maintained ever since. Akorai was the great-grandfather of Khushal Khan, who within another half-century had, through his martial and literary powers, spread the name and fame of the Khattaks throughout the Pathan country and beyond, in Mughal Afghanistan and India.

The Khattaks served the Mughals Akbar (1556-1605), Jehangir (1605-27), and Shah Jehan (1627-58) well. But in the 1660s during Khushal Khan's chieftainship, two events came together to disrupt their power and prosperity. One was a long-standing tribal feud with the Yusufzai over land, which led to the death of many of Khushal Khan's relatives, kept the whole area in an uproar, and provided a challenge to him as the Mughals' principal representative on the Frontier. The other was a quarrel with the Mughal Governor of Peshawar, Sayyid Amir.

It was in the interests of both the Mughals and Khushal Khan that the latter dispute, obscure in origin and highly personal in nature, be smoothed over, as so many on the Frontier are, but it was quickly taken up by the new Mughal, Aurangzeb (1658-1707), in Delhi. The usual political motive may have been involved: that Khushal Khan and his Khattaks were becoming too powerful on the Frontier. But it seems more likely that the crux of the matter was one of personalities. The libertarian Khushal Khan, with his poems glorifying the love of wine and women, freedom of the mind, reckless bravery and independence, was simply too much for the narrow, orthodox, single-minded bureaucrat who was the last of the great Mogul Emperors.

In any event, Khushal Khan was sent in chains to the 'Mughals' Alcatraz', Ranthambhor Fort in Rajputana. Eventually released, he returned home and entered into an alliance with the Afridis against the Mughals. Together they inflicted major defeats on the imperial armies, forcing Aurangzeb himself to come to the Frontier. In his desertion of the Mughals, Khushal Khan was opposed by his own sons, as well as by his traditional enemies, the Yusufzai, who joined the Delhi army.

He died in 1689, virtually destitute, alone and without allies, the only comfort of his final years being the superbly-worded

curse he heaped on Aurangzeb, the Yusufzai, and his son Behram, and his injunction that he be buried where 'the dust of the hooves of the Mughal cavalry may not fall upon my grave.' With his death, the fortunes of the Khattaks went into a sharp decline. They continue up to the present time, however, to produce an abundance of poets, always assured of a place of honour among Pathans.

In the eighteenth century the Khattaks, by now like much of the Frontier nominally ruled from Kabul, were involved in the wars of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah but played only a peripheral role. They had a small part too in the Saddozai-Barakzai conflict among the Durrani for the throne of an emerging Afghanistan. They had a moment of glory again in 1823 when, temporarily united with the Yusufzai in support of the Afghans, they came within an ace of defeating the Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his expanding empire of the Punjab at Pir Sabak near Nowshera. A decade later the ungrateful Durrani turned them over to the Sikhs in return for what they thought would give them an uncontested claim to Kandahar.

Sikh rule of the Frontier was nasty, brutal, and short. It did not extend very deeply into the Khattak country before Herbert Edwardes, the first British administrator on the Frontier, came to Bannu in 1847. The British had not penetrated the Khattak country deeply by the time they were distracted by the 1857 Mutiny further east, either. In the decades that followed, however, they came to put a premium on the salt deposits along the Indus and turned to exploitation and control of them as a source of revenue. Before long they also recognized that the Khattaks had few equals among the tribes for fighting qualities, loyalty, and willingness to adopt to modern ways while at the same time fiercely maintaining their Pathan integrity.

These characteristics grew in part out of the cosmopolitanism they had inherited from Khushal Khan and their long association with the Mughals. Other elements were their geographic location, directly across the Indus from the Punjab but relatively remote from other Pathans, their almost exclusively rural way of life, and their status as the only large Pathan tribe which lived entirely in the settled districts (as opposed to the unadministered tribal territory in the western hills with its open door to Afghanistan). They soon began to appear in

substantial numbers in the lower levels of the British military and civil services.

This brings us to 'Buster' Goodwin (also known in his youth as 'Tubby'). He came out from England in 1927 to a first posting at Jatta in the heart of the Khattak country, and for the next quarter-century lived almost exclusively among them, being concerned primarily with the regulation of the salt industry. A modest man, his book was written at the insistence of friends who had it published privately in 1969.

Goodwin himself disclaims all pretense of literary excellence, and indeed his style cannot be compared with that of Khushal Khan. His tales of the comic antics of young British men and women living on the Frontier during the 1920s and 1930s have lost some of their hilarity. With one exception, his coverage of the broader events of Indian and international history is nil. That exception, however, ties together a wide spectrum of the then nascent Freedom Movement.

In 1930, Gandhi chose to flout the Government's salt monopoly in a challenge to arbitrary British rule. In Gujerat, surrounded by a host of supporters, he defied the law by picking up and eating an untaxed bit of the mineral after a highly publicized 'Salt March' to the sea. Anti-British agitation soon spread all over India. The next year, the 'Gandhi-Irwin Pact' between the Mahatma and the Viceroy sought to calm the agitation and direct it into non-violent channels. One of its provisions was that citizens were henceforth to be allowed to remove salt for their own use from deposits which were not 'hedged or buried', i.e., already staked out by the Government or exploitable only by mining.

It did not take much imagination for the Khattaks to interpret that. To encourage them, Abdul Ghaffar Khan's newly-founded *Khudai Khidmatgars* ('Red Shirts' in British terminology) came into the Khattak country to organize things. Government fences were torn down. New quarries were opened up. Within weeks a marginal industry became a highly profitable one, as caravan after caravan of no-cost salt moved out to Kohat, Bannu, and points further afield.

As prosperity increased, Goodwin noted that political meetings usually ended with drums beating, men dancing, and a feast. 'The processions with the volunteers wearing red shirts and multi-

coloured Sam Browne belts and shouting '*Inkilab Zindabad!*' ("Long Live Revolution!") were a spectacle hard to resist.' But soon the Government concession was withdrawn and Goodwin found himself arresting violators and confiscating their property. When he rode his horse on patrol, bullets whistled over his head and he was reduced to marching on foot among his men to obscure his identity. He got a decoration for his work but, 'This was all very gratifying but it did not assuage the hurt I felt at having arrested old and trusted friends.'

Goodwin's anecdotes about Khattak values and practices indicate that he had got deep into their minds. His memory lives on in the Khattak country where he is still widely referred to as 'Good Man'. 'Sepoys of the Salt Department live in fortified towers,' he tells us. 'The attitude of my men to outlaws and raiders was sensible. They were stationed at isolated posts. If anything untoward occurred, unless there were survivors, nothing would be known until somebody visited the post on inspection. If they had been unfriendly and adopted an inimical attitude toward the raiders, they would have been wiped out in a day.'

Of a raid on the large wealthy village of Karak he says: 'For nearly two days the Wazirs looted the shops and homes of the Hindus. Pickets were relieved from time to time so that they could all take a hand in the fun. Fat-tailed sheep were slaughtered, roasted over embers, and eaten in the open bazaar. The local Muslim inhabitants took the opportunity to do a little looting of their own. They burnt account books, papers, and receipts of debts owed the Hindus, but many of them also gave shelter to the Hindus and saved them from being kidnapped.'

Speaking of a marriage dispute between two families of neighbouring Ismael Khel and Ali Khan Khel villages which was ostensibly settled by a *jirga* and a feast of reconciliation, Goodwin remarks, 'The absence of acrimony at the *jirga* and the apparent friendliness bred in me a premonition of tragedy to follow.' He notes also that in the Depression-ridden 1930s a professional killer could be hired for four hundred rupees and that, sure enough, within days a killing was carried out.

It is in its vivid and authentic anecdotes of the day-to-day workings of *pukhtunwali* among the Khattaks in our lifetime that the value of Goodwin's book lies. He is as appreciative as any Pathan of the sheer fun of fighting and firing. He laments that

this sometimes leads to the throwing away of life over a petty matter, but makes no compromise over serious ones, acknowledging in his Introduction, 'It may appear that I was a friend of outlaws and fugitives from justice. This is not so. Some of these outlaws or wanted men committed crimes which they had to as Pathans.'

As far as *pukhtunwali* is concerned, things have not changed much in three hundred years. Khushal Khan Khattak would understand Buster 'Tubby' Goodwin instantly.

To revert to my own early days in Pakistan in 1951-3, my first Pathan friend was a Khattak, Mohammad Aslam Khan, later to serve as Ambassador in Kabul and Tehran, Governor of the North-West Frontier Province, and senior minister in national governments. A lawyer and educator by training, who had helped develop the name and concept of Pakistan while at Oxford, I met him in Karachi, to which he had just been exiled by a hostile Chief Minister of the North-West Frontier Province. Before long I got to know his venerable father, Khan Bahadur Kuli Khan, in Peshawar, one of the first Pathans allowed into the Political Service, rescuer of the kidnapped British girl, Mollie Ellis, in 1923, and principal figure in dozens of Frontier tales. Then came friendship with his brothers and sisters, daughters and nephews, many of whom have held prominent places in Pakistan during its first half century.

In those same early years I made the pilgrimage to Khushal Khan's simple tomb at Surai near Akora. I looked out upon the same dramatic view which Caroe describes so vividly in words then not yet written for his book. But somehow I never got much deeper into the Khattak country. Returning to Surai in 1993, now having had my share of years and sorrow as Khushal Khan did, I was not surprised to find that the tomb and its view had not changed a whit.

In 1994 Reza Kuli Khan Khattak, grandson and namesake of Khan Bahadur Kuli Khan, took me into the heart of the Khattak country. We went, as 'gentleman' should, driving from Peshawar in an elegant and venerable Mercedes, trailed by a four-wheel-drive jeep which would take us through the 'rough spots' in remote areas. Dr Sahib Gul Khattak, an expert on local history, came along.

We stopped briefly in Kohat to allow Reza Khan to attend

to a few bits of business at his cotton spinning mill there and to visit the office of the Assistant Collector of Customs and Excise, traditionally know as the Head of the Salt Department, another Mr Khattak. His office and residence were in a century-old bungalow with walls three feet thick and a ceiling sixteen feet high. On a highly-polished wooden board above a modern fax machine were listed the names of all the Assistant Collectors since the foundation of Pakistan. And, lo, that of Lieut.-Col. E.R.C. Goodwin (14.8.47-31.5.50) led all the rest. (It was the only indication I ever came across that 'Buster' had other names, albeit neither his current successor nor anyone else was ever able to tell me what they were.)

At Bandu Daud Shah on the Kohat-Bannu Road we turned off on a side route that I have not been able to find listed on any map for Jatta, a salt-mining centre. Passing a ruined rest house and pickets built by Goodwin, now used as a caravanserai for the transfer of salt from camels to trucks, we crossed barren ground. Apart from an occasional flash of green from a tiny wheat field tucked into a corner of the hills, all was grey and brown, level places and hills alike, absolutely sterile. Outcroppings of salt appeared, just breaking the surface but poisoning what topsoil there was. Apart from the salt, there seemed nothing productive or profitable in the country. Even the gypsum which abounds in the hills is in too remote a location to be of much value.

Near the side of a massive hill, we came on piles of salt, grey and shiny, each chunk a foot or two wide and long. These had obviously been created by the hand of man but there was no one in sight. Probing into an enormous hole in the side of the hill, we went down to where it became a cavern. There was a single young man in a Pathan-tailored, electric-blue jump-suit loading chunks of salt into panniers on three camels. Each load must have weighed five hundred pounds. Other workers, he explained, hacked the salt onto the floor from the roof and sides of the mine. Then they went to another site and he and his camels carried it up to the surface. Sometimes trucks picked it up there. If they didn't, he and his camels eventually took it to the next collection point.

Heading south again on another road unknown to any of the three maps I carried, we came across the route of the new

Indus Highway, which will cut more than 200 miles off the Peshawar-Karachi run. Chinese and Turkish construction companies with Japanese supervising engineers and numerous local labourers already have much of the grading and most of the culverts and bridges in place. One of the biggest of the latter, I was told, is to be named the Mohammad Aslam Khan Khattak Bridge after my old friend, who as senior minister in the then government saw to it that the road ran through the Khattak country—which it will open up as never before.

Karak, long the centre of the salt trade and today capital of the district, is a large and bustling town in the centre of a relatively fertile valley known as the 'Greenery of the Khattaks'. Its first appearance in British imperial literature is, as far as I can determine, a description by the famous Christian medical missionary, Dr T.N. Pennell, after a visit in 1895: 'A rough and fanatical population, who refused to listen to our message, and even rejected our medical aid'.

We deposited our things at its brand new Circuit House and prowled through the extensive bazaar just as the shops were banging down their shutters for the breaking of the Ramazan fast. As bazaars go, Karak's is neat and systematic, with paved brick streets and poured-concrete shops. It was not always so. This is the 'New Bazaar', built after the devastating raid on the old one, of which Goodwin's description is given above

We went on to what was left of the old bazaar, now a congested residential labyrinth. There Arab Gul, the leader of the raid, came alive in the voice of Dr Gul Sahib, our guide. Arab Gul, like so many Khattaks, was a soldier in the Indian Army. On leave he returned to his village near Karak to find that his wife had given birth to a child he could not possibly have sired. He quickly found out who the father was and shot both him and his wife. This was in accord with *pukhtunwali*, but in the eyes of British India, two miles inside whose territory the killings had taken place, it was simple murder with a clear cut penalty: death by hanging.

Arab Gul deserted the Army and took sanctuary in adjacent Waziristan, where the British writ did not run. Deprived of profession, family and lands, he became the leading bandit of the area. His speciality was kidnapping rich Hindu merchants and holding them for ransom. As Goodwin notes, 'He was

reasonably kind to his captives and never cruel,' standing out against the practice of other bandits of 'sending a finger or an ear of the kidnapped person to his relatives to expedite payment'. Finally he decided to take possession of the whole bazaar in Karak.

He collected several hundred Wazirs, cut the telephone and telegraph lines leading into Karak, isolated police and Salt Department pickets with small detachments of his men, and descended on the bazaar. For nearly two days, the raiders looted merchandise and selected kidnappees. Then they loaded up camels, left ransom demands, and went back to Waziristan. Dr Gul Sahib showed us the place in the broken street where Arab Gul, with a Western-style hat on his head to demonstrate who was in control, sat on a chair and directed operations. The local urchins were as well-informed and respectful of the historic site as the learned scholar.

This Pathan tale has a typically tragic ending. British law did not run in Waziristan but the authorities put a high price on Arab Gul's head. He had lost his family, lands and profession. The brother of the man he killed had a right to *badal* (revenge). A friend of his youth from the same village now in the militia saw a chance for profit and promotion. This man went to Arab Gul in Waziristan and persuaded him to come back for a 'feast of reconciliation' in which the brother would accept token blood money, thereby ending the feud and paving the way for the outlaw's rehabilitation.

On the way Arab Gul foolishly allowed himself to be persuaded to give up his arms. As he entered the room for the feast, the dead man's brother shot him in the chest while the go-between shot him in the back. The conniver got the reward and a promotion to *jemadar* in the militia.

Goodwin helped bury Arab Gul and recounts his mother's pledge of revenge. It was plausible. There were other men in Arab Gul's family and he was respected and admired by countless Wazirs. Almost immediately, the brother of the offending lover was kidnapped and killed. Goodwin told the district authorities that they had signed the *jemadar's* death warrant and estimated that he had only a month to live, but 'as things fell out, he lived for another four,' during which two unsuccessful attempts were made on his life. Then, when on an inspection tour with

a party of militia, he was ambushed and killed, his genitals cut off and stuffed in his mouth. As Goodwin remarks, it was 'a fitting end for the traitor.'

A hundred yards from Karak's old bazaar, behind a low wall, stands a monument to another remarkable man, Dr Jehan Khan. It is a small stone cruciform church with a squat Islamic dome topped by a slender and inconspicuous bronze cross. Unused but maintained, it is all that is left in Karak of a vigorous Christian effort sponsored in the early twentieth-century by Dr Pennell of the Church Missionary Society in Bannu and carried on by Jehan Khan, the best-known of the few Christian converts on the Frontier.

He was born in the Afghan Valley of Laghman, and in about 1890 came as a boy to Bannu on a trading expedition with his father, who died not long after their arrival. Coming into Dr Pennell's service as a domestic, Jahan learned English and eventually embraced Christianity. He also apprenticed himself in medicine to Dr Pennell and married another convert of Afghan blood from India. Returning from a visit to his family in Laghman, he was poisoned, apparently for his faith, while travelling with a camel caravan through the Khyber. He recovered and went off under the auspices of the Missionary Society to Bahrein to work with American Protestant missionaries there. After his return, Dr Pennell decided to have another try at the 'rough and fanatical population' and sent him to establish an outpost at Karak.

Jahan spent the rest of his eighty-five years there and lies buried near his little church. Bereft of the security that Pathan *melmastia* and *nanawati* would have brought him if he had been an Englishman, he tried to counter his disadvantage as a renegade Muslim with untiring medical service to anyone who needed it. Reasonably enough, he developed a particular skill in the treatment of knife and gun-shot wounds. Most tribesmen didn't mind—or were unaware of—the Bible stories and homilies on the Christian virtue of forgiveness that he gave while probing and suturing.

British officials, including Goodwin, sat in the front pews in Jahan's little church when they were in Karak, and there was a small congregation of Indian Christians, albeit even today the Khattaks claim that no member of their tribe ever converted.

Jehan's 'winning of souls' for his and Dr Pennell's Victorian God was modest, and I could find no trace of it in the Karak of 1994. But he did establish a position of respect for himself and his faith which kept his little establishment unmolested through half a century of turmoil, including Arab Gul's raid and the disturbances at the time of Partition when many of Karak's Hindus and Sikhs fled to India.

Dr Jehan's story, like most Pathan sagas, has a footnote to it. This came up in the course of a conversation after dinner at the Circuit House on the often conflicting demands of *pukhtunwali* and official responsibility. It appeared that Dr Jehan's eldest son, Abdul Aziz Khan, though a member of the church, chose not to follow in his father's footsteps. Becoming an officer in the Salt Department, by chance he fell in one day with a Khattak who had killed a man for molesting his wife and fled to Waziristan. Like many absconders the outlaw returned now and again to his village to see family and friends. Aziz Khan recognized him but, like a good Pathan, decided to ignore that fact. A couple of his sepoy's, whose families were at feud with the absconder and who were eager for reward and recognition, insisted that Aziz arrest him. He reluctantly did so, and the honour of the family was diminished overnight. After the usual unsuccessful attempts on his life (which are often designed merely to warn the target to get out of town), Aziz was ambushed by a person or persons unknown. He took seven bullets, which effectively destroyed his right arm. Whether he was to be condemned or commended is still considered well worth a half-hour's discussion in Karak.

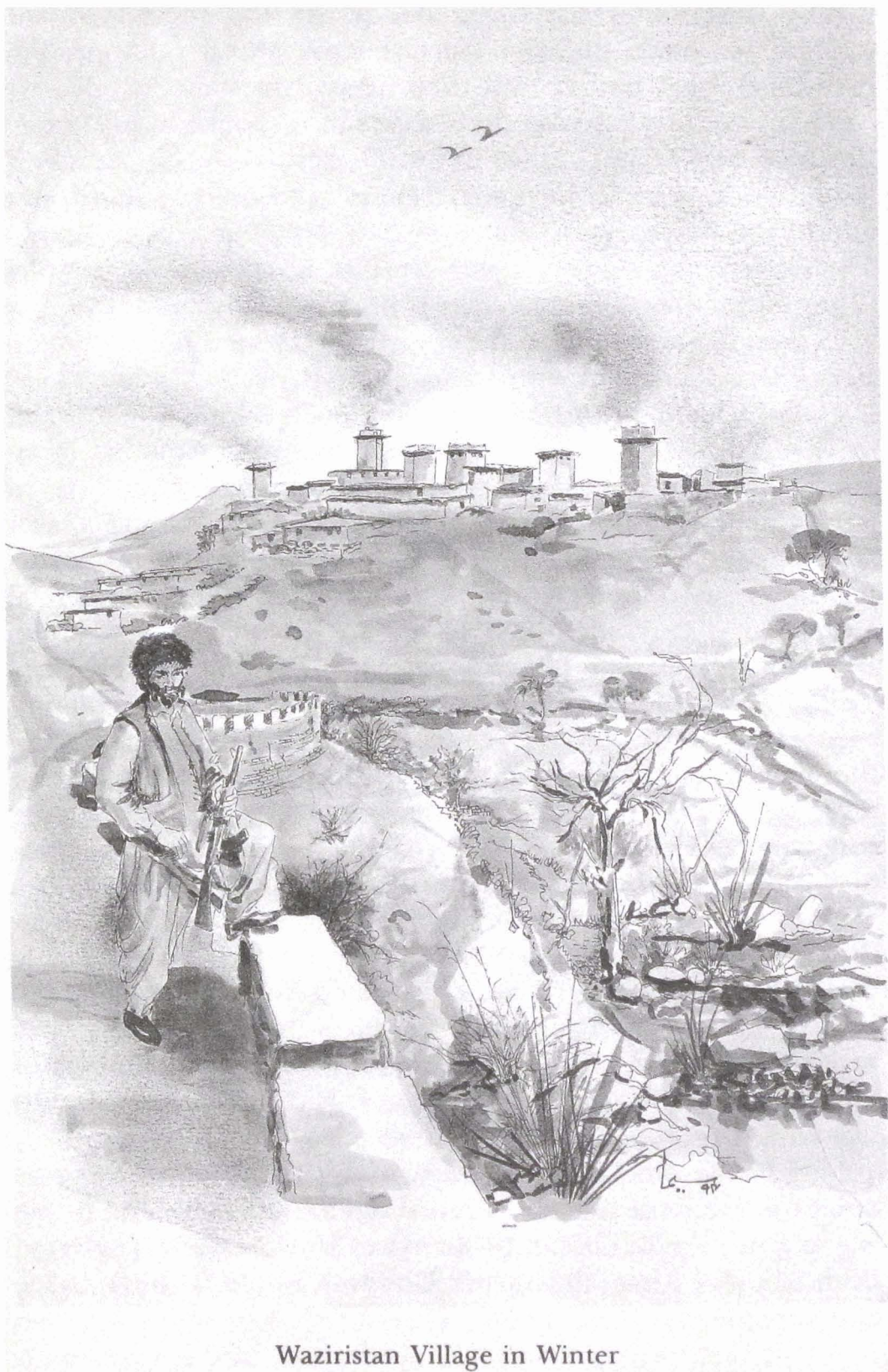
Before leaving, we drove through the 'Khattak Greenery', the fertile end of the Karak Valley, and then through the 'other' desert, end. The 'Greenery' had a pleasant, sub-tropical air about it. Broad dry riverbeds filled with stones, gravel, and sand are heavily dotted with oases of fields and trees. Individual palms and clusters of fruit trees are interspersed between farms and villages fortified with the usual walls and watch towers. In sharp contrast the desert end has nothing but stone, gravel, sand and clay. I was never able to get clear why there should be so great a difference between the adjacent areas. It had something to do with the availability of water but the usual explanation was simply that it had always been that way.

On the way out of Karak we were approached by four very dirty but boldly handsome, unveiled young women, each carrying a long stave. They had their hands out but their arrogant expressions were totally different from those seen on the occasional local beggar and they seemed to want to talk. My companions hastily waved them away. In response to my query, they said they were gypsies, not to be dealt with. We saw their tented encampments in the 'Greenery' and even in the desert end of the valley. As to what they did: 'Nothing—except steal'. The explanation as to why they were in Karak was also simple: 'They have always come at certain times of the year.'

Leaving Karak we followed the 'old road' toward Bannu, seeing frequent evidence of more construction of the Indus Valley Highway. Turning north again on the main Bannu-Kohat Road, we went through an area reminiscent of America's Grand Canyon. Steep hills ran along both sides of the road. Many of them were topped with now-abandoned stone picket posts and almost all were strongly stratified with brilliantly-coloured minerals. Apart from the ubiquitous gypsum, nothing of possible commercial value has yet been identified.

Various changes in the course of the road over the years were pointed out to me. Most of them seemed to have more to do with security than with convenience. A diversion from the 'closed side' of a mountain to the 'open side' had been undertaken more than fifty years ago after Goodwin and a party had been held up by bandits. At Bahadur Khel, a formidable new tunnel had been drilled through a mountain during the height of the recent war in Afghanistan because of the realization that a single high-explosive Soviet rocket hitting the sole existing one would cut the NWFP in half. A few miles beyond, the high arch of a venerable British-built bridge across a wide, dry river bed had simply been filled in with rock and sand, whether for the same strategic reason or because it had become structurally unsound, I was unable to determine.

Such is life, work, and transportation in the Khattak country today, but, as Reza Kuli Khan remarked as we left it, 'The future is going to be a lot different—thanks to Uncle Aslam's Highway.' Both Khushal Khan and Buster Goodwin would, I think, agree and approve.



Waziristan Village in Winter

Chapter 7

Waziristan: Less Dark and Bloody

When I was wandering about the Frontier in the 1950s, the 5,000 square mile tract in the southern part of tribal territory that is home to half a million Wazir and Mahsud tribesmen was remote and inaccessible. The tribesmen themselves might be seen visiting the nearby provincial towns of Bannu and Tank, but no one went to see them uninvited. After due negotiations with the Political Department, I was able to make short trips into Miranshah and Wana, headquarters respectively of the North and South Waziristan Agencies.

But such places as Razmak and Kaniguram, centres of tribal strength within the agencies, were forbidden to outsiders. For them I had to make do with the reminiscences of British officers, such as the novelist John Masters, who had served there, descriptions by Pakistanis who had also been stationed in Razmak in the old days, and a handful of photographs that one of them had recently taken while passing by Razmak on the way to a *jirga* in another place.

It was small wonder that people kept away. In a particularly perceptive anthropological distinction the Pakistani scholar-official Akbar S. Ahmad distinguishes the Wazirs and the Mahsuds from other Pathans by describing them as acephalous, segmentary egalitarian, living in low-production zones. This is in contrast to the tribes he characterizes as ranked groups with super- and subordinate social positions inhabiting irrigated lands. Among the latter the important element of life is *qalang*, taxes and/or rents. To the Wazirs and Mahsuds *nang*, honour, is all that counts.

Having nothing to lose and liking it that way, the Wazirs and Mahsuds, more vigorously than the northern tribes, fought for three centuries every effort of the Mughal Emperors of Delhi to penetrate their territory. Even under the great Ranjit Singh,

Sikh rule of the area in the first half of the nineteenth century consisted of no more than annual killing raids into the southern tribal area. In fact one gets the impression from contemporary documents that the Punjabi *sardars* were relieved to turn the turbulent territory over to the British in 1849.

These new-comers left the Wazirs and Mahsuds pretty much alone until 1860, when the Mahsuds, in an expression of annoyance with their recently-acquired neighbours, came down and looted and burned the prosperous provincial town of Tank. In retaliation British administrator Neville Chamberlain took a multi-divisional force into tribal territory from Tank and, in a sixteen-day 'scuttle and burn' march north which brought him out through Bannu, restored Waziristan to its normal state of anarchy.

The fight never ceased after that. During World War I, the Wazirs and Mahsuds flirted with German agents. In the Third British-Afghan War in 1919 they supported the Kabul regime and briefly took control of Wana. In the 1920s and 1930s there were literally hundreds of tribal raids into the province and dozens of British punitive expeditions into tribal territory. The sparring escalated into full-scale war in 1936-8 when the British employed more than 30,000 regular troops in battle. Neither side won, but for many of the British soldiers who survived it was a bloody baptism for World War II. For the tribesmen it was a demonstration that their *nang* was intact.

Strangely, the Wazirs and the Mahsuds, except for the infamous 'Faqir of Ipi', a Wazir *mullah* who had been both genesis and genius to the 1936-8 war and who spent the next several years dickering with German agents, remained quiescent during World War II. They also stayed on the sidelines in the years immediately afterward when new alignments were being formed in the sub-continent prior to Independence which eventually led to the emergence of Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister of India and Mohammed Ali Jinnah as Governor-General of Pakistan.

In late 1946 Nehru, accompanied by the Frontier Congress Party leader, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, came to Razmak to campaign for the inclusion of tribal territory in a united India. A combined Mahsud-Wazir *jirga* shot at his plane as it landed, threatened to beat him over the head with umbrellas during his speech, told him that if they ever decided to deal with any Indian, it

would be Jinnah of the Muslim League, and dismissed him with contempt. (Victoria Schofield gives an amusing account of the incident on pages 160-1 of *Every Rock, Every Hill*.)

They did in fact deal—and typically—with the new nation of Pakistan: Pakistan should withdraw its troops from Razmak and other places in tribal territory which the new army had inherited from the British, and the tribes in turn would accept the light-handed and largely nominal administration of political agents and small para-military scout units stationed at agency headquarters in Wana and Miranshah. If more armed men were needed, they would supply them themselves in the form of *khassadars* (levies)—which, however, the Pakistan Government would have to pay for.

Oh, yes, what about the Faqir of Ipi? He was still alive, holed up with a modest following in an inaccessible hide-out not far west of Razmak. The tribes as such would no longer support him, but neither would they eliminate him or vouch for his behaviour. Pakistan forces would not be allowed to go after him either.

The Faqir, Mirza Ali Khan by name, had not changed his character. From the beginning of the new order in South Asia he collaborated with Afghanistan in promoting the secession of the Pathans from Pakistan to form a new nation of 'Pushtoonistan'. By the early 1950s he was receiving Soviet agents in his cave at Gorwekht. But nothing much came of it all, and he died, surprisingly of natural causes, a few years later. His former foes in London gave him a glowing obituary. According to *The Times* of 20 April 1960 he was, 'a man of principle and saintliness, the inspiration and general of tribal revolt.' Even in Paradise that must have been a surprise to him.

To explain further why the rulers of the Indus Plain wanted to keep non-residents out of Waziristan, it should be noted that the Wazirs and Mahsuds fancied themselves as 'king-makers'. Long used to being courted by amirs and kings in Kabul, they had given the Afghans their few victories in the 1919 War with the British. In 1929, after the modernizing King Amanullah of Afghanistan had been overthrown by a rabble led by the water-carrier Bacha Saqao, his cousin General Nadir Khan twice called the Wazirs and Mahsuds to Kabul to recapture the Durrani throne

and establish himself on it. In return he had to let them loot his capital city.

Then in October 1947, with the future of the former princely state of Kashmir still being negotiated between India and Pakistan under United Nations supervision, the Wazirs and Mahsuds (together with many of the other tribes) erupted again. Srinagar is more than three hundred miles from Wana and Miranshah, with formidable mountains in between, but having scattered local Hindu troops before them, within ten days the tribesmen were a few miles from the vital airfield in the suburbs of the Kashmiri capital.

There they stopped to digest their loot, some of which was shown me in 1951, as described in the first chapter of my earlier book. The Governor-General of India, Lord Louis Mountbatten, and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had time to fly in crack troops from New Delhi. The Maharajah acceded to India, the capital city and airfield were occupied and the Muslim forces gradually driven back up the valley. After a few months the Wazirs and Mahsuds went home, having failed at this effort at 'king-making'. As a result there would in later years be three wars between Pakistan and India.

It is not surprising that governments are leery about strangers prowling about among such a people. I was given more freedom than most in the 1950s and 1960s, but I was not sure what to expect when I came back in 1993, accompanied by a journalist son, wanting to see more of Waziristan.

Government approval for entry into the tribal area still had to be acquired, of course, and arrangements made for escorts and overnight accommodations. In Peshawar we took ourselves down to call on the Home Secretary. An urbane and well-read civil servant, he accepted our antecedents and bona fides readily enough. Just where did we want to go?

Right through the whole of Waziristan, including Razmak and Kaniguram.

Very well. We would spend our first night in Kohat. An escort from the North Waziristan Agency would pick us up at nearby Hangu and take us to Miranshah. Escorts from the South Waziristan Agency would guard us from there to Kaniguram and Razmak, on to Wana, and out through Tank, from where we could go to Dera Ismail Khan to get a commercial flight

out of the Frontier. Permits were written out and telegrams despatched to the political agents concerned. A warning and a blessing were offered as we left.

'You know Razmak and Kaniguram are in the high country,' the Home Secretary remarked. 'It's cold and miserable up there in January. Local tempers are short. No one who doesn't have to go anywhere near. That proves to me that you're serious about this business. Have a good trip!'

We did. The Deputy Commissioner for Kohat, our host for the first night, gave us spacious accommodations and an excellent dinner. Demonstrating the usual Frontier capability for history, he recounted in exact and unchanged detail the story of the kidnapping of the British girl Mollie Ellis from Kohat seventy years before, and added a colourful account of her return visit to Kohat several years ago. He reminded us that one of his British predecessors, Sir Louis Cavagnari, had built the house in which we were sitting on the model of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello more than a century ago before going off to be killed in Kabul, thus starting the Second Afghan War.

He sent us bed-tea in the morning, gave us a hearty breakfast, and warmly waved us off on our way to Hangu. Cavagnari had built well. The only difference in his version of Monticello that I noticed forty years after my first visit was that the huge, magnificent carpets that had adorned the rotunda and the main rooms then were no longer in evidence. Politeness forbade my asking about them, but my private guess is that sometime during the decades they caught the eye of a visiting minister or other top-level official and now repose in other government quarters.

The mixed bag of North Waziristan scouts and *khassadars* who met us in two pick-up trucks at Hangu were a happy and helpful lot. They were amply supplied with automatic rifles. The neat grey-blue uniforms of the Scouts contrasted with the gaudy if ragged attire of the *khassadars*, who were given to crossed bandoliers on their chests filled with brass cartridges, which they polished regularly sitting on the ground while at rest and bouncing about in the back of a truck while travelling.

None of them could show me just where it was that the first Mughal, Babur, had erected the pillar of heads which he noted with such satisfaction in his journal when he took the town and slaughtered its inhabitants in 1505. But they assured me

that there was no possible danger between Hangu and Miranshah, to which it was their great honour to escort us. Once we went on to Razmak and South Waziristan, of course, they couldn't say. There were a lot of bad people down there.

They were right about the first point anyway. When I first saw Thal at the neck of the Kurram Valley it was a bustling, brawling place and a principal staging ground for the Ghilzai *powindhas*, the 'Great Nomads', who swept back and forth across the international boundary every year in tens of thousands. Their aggressive merchandising of the timber and skins they brought down from Afghanistan ensured frequent individual fights. The distaste of the Sunni townsmen for the Shia Turi tribesmen from further up the Valley often led to group unpleasantness when the latter came to town. Now in 1993 all seemed peaceful, the only activity centring on a group of Mujahiddin on their way back to Afghanistan reclaiming the weapons they had had to check in when they entered the province.

Forty years earlier I had been intrigued by the area between Thal and Miranshah where every fortress abode had been connected to the government-controlled road by a ditch which the householder used to avoid being seen and shot by his neighbour. A few of the old ditches were still in evidence but most of them had been filled in or converted to irrigation channels. When I stopped to take a picture of the 'old and the new', a friendly Scout pointed out that the tightly-packed rows of trees which lined the water channels served the original purpose equally well. He approved. To provoke your neighbour by walking around in plain sight was not a nice thing to do.

The road to Miranshah (alt. 3,000 feet) ran steadily upward, the far peaks white with snow, the Afghan border a scant twenty-five miles away. Our little convoy pulled up at a petrol station in the town. As if to demonstrate just how safe it was in North Waziristan, our escorts shook hands and returned to their barracks for lunch. They took the time, however, to warn us again to be careful down south. You never knew about those people.

We sat near the petrol pumps and talked with their proprietor, who insisted on presenting us with a steady supply of free colas. He had worked and learned English in the Persian Gulf and served as interpreter for a half-dozen other idlers sitting on

charpoys (wood and rope beds). All Wazirs, they were amiable enough until the subject turned to Afghanistan. They approved of the Mujahiddin, of course, and of the support the US had given them. But they couldn't help wondering why the US had not simply turned to the Wazirs with supplies of arms and money. If it had, the whole business across the border would have been over much sooner. As a matter of fact, they would have gone on up and taken care of the Soviets too. Remarkably well-informed on developments in the former USSR, they conceded, however, that now there was no need for that. The godless Communists had taken care of themselves. By the way, was the American Government really interested in buying back Stinger missiles at \$100,000 each, as the newspapers said? They might just possibly be able to...

Then, just as we were about to accept our host's offer to order up a kebab lunch for us, word came that both lunch and our new escort had been waiting an hour for us at the Government Rest House a few blocks away. We made quick work of greetings and food and were soon on our way again. Once more the road ran upward, climbing another 3,500 feet to Razmak. Villages remarkably similar in architecture and lay-out to those on the plains clustered on hillsides. They offered a presumption of human occupancy but not a soul could be sighted in the countryside. Here the snow blanket had come down from the peaks to cover villages and road alike. Few, if any, tracks could be seen in it.

During a stop by the roadside, I asked the sergeant in charge of the half-dozen Shawal Rifles who comprised our escort where the people were. Shivering and stamping his feet, he explained that everyone stayed inside at this time of year. He glanced at a bank of clouds dumping fresh snow a few miles away and at the declining light in the western sky that marked a setting sun and suggested that I too would want to stay inside in Razmak that night. He certainly intended to do so.

'But what do they do with their animals?' I asked.

'Don't have any, except for a few goats and maybe a sheep. They keep them inside too.'

I pointed at a sizeable village opposite us. Not a light nor a wisp of smoke was to be seen. 'Don't they have fires? How do they keep warm?'

He waved an arm across the countryside, picture-postcard-pretty under its blanket of snow, I realized that the contours underneath were all rock. Nowhere was there the outline of a tree or a flash of green foliage.

'No wood for a real fire,' the sergeant pointed out. 'They buy a little charcoal in Razmak. It's expensive and hard to use for heat but it doesn't make smoke and that's good. An enemy can't tell whether you are home or not. Mostly they just put on all the clothes and blankets they have and wait for summer. But don't worry,' he concluded, 'there will be wood for a fire in your room at the Officers' Mess tonight and we'll bring you hot water for shaving in the morning.'

Razmak came into existence only after World War I, but it played a key role in imperial history from then on. Indeed, in the 1920s British penetration of tribal territory, which had been known in the nineteenth century as the 'Forward Policy', came to be called the 'Razmak Policy'. Its concept was simple: establish in the middle of hostile tribes large fortified strongpoints which could never be overrun, man them heavily with the latest and best of men and equipment, connect them with good roads, and sally forth in strength when necessary to punish wrongdoers. The arrangement was richly symbolic of the relationship between government and tribes that had solidified in the latter years of British rule.

Here, surrounded by Mahsuds, a permanent garrison of as many as 15,000 regular troops, British as well as Indian, thousands of horses and mules, a fleet of transport vehicles, and an armoured car company sat behind a triple circle of barbed wire with artillery pieces pointed out in all directions, while batteries of floodlights kept the perimeter bright twenty-four hours a day.

Within months of Pakistan's assuming sovereignty it was all abandoned, and in the 1950s and 1960s only a rare outside visitor saw the huge ghost town, to return with tales of doors banging in the wind and an occasional tribesman sitting in the deserted streets patiently cutting up strands of barbed wire to fill shells for his home-made mortar.

Then in the 1970s, as Afghan Prime Minister Daud stepped up his efforts to promote 'Pushtoonistan', Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto decided to reoccupy. He gave Razmak to a Scout unit as headquarters. The troops were mostly Pathans and only

the officers from the regular Pakistani Army. They seldom ventured outside the cantonment except on escort missions such as the one that brought us in. A few civilians came also to establish and maintain medical and educational facilities, which eventually expanded into a college and hospital open to tribesmen. Perhaps these factors were why the tribes accepted the new arrangement amicably.

This was the Razmak we came to visit in 1993. We could see little of it as we arrived after night had fallen, just acres and acres of dark buildings spaced along geometrically laid-out streets. At the Officers Mess, our host, the lieutenant-colonel commanding the Shawal Rifles, greeted us warmly and showed us our room. He hoped that I and my son would not mind sharing it. They could better keep us warm that way. A glowing stove and piles of blankets testified to their efforts.

A briefing on the Shawal Rifles' duties and responsibilities preceded dinner. These centred, first, on 'keeping the peace'. The colonel admitted that this was a rather broad task but insisted it wasn't difficult. If one tribesman murdered another, that was a matter for tribal *jirga* determination. If one clan went to war with another, that too was left to the *jirga* system—unless it spilled over onto the roads or beyond tribal territory. A couple of years before he had taken command, there had been a disturbing incident. One of the clans had kidnapped an expatriate teacher from the college and held him in its village. As he understood it, the teacher had given the clan *malik's* son poor marks. The colonel's predecessor had to go out to see about the matter. After a few weeks he had managed to talk the clan into giving the man back. Now he was teaching in a school elsewhere. The colonel himself had had no 'peace-keeping' incidents at all during his period of command.

As it happened I later met the Englishman concerned. He verified the story but provided an even more exotic explanation of its cause. The *malik* had been defeated in an election for a seat in the National Assembly. Knowing that the school teacher was a friend of important Pakistanis on the national level, he had taken him for ransom, i.e., overturning the election results. It did not work, but the *malik's* Pathan honour was upheld.

The Rifles' second major duty was making sure the roads connecting Razmak with the outside world remained secure,

so that guests such as we could visit, mail and supplies move in and out, and, if it were ever to be necessary, reinforcements come up to the garrison's support. A third activity was training. The Rifles did a lot of that, mostly within the cantonment, although they made an occasional *gusht* (patrol) outside. Only in certain areas, of course; in others the tribesmen would not welcome them.

In response to a question he showed me those areas on a map. They comprised almost half of the territory for which he was responsible. When I asked if he didn't sometimes feel tempted to go out and 'show the flag' in these areas, he replied reasonably, 'For what purpose? If they were trying to secede to Afghanistan or going down to the province to raid or holding kidnapped people in their villages, we might have to go after them. But as long as they are not bothering people outside, why should we bother them?'

The resident Assistant Political Agent was sick, so only the eight other officers of the Rifles appeared for dinner, a major, two captains, and five lieutenants. In contrast to my first dinner at a Scouts' mess forty years earlier, neither dress uniforms, dinner jackets, nor alcoholic toasts were in evidence. Like their colonel, they were all Punjabi career officers, and their talk tended to training and other army matters rather than to the folkways of the Mahsuds and Wazirs. Afterward they turned to what they were really enthusiastic about: bridge and the prospect of a couple of new partners at it.

As was appropriate, I was paired with the colonel and my son with the major. It turned out not to be my kind of bridge. They were experts. After the bidding and the first trick or two the outcome was clear to all; hands were laid down and scores counted up. Hopelessly out-classed, I beat a hasty retreat to my room after the first rubber. My more skilful son lasted through a rotation of captains but gave up when confronted by a succession of 'four club' opening bids by his first lieutenant partner.

Some mysterious good fairy slipped in a couple of times during the night to replenish the stove, and in the morning hot shaving water came with bed-tea. After breakfast we had a drive round the cantonment. Everywhere one looked groups of Shawal Rifles were busy at morning exercises. An occasional solitary figure

could be seen around the hospital. But the college was closed for vacation, and most of the buildings we had glimpsed last night were deserted, with both doors and door frames gone to provide insulation or fuel in the villages. There was no sign at all of the once-vaunted lighting and barbed wire systems.

The road south, climbing another three thousand feet, was clogged with snow, but we managed to get through by virtue of the escorting scouts getting down and, with automatic rifles slung, pushing our and their own vehicles. When we came opposite Kaniguram, we stopped on the road across a ravine from the village itself to admire and take a picture of the graceful multi-storey houses and towers clustered tightly together for defence.

‘Aren’t we going in?’ I asked.

Well, no, the sergeant in charge of the escort told me. That was something of a delicate matter and arrangements had to be made weeks in advance. To comfort me he added, ‘I expect the American *sahibs* would be warmly welcomed, although they might want to keep you so long that you would miss lunch in Wana. The problem really is that they wouldn’t like us coming in without notice.’

The road turned downward, and over a real Pathan lunch in Wana the Assistant Political Agent, himself a Wazir, and I exchanged memories of early years and talked of the long-gone, mutually beloved Ataullahjan Khan, who had been Political Agent forty years earlier. Our host described a few excursions around Wana he had planned for the afternoon and a Khattak dance laid on for the evening. He thought these would help us get a feel for the real tribesmen. He let it be known that he didn’t play bridge himself and that he wasn’t very impressed with ‘that bunch of Punjabis’ up in Razmak. They were good enough soldiers but what did they know about Pathans?

It also came up in the conversation that the plane which we intended to get from Dera Ismail Khan to a long-planned rendezvous with another son on duty in Quetta with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees flew, not the day after tomorrow, as we had thought, but tomorrow and early in the morning too. There wouldn’t be another for three days.

So, against everyones’ preferences, we decided we had to push on from Wana that day. An escort of South Waziristan Scouts

was hastily assembled to take us to Tank where we would exit tribal territory. The sergeant's plea that he and his men be permitted to take the honoured guests on to Dera Ismail Khan was granted by the Assistant Political Agent and permission was even given for them to spend the night in the steamy (even in January) town on the Indus in the extreme south of the North-West Frontier Province.

Dusk fell half-way between Wana and Tank, just as we entered the Shahur Tangi, the infamous dark defile in which so much blood has been spilled. Sarwekai, the post where, in 1904, Captain Bowring and sepoy Kabul Khan, in a tale that has already been told, entered their names in the annals of *pukhtunwali*, guards the eastern end of the gorge. The first ambush within it took place in April 1921, when a convoy coming from Wana was attacked by Wazirs and Mahsuds. Three months later the tribesmen struck again. Dropping home-made bombs from the cliffs, they stampeded the pack animals and crippled the motor vehicles, then shot the sepoy at their leisure. The British got reinforcements in, and mortars and mountain artillery drove off the attackers. But then a downpour in the nearby hills created a 'spate' which suddenly brought the normal trickle of water in the Shahur Stream to full flood and inundated the rescuers.

The tribesmen's great victory came in April 1937. Led by a Mahsud outlaw named Konia Khan, just after dawn they attacked a fifty-vehicle convoy escorted by four armoured cars on its way to Wana. Having rehearsed the ambush a few days earlier, they kept their firing positions on the side of the gorge above the level to which the armoured cars' machine guns could be elevated. British officers were picked off first. Tracer bullets set lorries afire, and made passage around them impossible. The battle went on into the night. At dawn the next day, the tribesmen had disappeared. Their casualties were estimated at sixteen killed and twenty-six wounded. On the British side fifty-two lay dead, including the convoy commander and most of the British officers, with forty-seven more wounded.

The Shahur Tangi saw a bloody confrontation of another kind in October 1947. A few months after Partition and Independence and the chaos and Hindu-Muslim slaughter that accompanied them, a Gurkha battalion and a Sikh mountain battery of the old British Indian Army were still in Wana. At

the same time, Mahsuds were returning home in a bad mood from an unsuccessful effort to take Srinagar in Kashmir. It was clear that any effort to get the Sikhs and Gurkhas out would be a dangerous one. Nevertheless, the few remaining British officers in Waziristan made plans to take them down to Tank for onward transportation home. The once-mighty British Indian Army was no more. The Pakistani Army had not yet been organized on the Frontier. Escort duty fell to Pathan Scouts units in Wana, primarily Afridis. While the Hindu Gurkhas and the Sikhs were as distasteful to them as to their fellow Pathans, they took it as a matter of *nang* (honour) to get them through.

The Mahsuds made a lightning strike in the Shahur Tangi. They destroyed most of the lorries and left forty or fifty casualties, Afridi Scouts as well as Gurkhas and Sikhs, but most of the refugee soldiers made it through. An eye-witness account of the attack (which one can hope will be the last that the Shahur Tangi will see), as well as a detailed description of the 1937 ambush, can be found in Charles Chenevix Trench's *The Frontier Scouts*.

Forty-five years later, when my son and I passed through the Shahur Tangi, ghosts aplenty hovered about us, but we saw none. It was full night when we came out at the other end, and we saw little of Tank as we passed through. In Dera Ismail Khan the escort got lost and it took us an hour to find the Commissioner's House, where telegraphic arrangements had been made for us to spend the night. The next morning we got the flight that had upset our schedule, and, as I had done so often in the past, left the Frontier.

By going in at Hangu and coming out at Tank we had duplicated in reverse Neville Chamberlain's trespass across Waziristan 133 years earlier. It is not as fearsome and deadly now but it is as wild and fascinating as ever. I expect it will be the same if my grandchildren ever set out to see it.



The Great Mountains

Chapter 8

Swat, Buner, and Chitral

When I was first visited Swat, in 1952, it was on my honeymoon. We stayed in the Ruler's recently-renovated guest house. There was no other place for tourists. Wali Jehanzeb had us inspect his new high school, while he himself was busy repairing a road bridge. When I and a thirty-year-old son came back to Swat in 1993, there was varied and abundant hotel space but we stayed in the private house of Aurangzeb, Jehanzeb's son, a friend of decades standing, who would have been Wali if the princely state had not been incorporated into Pakistan.

Swat had a certain fame in the United States, where its Ruler shared honours with famed baseball player Babe Ruth, the 'Sultan of Swat'. Unlike Kashmir, Hyderabad Deccan and the Rajput principalities, it was not what foreigners usually imagine when they think of an Indian princely state. Relatively small (4,000 square miles) and poor, it has even today scarcely more than a million people. From the sixteenth century on it has been dominated by the warlike hill Yusufzai.

Their brothers in the plains had to accept Mughal, Durrani, and Sikh sovereignty from time to time, but the men of Swat never paid taxes to or took orders from anyone. An interesting anthropological sidelight on their way of life lies in Fredrik Barth's observation in one of his earlier books that the Yusufzai penetrated the mountains only to the exact extent that the land was suitable for the double-cropping required to support their lavish traditions of war and hospitality.

In the early nineteenth century a foreshadowing of order and stability appeared in the person of Abdul Ghaffar, a shepherd who became a saint. Although born in Swat, Abdul Ghaffar was not a Yusufzai but a Safi Mohmand from Afghanistan. Having acquired a religious education, joined the Naqshbandi Sufi order,

and won a reputation for holiness while wandering about the Peshawar Valley, he returned to Saidu in Swat and, contrary to all custom, married a Yusufzai. His reputation for wisdom and piety grew; his influence spread among the Yusufzai; he acquired the title of 'Akhund'. His word became law but he never attempted to assume temporal power. More was to be done by his descendants.

In the late nineteenth century, concerned at Tsarist expansion eastward, the British rulers of India turned to strengthening their position on the Frontier. In the Durand Agreement of 1893 they demarcated India's borders with Afghanistan and made sure that the Amir, Abdur Rahman, renounced all claims to Dir, Swat and Chitral. In 1895 they created the Malakand Agency to administer the three areas. In 1895-8 the great tribal revolt which had begun in Waziristan soon encompassed the northern areas and brought the young Winston Churchill his baptism under fire with the Malakand Field Force.

The new masters of the Frontier won all the battles but found their subjects as difficult to deal with after as before. An intra-Pathan struggle for dominance soon developed in Swat with the grandson of the Akhund, Miangul Gulshahzada, contesting for power with Sayyid Abdul Jabbar Shah, great-nephew of Sayyid Akbar Shah of Sitana, patron and associate of Ahmad Shah Barelvi, the leader of the famed 'Hindustani Fanatics'. Before long the British had had enough of trying to maintain order through direct rule. The Miangul had clearly come out on top in the local conflict. In 1926 they created a new princely state, made him the ruler with the title of Wali Sahib (popularly called Badshah Sahib), and gave the turbulent Yusufzai a chance to manage their own affairs.

The Badshah Sahib did it with stern efficiency. He built a network of picturesque small square forts equipped with telephones; he constructed roads and then primary schools. He eliminated the rabid animals which had been a scourge of the Valley. He balanced his Yusufzai barons against each other. While stressing Pathan dominance, he gave enough attention and resources to the sizeable number of Kohistanis in the high mountains, pastoral *Gujars* and Muslim *Paracha* businessmen to keep them content, a useful brake on the more impetuous Pathans.

He sent his sons off to the British-founded Islamia College in Peshawar, and despite a prolonged estrangement from Jehanzeb, his eldest, carefully trained him up as his successor. He presided over Swat's accession to Pakistan in 1947 and then abdicated in favour of Jehanzeb in 1949. As he himself admitted, he sensed that the state he had so assiduously created under the British would not last indefinitely in the new independent nation and he did not want to be associated with its dissolution.

I met the Badshah Sahib only once, at his retirement retreat in 1954. Suffering from cataracts, he was nonetheless studying both Urdu and English, carefully completing the reading courses in the current high-school curriculum, and going through the Holy Koran page by page, referring to a pile of commentaries as he did. He turned away from these, a little impatiently I thought, to give me what surely must have been the most comprehensive-ever oral history of Swat, remarking that he supposed he would have to write a book, as too many visitors asked him too many questions to leave time for his religious studies. In fact, he did. It was published in Peshawar in 1963 by Ferozsons Ltd., *The Story of Swat*, (as told to Muhammad Asif Khan). It is well worth looking at. He died in 1971 at the age of eighty-nine.

Wali Jehanzeb faithfully followed his father's example, building more schools and roads, as was evident in my first meeting with him in 1952 already described. He fought off an effort in the early 1950s by North-West Frontier Province Chief Minister Abdul Qayyum Khan to incorporate the state into the province, but in 1969, when I was again in Pakistan at the US Embassy in Islamabad, history had its way, and Swat joined Dir and Chitral as integrated parts of Pakistan. Jehanzeb's story is best told by himself. He too has written a book, *The Last Wali of Swat*, as told to the Swedish anthropologist Fredrik Barth. It also deserves a prominent place in Frontier history.

And what of Jehanzeb's son, Aurangzeb, who would have been the next Wali? While still firmly sited in Swat, his politics are nationally-based and his name is widely known throughout Pakistan. An army officer in his youth, in 1955 he married the eldest daughter of President Ayub Khan, another out-of-sept union (Ayub was a Tarin Pathan from Hazara District) which worked out as remarkably well as that of his great-great-great-

grandfather, the Akhund. He served in the National Assembly for some years. Defeated in the 1980s, he won back his seat in 1993, about the time my son and I made our last visit to Swat. The blood ran true. He was, he confided, going to try to squeeze some real money out of his colleagues for—'roads and schools' in Swat.

The Swat Pathans share with their brothers in the plains a sturdy, handsome physique, a passionate devotion to *pukhtunwali*, and a particular fondness for the *hujra* (guest house) as a centre for social and political activity. However, they have always struck me as having a distinction of their own. While the Mardan *khans* stroll elegantly through their fields, and the Buner yeomanry turn gracefully from plough to rifle and back again, my image of the Swat Yusufzai is of a lone man crouched like a hawk on a rock above the road willing equally to swoop down to seize loot or to proffer help.

It was the latter treatment that son Bill and I received on our last visit to Swat in 1993. Driving up to see a new ski resort and army mountain warfare school some thirty miles north-east of Saidu, we got our vehicle hopelessly stuck in the snow. Before long a single tribesman, feet shod only in *chaplis* (open Pathan sandals), dropped down from an invisible eerie to help us push and shove. Our efforts were unavailing until a sports car containing three obviously affluent young men came along and joined in. *Khans'* sons, they were on their way up to have a Coca Cola at the resort. Egalitarianism still prevails among the Yusufzai. The newcomers showed the humble countryman the same courtesy and respect they gave to us, insisting on working at the particularly confounded right rear wheel because their fancy boots were better protection than his naked *chaplis*.

The history of the modern state of Swat may have been short, but important things have gone on in the Valley for a long time. The most impressive is the Graeco-Buddhist Gandhara school of art, which probably originated here. Many of its choicest treasures are in the museums of Peshawar, Lahore and Karachi, a few even in Rome, Paris, Berlin, London and New York. But there is still plenty in Swat, unexcavated, carved into living rock, and in the splendid little museum in Saidu.

Followers of the Buddha, like Muslims centuries later, originally looked askance at visual representation of their Lord. He was

represented by a symbol—an umbrella, a footprint, the sacred *bodhi* tree, the *chakra* (wheel of life). But under the influence of the Greek passion for sculpture left behind by Alexander and his successors, the Gandharans began to carve stone. A case can be made that all Buddhist iconography, in India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Nepal, Tibet, Japan and China, derived from their work.

There are representations of the Buddha in the bloom of youth, a sleek handsome man with meticulously dressed hair, well-trimmed moustache, and the ancient Aryan sign of nobility, elongated ear-lobes. Others show him hollow-cheeked, eye-sockets sunken, nose tissueless, spine strained, ribs showing, belly swollen with starvation. Later, under the influence of Shamanism and Nestorianism, there developed a fascination with ordinary people and events, but with a flavour of magic and mysticism that led the Italian scholar, Guiseppe Turci, who excavated in Swat, to pronounce it 'a nation of witches and magicians'.

The Swat Museum collection is particularly striking in this area: a whimsical Buddha driving a chariot behind two chargers, his horse Kanthaka hungry in his stable, a young devotee with flower-decorated nimbus slightly askew, a dancer in leotard and ribbed stockings feeling the cold, a *yakshi* (female tree spirit) arrogantly graceful with hand on hip, a dreamy female with an amorous male removing her skirt while crooning in her ear. Exquisite little round stone toilet trays with scenes of people eating drinking, dressing, and working lie in rows. This is a Swat far removed from that of Akhunds, Mianguls, Walis and today's Yusufzai, but it will never be forgotten either. In 1994, in the remote south-east corner of what is now Swat District, I came across another memory of the Akhund. Travelling in the company of the redoubtable Chitrali Colonel Khushwaqt-ul-Mulk and Behroz Khan, a young Yusufzai journalist, I visited Buner, a series of smiling valleys along the Indus noted for opium production, cut off from the north-east corner of the Peshawar Valley by the Ambela Pass, scene of the first major confrontation of what was to be an eighty-five year struggle between British and Pathans.

From Mardan the road winds up through Shahbazghari, site of the Emperor Asoka's well-known stone-carved admonitions to his subjects to be good. An earlier experience there was repeated. A circle of schoolboys on an outing stood around

their teacher while he, translating from English to Pushtu from a book in his hand, interpreted for them the ancient Koroshti inscription. (In the tradition of Pathan schoolmastery, he slapped a boy occasionally to keep him attentive.)

The road onward goes through Rustam, a large and prosperous village in the north-east corner of Mardan District, and then climbs high along the mountainsides above chequerboard green and yellow fields of wheat and mustard to the Ambela Pass, the entrance to Buner. Here and there small side valleys blessed with springs, of the kind that would be called 'hollows' in the southern United States, branch off. As in the US, where such remote places are valued for illegal whisky production, the Buner hollows were until recently given over to the opium poppy.

Now, thanks to strict controls by the Pakistan Government, there was no opium in sight. Most of the new agricultural infrastructure designed to support alternative crops didn't seem to be in working order and some of the people we talked to blamed US anti-narcotics pressure for a loss of prosperity. Strangely, here in the mountains camels are the common form of freight transport. They emerge from the hollows one at a time laden with timber and great bundles of forage, a youth with a long stick to direct the beast perched on top a dozen feet or so above the road. In one case a solitary camel, barely visible beneath a huge pile of sacks, was followed by a Japanese pick-up truck, perhaps a remnant from the days of poppy prosperity, carrying the left-over load.

The story of the fight at Ambela begins well before the British arrived on the Frontier. The main opposition to Sikh rule in the first half of the nineteenth century centred on two *sayyid* families (*Sayyid*, descendants of the Holy Prophet, not Pathans) settled on the upper Indus River in a place called Sitana now buried under the Tarbela Dam reservoir. One, headed by Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi, a refugee from the Indian plains, was dubbed the 'Hindustani Fanatics' by the British. The other, generally known as Mujahiddin, was led by Sayyid Akbar Shah, who was also of Mughal descent. Both were competitors with the Akhund for dominance in eastern Swat. Both continued their resistance to outside rule after the British take-over from the Sikhs. With their crowds of religiously-inspired followers, they were formidable opponents.

Sayyid Akbar's son, Mubarik Shah, his ranks swelled by fugitive sepoys from the 1857 Mutiny, left Sitana in 1858 and settled a dozen miles inland in an even more remote spot called Malka, on the Mahaban Mountain above the Chamla Valley. From here they sallied forth to attack the new British outposts in Mardan. In August 1863 General Sir Neville Chamberlain, fresh from his almost bloodless triumph in Waziristan (Chapter 7), set forth to teach the *sayyids* and their Pathan allies a lesson by burning the *sayyid* village at Malka. Relying in part on the Akhund's promise to restrain the Pathans, and taking as one of his officers the dynamic young 'Bobs' Roberts (later to be Field Marshal Lord Roberts of Kandahar), Chamberlain led 6,000 English, Sikh, Gurkha and Pathan troops out of Mardan. It took them two months to reach Ambela, where they established a camp with large stores of arms, ammunition and supplies and two large entrenched pickets designed to fire down on any tribesmen coming up the Chamla Valley.

Mubarik Shah of Malka led the defence. The Swat Yusufzai paid no attention to the Akhund's remonstrances. The other *sayyids* came over from Sitana. Pathans from distant places rushed to Ambela. (I have talked to Afridis and Mohmands whose grandfathers were there.) Before he knew it, Chamberlain was surrounded by tens of thousands of inflamed Pathans and *sayyids*. They were not in the Chamla Valley under his guns but in the hills above and around him—and across his line of retreat to Mardan.

The fight lasted almost two months. One of the pickets, named 'Crag', by the British and known among the Pathans (then and now) as Qatlgah ('the Slaughtering Place'), changed hands three times, with Chamberlain himself being wounded in one of the counter-attacks. A thousand men on both sides died in these engagements. The British lost another five hundred elsewhere in the battle. According to a Pushtu verse still recited in Buner, 'The jackals of Ambela went mad gorging on the entrails of infidels.' The casualties of the poorly-armed attackers, of course, were even higher.

Eventually the British troops were reinforced and broke out into the Chamla Valley. Recognizing that resistance there would be deadly and unsuccessful, Mubarik Shah proposed a deal. A few of his followers would escort a small party of the English

force twenty-five miles further on to Malka. There they could burn something to fulfill Chamberlain's pledge. After that the whole British force would return to the plains and stay there.

That's the way it worked out—with 'Bobs' Roberts among the witnesses to the inviolability of the British word.

There is only one discrepancy between British and Pathan accounts of the events at Malka. The former tell of the whole village going up in flames beneath a great column of smoke, a visible and unforgettable sign of British might in the wildest country under the Raj. The latter insists that only a token abandoned stable was burned, proving that Mubarik Shah could out-think as well as out-fight his foes.

Malka is atop a hill a mile or more from the motorable road. If not straight up, the path must average forty-five degrees. It took me an hour and a half to manage the ascent. To encourage my flagging feet and spirits, I was told that the donkey trains that carry food and water up make it in half that time. To add to my *joie de vivre*, I realized that if it rained that night, as the weather forecast predicted, I'd be up there until it stopped and the path dried out.

A small but attractive mosque, in whose courtyard the great men of Ambela are buried, occupies the first level of construction on the peak of the hill. Above this is a labyrinth of rooms given over to the personal use of the *sayyids*. On top of that is a large *hujra* with dining and sitting rooms and sleeping chambers for pilgrims and visitors. There are no electricity, running water or conventional toilet facilities. But there is an abundance of hospitality and a keen and tolerant interest in things far from the little world of Malka.

On our arrival we were given blankets to wrap around our shoulders Pathan-style to protect against the cold. Even though it was the fasting month of Ramazan, most strictly observed in this holy and historic place, our *sayyid* hosts insisted that I have tea. It was welcome, both to counter the late afternoon chill and to replace the fluid I had lost in copious sweating on the climb up. No food or drink was offered, of course, to my young Yusufzai companion, but a cup of tea was brought for Col. Khushwaqt, who was mistaken for another foreigner (after all, Chitral is two valleys and almost sixty miles away.) His polite refusal—in Pushtu—inspired surprise and respect.

At dusk, we were taken up on the roof to view the circle of dark-sided, snow-capped mountains which separates Malka from the Indus on the east, Dir, Swat and Kohistan on the north, Bajaur and the Mohmand country on the west, and the Mardan District on the south. Splendid in the glow of the setting sun, many of them have religious or historical associations which the *sayyids* narrated in detail, ignoring only whether the place or event dated a year or five hundred years ago. Down in the shadow of our own hill, the famous stables burned in 1863 and rebuilt the following year were pointed out.

Iftar, the daily breaking of the Ramazan fast at sunset, doubled for dinner under the light of a kerosene lantern as Buner fell into darkness. Despite the spaciousness of the *hujra*, it was suggested that the three of us sleep that night in the same room for warmth. Our scanty hand luggage had already been deposited in it and several men were busy replacing broken fire bricks in the tiny fireplace.

Afterwards, we—and a constantly changing company of *sayyids*—gathered in another small room whose fireplace was already working. There, with firelight flickering on *tulwars* (sabres) and other weapons used at Ambela on the walls and a huge portrait of the hero, Mubarik Shah, just outside, we refought the battle of Ambela over innumerable cups of tea until two in the morning. The discussion was fantastic in detail: who had led which attack on the Qatlgah, who had been at the Malka burning, who had captured a dozen British rifles, and whose descendent we were talking with now. It was all in Pushtu but Khushwaqt and Behroz periodically translated for me, and when the *sayyids* thought that they were not being thorough, one of their young men added his bit in basic but eloquent English.

Before breaking up we had a hearty snack, so that the visitors would not have to arise before dawn for Ramazan breakfast. Then we slept away the cold, cold remainder of the night under huge piles of quilts and the warmth of a dying fire. (The repairs to the fireplace had been completed as we finished reliving Ambela.) The morning sun proved the forecast of rain wrong, and I managed to scramble down a dry hillside (with one hand resting almost continuously on Behroz Kahn's shoulder) in less than an hour.

From Malka we set off through the large village of Nawagai

to Pacha in western Buner, less than twenty miles for a high-flying crow below the Swat capital of Saidu. Here at Pir Baba is the best known Islamic shrine on the Frontier. Its tradition is older and gentler than that of the Malka Mujahiddin. In the early sixteenth century one Sayyid Ali of Termez on the Oxus followed the unfortunate Mughal Emperor Humayun on his expedition into India. He became a mystic popularly known as Pir Baba, and, according to one tradition, married Humayun's sister. After much wandering, he settled at Pacha, devoted himself to religious study and the care of lepers, and founded the family of the Malka *sayyids*.

One approaches Pir Baba over a foot-bridge across a considerable stream near the centre of the large village of Pacha. A large modern mosque of no particular charm occupies the space nearest the stream. From it a pleasantly curving passageway, open at the sides but roofed over, winds up an incline to the grave of Pir Baba. This is an ancient wooden structure bedecked with flags, offerings, and tokens of cures. It contains two simple, uninscribed graves. A pair of praying pilgrims assured us that these were the final resting places of Pir Baba and either his wife or a favourite disciple but, they added, no one knew which was which.

The covered passageway is the most fascinating part of the whole complex. Small, elegantly-proportioned cubicles line both sides. One row is given over to religious souvenir shops selling prayer beads, amulets and a variety of trinkets. The other provides shelter for a dozen or more lepers in all stages of the ravages of the disease. The younger ones, due largely to the modern medical facilities also associated with the shrine, in which the disease can effectively be controlled, are noticeably less deformed than the older.

At each end of the passageway are money-changers who convert rupee notes into very small coins without commission—their way of honouring Pir Baba. Each of the lepers has in front of him or her eight separate begging bowls for which they implore alms. One pilgrim told us that this was how they got money to pay for the modern medical treatment. Another insisted that on the contrary that treatment was free. This was how they paid for their food and at the same time gave visitors an opportunity to earn merit, the latter also being an important element in Pir Baba's philosophy.

In any event, it was not hard to comply with the procedure. I estimated that a ten rupee note would easily produce enough small coins to deposit one each in all of the begging bowls of all of the lepers. What I was completely unable to find out was why exactly eight begging bowls.

For all of its inconsistencies and eccentricities, Pir Baba's shrine has an air of natural beauty, simplicity, holiness and serenity about it, the last things one associates with modern urban hospitals. We left it with regret for the long drive back to Peshawar, comforted a little as we passed through Ambela, Rustem and Shahbazghari that we were 'going down to Hindustan' on the exact route followed by Alexander more than two thousand years ago.

My mind turned next to Chitral, a princely state when I first visited, now a district of the NWFP. The next major valley westward from Swat, it lies up against the Durand Line border with Afghanistan. It terminates just below the Wakhan tongue in the great 25,230 foot mountain, Tirich Mir. Bigger than Swat but more sparsely populated, the Chitralis are not Pathans. However, as cited by the geographer David Dichter, they have 'a definite affiliation to "Pathanism",' and their history shows a long and close association with the Afghans of the Kunar River Valley and Nooristan. They get their polo ponies there—and in Chitral almost everyone plays polo.

Chitral is not a fertile place. Food grains have to be imported regularly. Almost all manufactured goods come from the outside. Dichter, not altogether fairly, sums up his own impressions by quoting the words of Sir George Robertson, one of the first British administrators in Chitral: 'The dominant note of Chitral is bigness combined with desolation; vast silent mountains cloaked in eternal snow, wild glacier-born torrents, cruel precipices, and pastureless hillsides where the ibex and the markhor find a precarious subsistence. It takes time for the mind to recover from the depression which the stillness and melancholy of the giant landscape at first compel. All colour is purged away by the sun-glare; and no birds sing.'

While boning up in the early 1950s on the intricacies of the Russian-British 'Great Game', my attention was caught by two files I came across in the India Office Library in London. One was a comprehensive, if convoluted, account of how no less than

sixteen of seventeen royal Chitrali brothers and half-brothers eliminated each other (apparently with British encouragement) in 1892 as contenders for the kingly title of 'Mehtar'. The other contained first-hand reports on what in 1895 was a world event, the siege of the British garrison in Chitral and its relief by Col. J.G. Kelly in a spectacular 130-mile march (much of it above 10,000 feet) from Gilgit. These alone were enough to make me want to visit Chitral.

However, its young Mehtar, whom I had met during my Embassy time in Karachi, was killed in an airplane crash in 1954; the Pakistani Political Authorities took to discouraging visitors; and the state lost its immediate appeal. It was apparent that, like Swat, it would eventually be incorporated into Pakistan. Somehow or other I never got there until we were stationed in Pakistan a second time in 1969, when that process was just getting under way.

What a visit that turned out to be! I was Charge d'Affaires of our Embassy, serving between Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon political appointees. As such I had command of the Defence Attache's plane, a spacious but rickety and unpressurized Convair. The US Air Force colonel who flew it was always eager to soar over new territory. By now a US Consulate had been established in Peshawar. Its senior Pakistani staffer, Col. Khushwaqt-ul-Mulk, a retired army colonel born a prince of Chitral, agreed to come along. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs owed me a favour and the Ministry of Defence (perhaps in compensation for having refused to allow me to go inside Attock Fort) was willing to issue a permit for us to fly into Chitral on condition that a Pakistan Air Force navigator be added to the party.

So we flew up, skimming the trees of the 10,500-foot Lowari Pass and being directed through the tangle of 20,000-foot peaks beyond by the Pakistani navigator. 'To the right of the big one over there. No! Not that one! The other one!' In the Chitral Valley, with 25,500-foot Tirich Mir looming at its end, the pilot received additional instructions. 'Take your time and do it right. From here on the valley is too narrow for a plane this size to turn around. You either come in dead on the airstrip at the town or you go on into Tirich Mir!'

The US Air Force Colonel did it right. We landed and were

greeted by the Pakistani Political Agent, who invited us for dinner and a polo game the next day. He discreetly returned to his office while the rest of the party went off to a nearby hillock to the home of Khushwaqt's older brother, Burhan-ud-Din, for lunch. Here we were given generous glasses of 'Chitral Water', a specialty of Burhan's made from his own grapes. The ageing gentleman was a perfect host, talking quietly of his agricultural experiments and the beauty of his valley. He had seen a bit of the world, he said, but there was no place like home.

It was only later, while perusing books about India's role in World War II, that I discovered Burhan had been a controversial and widely-known figure in those days. A member of Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army, he had, in the hope of accelerating the British withdrawal from India, supported the Axis side. After the collapse of the INA and the Allied victory, he and a number of his fellows were subjects of a bitter disagreement between the soon-to-depart British on one side and the emerging Indian Congress Government on the other over whether or not they should be hanged. By 1969 it all seemed very long ago. (It was even further off when I met the wise and gentle Burhan again in Peshawar in 1994.)

Later that evening, at the lovely little sylvan hotel at the end of the main street, we gave a party of our own. All the notables came. An obviously affluent but dreamy-eyed young American couple who had been resident for weeks at the hotel wandered in. They were on their honeymoon in Chitral, they explained, 'because in all the world they have the best *charas* (a local hashish) here'. I explained to a Chitrali nearby that they were not of our Embassy party. He didn't seem to care, and disconcerted me further by offering me the loan of a pony and mallet for the next day's polo.

The next afternoon, at the polo field near the Mehtar's palace, the idea didn't seem so far-fetched. Chitrali polo is quite different from the carefully orchestrated, five-a-side posting and cantering of the western game. Everyone names his own handicap; anyone who wants to can play; only minor thought is given to balancing the numbers. The horses thunder up and down the field at a constant gallop. It is permitted to grab the ball in the hand (from the ground or in the air) as well as to hit it with a mallet. In one version of the rules it is required not only to hit the

ball through the goal but to dismount and pick it up before the score is counted. Not that anyone ever seems to keep track of or care much about the score. If I'd ever learned to do anything more than one thing with a horse, namely stay on, I could have had a grand time.

The main body of Chitralis are Muslim. They call their country Kho and their language Khowar. In the south-west, however, are the Kafir Valleys of Rumbir, Bamburit and Barir, inhabited by the remnant of a non-Muslim people that was once prominent in Afghanistan, as described by Kipling in his classic story, 'The Man Who Would Be King'. Their origin is unknown but their life-sized wooden grave effigies, their passion for cowrie shells (while living fifteen hundred miles from the sea shore), and legends that they celebrate a summer saturnalia, suggest something other than Central Asian. So do their distinctly Balkan European appearance and their fondness for wine. Some hardy anthropologist should do a comprehensive study while there is still time.

We spent a couple of days among them, moving about on horseback, and found a tough, merry, if somewhat debased people, torn between allegiance to their own customs and envy of the more advanced status of the Muslims about them. An enterprising outside promoter with a few words of English appeared and staged a dance for us, hitting the Kafir women with a stick to get them in line. The practice would have cost him his life in Pathan circles but here the Kafir men stood calmly by. However, when a member of our party set out to negotiate the purchase of one of the ladies' cowrie-covered headdress, she thrust the promoter aside and, using fingers, made her own bargain.

Our riding adventure ended with an anti-climax. On the way back to the road and the jeeps my wife Edith and I fell behind the rest of the party. At one point she plucked a large branch of *charas* from the side of the road and clasped it in her teeth. An accomplished horsewoman, she galloped off, leaving me behind. When I picked my way down to the village where we had left the vehicles, she and her horse were standing dejectedly in the middle of a deserted square, the *charas* branch discarded on the ground.

'I thought I'd give everybody something to talk about,' she

said, 'but they're all inside having tea and nobody saw. We might as well go in too.'

I tried to return to Chitral during a visit to the Frontier in February 1994, making arrangements well in advance for a seat on the daily plane from Peshawar. When I got to Peshawar, I found that the plane hadn't flown for a week. The weather had closed in on the mountains. After another week without flights, I set about arranging a vehicle to drive in over the Lowari Pass. Just as the jeep appeared, the clouds dropped their contents, and the Pass disappeared under several feet of snow. According to local news reports, thirty Afghan labourers trying to make their way home on foot disappeared with it.

Friendly Chitralis in Peshawar had another alternative: go the way they go under these circumstances, through the Mohmand Tribal Agency, across the Afghan border, up the Kunar River in that country, and then back across the border to the Chitral Valley north of the Pass. It took only two days if you had a good four-wheel-drive vehicle. Sorely tempted, I nonetheless declined, having in mind what happened the last time I forayed into war-torn Afghanistan (Chapter 10). Such is travel in these mountains, even at the end of the twentieth century. But next time...



A Pathan School

Chapter 9

A Place in Pakistan

Over the past millennium an even half-dozen Afghan dynasties have structured states, often great imperial ones. But the Ghaznis, Ghoris, Khaljis, Lodhis, Suris and Durranis all had their base in Afghanistan, west of the Pathan tribes of what we now know as the North-West Frontier of Pakistan. The latter always preferred to cling to their flexible tribal organization and loosely-defined but fiercely-defended independence—even under rulers of their own blood. Although larger in number than the Kurds, as integrated in culture, and with much more contiguous territory, the idea of creating a state of their own seems never to have captured their imagination.

When it did finally appear, it was almost an accident. As Independence and Partition approached in 1947, a Congress government controlled by Bacha Khan was in power in the North-West Frontier Province. The departing Raj decided to hold a referendum to let the people decide directly between India and Pakistan. Bacha Khan demanded that a third choice, 'Pathanistan,' be included. When this was refused, he called for a boycott of the voting.

50.99 per cent of the eligible electorate turned out and voted 99 per cent for the Muslim League and Pakistan, which demonstrated the views of only the barest majority of the total voting population. The die was cast, but 'Pushtoonistan', as the proposed state soon came to be called, became a major issue on the Frontier. The Government of Afghanistan vigorously supported it, voting against Pakistan's admission to the United Nations and releasing a barrage of books and pamphlets. A flag was created and maps issued showing a new state encompassing the North-West Frontier Province, Tribal Territory, and, to provide an outlet to the sea, all of Balochistan. After the bitter

Kashmir conflict flared between Pakistan and India, a disgruntled New Delhi also backed 'Pushtoonistan,' albeit more discreetly.

When I was first on the Frontier in the early 1950s, 'Pushtoonistan' was a major subject of conversation. Indeed, it had taken on a semblance of reality. Afghan Prime Minister Prince Daud spoke eloquently of it to all visitors. A 'Pushtoonistan' Square was established in Kabul. The Pakistani Embassy was burned down by a pro-'Pushtoonistan' mob. Dissident Pathan *maliks* (chiefs), poets, intellectuals and former Congress Party members were received and given robes of honour by King Zahir. The impressive Khushal Khan Khattak School was set up to train young Pathans to run their own state. Occasional *lashkars* (war parties) emerged from tribal territory to cut roads and carry out other mischief in the North-West Frontier Province. And, of course, the infamous Fakir of Ipi, noted earlier in the chapter on Waziristan, gave 'Pushtoonistan' his blessing.

Meanwhile a remarkable Peshawari was working to integrate the Frontier into Pakistan. Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan, 'Kashmiri Qayyum', his political enemies called him because of a non-Pathan ancestor from the princely state, was a graduate of the London School of Economics and a barrister of Lincoln's Inn. He joined Congress, served in the Indian Central Legislative Assembly, and in 1945 produced an interesting book called *Guns, Gold, and the Pathans*. The same year he switched to the Muslim League, and after Partition took control of the province as Chief Minister. A huge man fond of an ankle-length *chogha* (overcoat) and an entourage of gunmen, he manipulated local elections and overwhelmed his opponents to see that the League remained in control.

He successfully incorporated sections of tribal territory into the province, spent heavily on irrigation and electricity, education and welfare, and developed a cadre of vigorous, imaginative young provincial civil servants who were to rise to national stature. One of them was Ghulam Ishaq Khan, President of Pakistan from 1988 to 1993. Although totally opposed to 'Pushtoonistan', he originated an innovative proposal for a federation of Afghanistan and Pakistan with the gentle King Zahir as monarch of both. 'It would leave that wretched fellow, Prime Minister Daud, without a job!' he told me with a chuckle one night.

Qayyum Khan founded the University of Peshawar and launched it on the way to its present eminence. In 1952, when we chose the first American Fulbright professors together, he spoke of his dream that the year-old institution would one day surpass the scholarly achievements of Bokhara and Samarkand in their days of glory. Indeed, he became so formidable that the Central Government insisted he join it as Minister of the Interior in Karachi. Eased out of that job also, he was President of the Muslim League until he died a few years later.

When I returned to the Frontier in the 1980s and 1990s, 'Pushtoonistan' was a dead issue. The books, maps and flags had disappeared. The hostile *lashkars* that had been sent across the border in the early days had accomplished nothing. The emigre Pathan *maliks* had returned from Kabul. (In many cases their reason for going there in the first place had more to do with personal profit or honour than with ideology). Bacha Khan's son Wali Khan and his daughter-in-law Nasim were working with a coalition government in the North-West Frontier Province.

In Kabul the radical leftist Afghans who had taken control of the government were more concerned with revolution than with the ethnic influence aspired to by the former royal family. After the Soviet invasion, almost all Afghans—and, indeed, most of the world—concentrated on forcing the Russians to leave. When that was achieved, everyone had the civil war to worry about. No one had any time for 'Pushtoonistan' any more.

This is not to say that the Pathans have given up thinking about themselves, and there is always a danger that such a large, powerful, warlike, well-integrated people such as they will take it into their heads to strike off on their own. *Pushtoon khwa* is now a subject of much discussion. Editorials are written regularly on it in the Frontier Press and newspaper supplements devoted to it. However, it has nothing to do with redefining political structures or drawing new lines on a map.

Khwa is a Pushtu preposition. It means 'next to', 'alongside of', 'among', 'in the midst of', or in the possessive sense, the simple English 'of'. The connotation is that certain things, cultural, social and economic, belong to the Pushtuns by right and that they will have them. The principle would be approved equally by Abdul Qayyum Khan and Abdul Ghaffar Khan. It would be readily understood in Texas, USA, as well.

One manifestation of *Pushtoon khwa* is the desire to re-establish older trade patterns. For two thousand years the Frontier was a centre of north-south trade between Central and Southern Asia and east-west movement between China, the Middle East and Europe. With Czarist Russian expansion eastward in the nineteenth century, British Indian counter-efforts, and constant turmoil in China under the dying Manchu Dynasty and the unstable nationalists, this trade dwindled away. (Of course, technological developments in transportation also had much to do with it.)

Additionally, there is dissatisfaction with central control of, as one exponent of *Pushtoon khwa* puts it, 'what we call trade and the Government smuggling'. The customs control post at the Indus River crossing at Attock, which seems designed mainly to deny goods smuggled through the Frontier free entry into other parts of Pakistan, is a particular target of resentment. And, of course, no one likes being dependent on the port of Karachi, a thousand miles away, for imports and exports.

Another source of annoyance is WAPDA (Water and Power Development Authority), the successful, highly-centralized government agency which controls irrigation and electric output and distribution throughout Pakistan: 'The Frontier produces the electricity but the control button is in Lahore. We should have it here.' Adding to suspicion is what the *Pushtoon khwa* advocates consider the undue dominance of 'Punjabi bureaucrats' in WAPDA ('who naturally take care of their own needs first') and recurring rumours of 'privatization' of WAPDA, the enormous capital investment for which can come only from the Punjab and Karachi.

Then there is the Gadoon Industrial Estate. It has an interesting history. Located about fifty miles north-east of Peshawar near the high mountains, it was the centre of a poppy-growing region where some 150,000 people depended on the production of opium for their livelihood. In a strong move against the illegal narcotics trade, the Government burnt the fields and put a total ban on poppy-growing in the area. It encouraged and subsidized alternative crop production, but the main compensation was to be the creation of a large new industrial estate, which would provide jobs. The project got under way in 1987.

Generous incentives were offered to those who established plants: a ten-year tax holiday, exemptions from customs and sales taxes on imported machinery and raw materials, concessionary terms for loans, and discounted electric and gas rates. Over the next several years more than 500 land plots were bought (many as investments) and by 1990 some eighty plants were in commercial production. But Gadoon was remote. Tribesmen fresh from the poppy fields or rifle-shoot do not make the best factory workers. Karachi was far away. Freight rates were high and requests for concessions on these too soon developed.

Instead, in May 1991 the Government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif withdrew most of the earlier concessions. Development of Gadoon stopped and an uproar broke out in the Frontier, with a number of established industrialists from Gadoon taking the matter to court. As of this writing, these cases are still being fought out. Bitterness at Nawaz Sharif's decision probably played a role in the strong showing of Benazir Bhutto's party in the province in the October 1993 election.

On the other hand, Gadoon is not without its critics. A Pathan eloquent in his support of other aspects of *Pushtoon khwa* put it to me this way: 'Any Pathan who lays out money for land he will never own and then spends more to build on it to make things he cannot dispose of among his own people is a fool! He deserves whatever happens to him'.

Other manifestations of *Pushtoon khwa* appear in a renewed emphasis on Pushtu language and culture and in sympathy for the Pushtoon factions in the Afghan civil war, which a few extremists even insist is deliberately kept going by outside forces to perpetuate the isolation of the Frontier. Resentment is expressed occasionally that so few recent Governors of the Frontier have been Pathans, and a close eye is kept on the proportionate numbers of Pathans in the senior civilian and military hierarchies.

Finally, there is protest over the alleged mistreatment of the large number of Pathan workers in Karachi by Sindhis and *mohajirs* (people from areas now in India) and, now and again, concern over injustice to those living in tribal territory by the application of the collective-responsibility principle inherent in the still-valid, British-devised Frontier Crimes Regulations.

'A poor Wazir without money makes a free meal out of a goat in Bannu, and those johnnies in Islamabad send the Scouts out to impound six cows from his *khel* in Miran Shah!' a disgusted Pushtoon told me.

It is important to note that all of these complaints are within a Pakistani context. Almost half a century of membership in that nation has had its effect. The reconstruction of the ancient Grand Trunk Road from Peshawar to Lahore into a multi-lane, divided highway has enormously enhanced interchange. Only a few Pathans in remote areas have not travelled it. Less and less do they speak about 'going down to Hindustan', once the usual expression for a trip to Rawalpindi or Lahore.

It strains the imagination to think of refrigerated container trucks loaded with the Frontier's superb oranges, pomegranates and melons running between the gun shops in Darra on the new Indus Highway being pushed through the famous Afridi Pass. But many tribesmen are laying aside their weapons (temporarily anyway) to help build it, and others are enhancing their fleets of trucks to take advantage of it. If nothing else, it will provide a way to the sea while skirting the Punjab.

At the time of Independence it was widely predicted that the withdrawal of the 'infidel' British from the plains would reduce the tendency of the devoutly Muslim hill tribes to wage war on the established government. Despite the early 'Pushtoonistan' *lashkars*, that has largely been the case, and the Pakistani military hasn't had to mount a single large-scale expedition of the British kind in its almost fifty years of responsibility. The calm with which the reoccupation of Razmak was accepted in Waziristan is a good example of the changed atmosphere.

At the same time, in dealing with the friendly Chinese on their north-eastern border, tough Indian troops along the Kashmir border, and hostile Russians and Communist Government forces in Afghanistan on the west, the tribesmen have learned the value of a centralized military. While generous to Afghan refugees and Mujahiddin transients in their territory, the Pathans did not themselves join the Mujahiddin in significant numbers, neither to carry on jihad against the Soviet 'infidels', nor to share the spoils in a conquest of Kabul when the Russians left. ('It's their country,' a Khyber Afridi told me as we watched

Mujahiddin trudging up the Pass. 'Let them take it back and do what they like with it.')

Even the glory of the 1947 Kashmir jihad, when the tribesmen invaded the princely state to fight Hindu India, has faded a bit. When I first visited the Frontier, teenage boys had had a part in it. Now, only the greybeards know it from personal experience. Left alone, today's young tribesman's interest tends more to the pros and cons of Pakistan's having a nuclear weapon than to the doings of his forefathers at Baramula or Srinagar. But when asked if the Kashmir struggle was all over, *pukhtunwali* came into play. No! They had lost ancestors there; the battle had not been won. They would have to go back. The words spoken to me by an elderly *malik* in 1954, 'neither I, nor my sons, nor their sons, will ever sleep happily a single night until our honour is avenged!' have held for forty years.

Many of the hill tribesmen, those in the Afridi Tirah and the 'no-go' sections of Waziristan, have long had their *Pushtoon khwa*. At home they control all aspects of their lives and no one interferes. They seldom if ever leave to encounter the frustrations of the customs station at Attock or the complexities of making a living at Gadoon. Pushtu is the only language spoken and heard among them. Their 'Afghan heritage' lies just over an unmarked border across which they pass freely. They pay no taxes and serve no master.

Rough as the hillmen's lives are physically, they in someways have it easier than the better-off plainsmen, who must struggle with when to be a Pathan and when to be a Pakistani, when to develop his Pushtu and when to work on Urdu or English to get a better job, and when to sacrifice tribal or provincial for national interests.

Somehow or other, over almost half a century, the Pathans have managed to balance all these things. They swallowed (protesting all the way) the absorption of the Frontier Province into a 'one-unit' West Pakistan Province in the 1950s, when it was argued that that was the only way West Pakistan could achieve a balance with the eastern half of the country. When 'one-unit' was dissolved fifteen years later, they saw to it that the North-West Frontier Province re-emerged as it had been.

They managed to maintain their influence in a truncated country when East Pakistan (sometimes an ally against the Punjab)

broke off to become independent Bangladesh. They saw the princely states of Dir, Swat, and Chitral (the former two inhabited chiefly by Pathans) lose their autonomy. They had gone in droves to Kabul in 1929 and to Kashmir in 1947. But they stayed out of the wars in Afghanistan in the 1980s, going instead to China over the new Karakoram Highway to become the principal foreign traders in Kashgar.

Throughout it all the Pathans have hung on to their own identity and way of life, and when essential (and sometimes even when non-essential), they have been prepared to fight. For example, in Spring 1994, just a few months after the sojourn in Swat and Buner described in the previous chapter, tens of thousands in these areas rose in open rebellion against a Supreme Court decision to abolish the PATA (Provincially Administered Tribal Agency) Regulations under which the former tribal territories retained their century-old exemption from most provisions of provincial and national law.

If they were going to come under new law, they insisted, it must be Islamic Shariat law. They supported their position by enforcing a total blockade of road traffic between Peshawar and Malakand and Mardan and Ambela. In a whimsical move that was probably designed more to confuse and defy the provincial and national authorities than to further religious righteousness, they also demanded that traffic rules be changed to provide for right-hand rather than left-hand driving.

The inevitable armed clash came on 16 May 1994, when the protesters and contingents of the Frontier Constabulary, the Dir Scouts and the police opened fire on each other, leaving eleven killed and twenty-five wounded. Inevitably, who fired first was disputed. Inevitably, the place was Ambela. And, inevitably, the Government did an abrupt volte-face and promulgated Shariat.

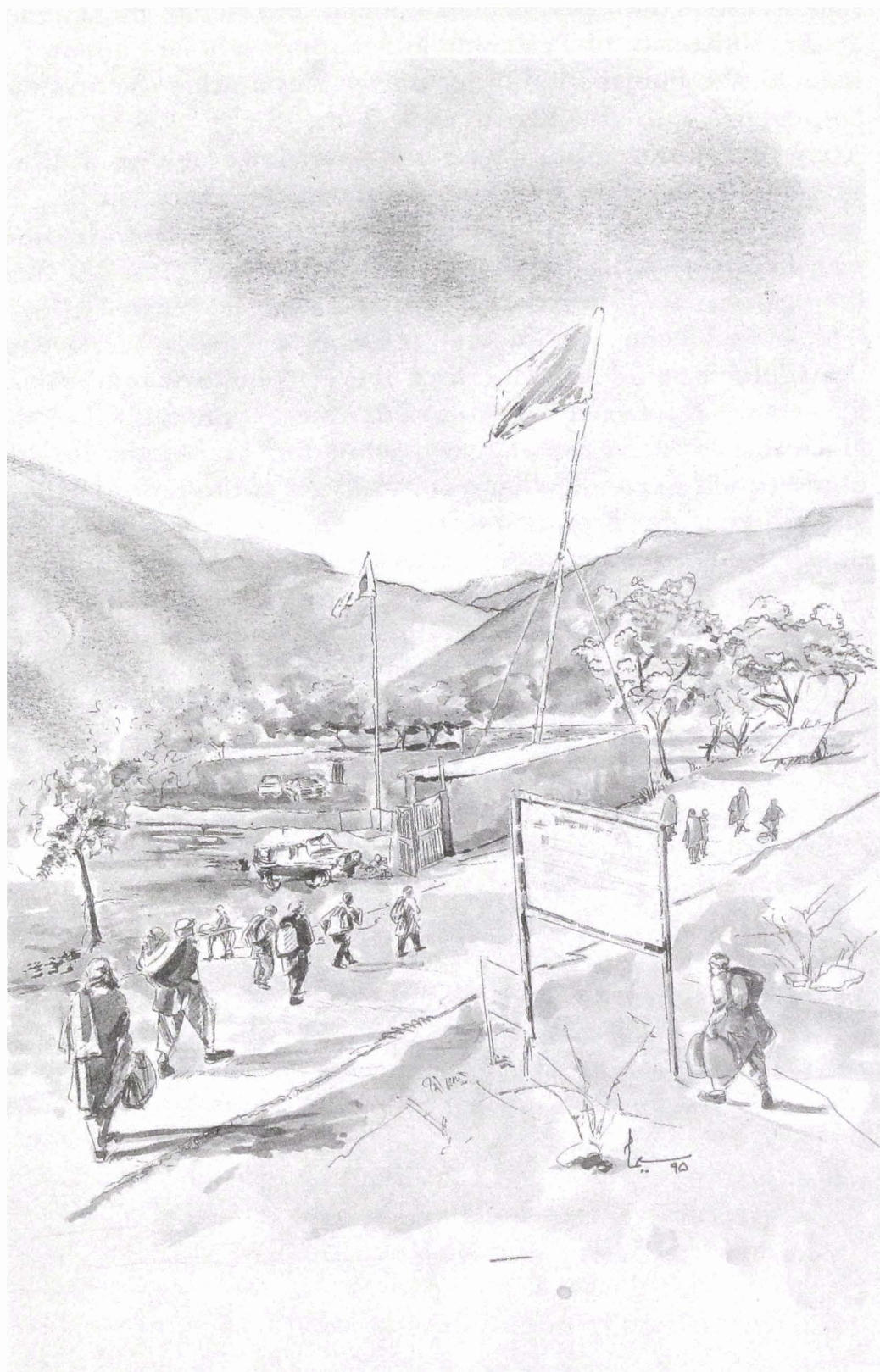
Even this did not end the matter. In November tribal *lashkars* seized the only airport in the district, shelled villages, and took dozens of officials hostage. Repudiated by the leaders of the May uprising as mere 'mischief', the fighting nonetheless claimed twenty-five lives.

Yet over the years a profound integration of the Pathans into Pakistan has taken place. The same political parties that contest each other nationally compete for votes throughout the Frontier. The same newspapers are read and the same radio and television

stations listened to. Non-Pathan students and faculty are common at the University of Peshawar and Pathan scholars abound at Karachi, the Punjab, and other universities outside the Frontier. Sometimes both the President and the Chief of Staff of the Army of Pakistan are Pathans and sometimes neither are, but that has come to be accepted as part of the game. So has the 'win one, lose one' approach to the competition with other provinces for educational, medical and other resources from the centre.

Above all, economic integration has proceeded apace, despite the Gadoon stand-off. Wherever the grid control button may be located (and it is easily moved), the Frontier has got the lion's share of Pakistan's large dam-building era. Modernization of the Grand Trunk Road and construction of the Indus Highway are bringing the Frontier, once the end of a long, straitened transportation line, into the main stream of Pakistani industrial and commercial activity. Even apart from their dominance in Kashgar, the Karakoram Highway has provided more opportunities for Pathans in Indus Kohistan than for anyone else, if for no other reason than that they live closer to it and know it better.

It is no great wonder that the benign, non-separatist *Pushtoon khwa* has replaced the old aggressive, secessionist 'Pushtoonistan'.



Mujahiddin Going Home

The Afghan Side of Things

Frontier regions, like other areas, have to be concerned about their borders. Nowhere in the world is this more true than on Pakistan's North-West Frontier. Beyond it is Afghanistan, every bit as ancient and violent. Darius Hystaspes, the Persian, brought it into recorded history when he made it the Arochosian Satrapy of his empire in the sixth century BC. Alexander and his Macedonians, the Kushans, the White Huns, the Mongols, the Turks, the Mughals, and a whole variety of Afghan conquerors came down across it to the rich plains of the Indus and beyond (only the Sikhs and the British came up from the south). It is no wonder that it is impossible to talk very long of the Frontier without sliding into the subject of Afghanistan. What happens there inevitably has an effect on the other side of the Khyber Pass.

I found Afghanistan and its people full of charm in the early 1950s. As I visited regularly over the next fifteen years, extending beyond the Pushtoon areas of the country to Kunduz, Mazaar-i-Sharif and truly ancient Balkh, 'Mother of Cities', I acquired friends. Many were lower-level government officials working to help develop their country, for example those striving to establish a link between primitive Ariana Airlines and Pan American. Some were Fulbright students and school teachers who were proud of their record of 'always coming home'. Others were taxi-drivers, shop-keepers, and ordinary tribesmen.

The Yahya Khel branch of the Pushtoon Durrani which had presided over the country for two hundred years was particularly charming—at least to those who did not have to live under its stern rule. Prime Minister Prince Daud liked the account of my interview with him in my first book and I saw him again when I visited from Washington. Accompanying Under Secretary

of State Averell Harriman on a visit to Kabul, I met King Zahir Shah (for whom Harriman had helped settle a boundary dispute with the USSR while US Ambassador in Moscow). A year later, at a *buskashi* game celebrating the King's Birthday at the Royal Box in the Stadium, I scrambled with him for cover when excited horses and players threatened to thunder over us.

I spent a day in the bazaar looking for a specimen of a 'Golden Bokhara' rug, a style introduced by the new Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul in which the background of the black elephant's foot pattern was gold rather than red. I finally found some behind a green door in an obscure corner. Negotiations were not easy. The very country-looking merchant apparently had no English. His prices were high and he wouldn't bargain. I got up to leave. 'All right. Keep them. You'll never sell them at that price,' I remarked. 'Oh yes, I will,' came the response in excellent English. 'The Germans will buy anything!'

Two prime ministers subsequent to Prince Daud, Hashim Maiwandwal and Nur Ahmad Etamadi, were friends from their diplomatic days before they went on to political eminence. When I accompanied Secretary of State William Rogers and a covey of high officials to Kabul in 1969, Etamadi handed out gifts of carpets. While the Secretary and his senior associates were 'oh-ing and ah-ing over their big ones, the Prime Minister whispered in my ear: 'Your little one is the rarest and best!'

My stock with Maiwandwal soared when, during an official visit to Washington, President Lyndon Johnson looked around the familiar faces on the American side of the table—Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary Phillips Talbot, National Security Council Aide Howard Wriggins—spotted an unknown one (mine), glanced at the briefing memorandum in front of him, and reassured the visiting Prime Minister, to whom he had talked about nothing but Vietnam, of his interest in Afghanistan.

'Of course,' the incorrigible Johnson explained, 'I, Dean, Phil and Howard can't spend all our time on one country. But Jim here watches Afghanistan all the time, and when he spots a problem, he gets in touch with me and we fix it up right away.'

When, in the 1970s, I left South Asia for Turkey and Tanzania, I kept in touch as best I could with my Afghan friends as they struggled to modernize and develop their country. But I did

not get back to visit, and now, as far as I can determine, except for a few, like King Zahir Shah, in exile in Europe or the US, all my old friends are dead—killed by each other, or the Russians, or the young radicals who overthrew the Durrani and brought in the Russians.

While they lived, they remained very Afghan. In an effort to obtain a semblance of legitimacy, the Communist Afghans who seized power in 1978 tried to force President Prince Daud to sign a resignation paper by murdering members of his family one by one in front of him. As an Afghan (not an admirer of Daud) who managed to get out of the country at the time told me: 'The Godless rabble! If they were Afghans at all, they would have known that once they killed his first relative, they would have to kill him too—or he would sooner or later kill them.'

He expressed similar sentiments about the never fully-explained kidnap and death in Kabul of a mutual friend, US Ambassador 'Spike' Dubs: 'The Russians and their creatures were behind it. Only they would be stupid enough not to know that we would kill them for such a violation of Afghan hospitality!'

The next time I encountered Afghans was in 1980. I was newly arrived at the American Embassy in Ankara, Turkey. A secretary brought word that the entire Afghan Embassy was outside wanting to pay a farewell call. Reasonably sure that we had no relations with the new regime propped up by Soviet troops, I nonetheless agreed to see them. In came three urbane diplomats, obviously of wealth and substance. They announced that they had all resigned and were closing their embassy in shame. They wished to say 'goodbye'.

'Going to America?' I asked, expecting that a visa request was going to come next.

'No,' the leader responded. 'My mother and father and sister are in England and I am going there to say "goodbye" to them too. Then I will go back to my country to fight and die.'

A year later I ran into one of the three who had remained in Turkey and learned that his colleague had done just that.

After I retired from the Foreign Service in 1989 and began to revisit the Frontier I met Afghans again. More than three million refugees had fled to Pakistan. One saw them everywhere. They sold honey along the roads outside Peshawar. They did menial work on the farms up and down the Valley.

Tajiks, Turkomans, Uzbeks, Hazaras, as well as Pushtuns, they turned Quetta into a multi-ethnic city.

In Peshawar they organized into resistance groups, finally consolidating into seven major ones, which continuously fought each other as well as the Russians. Membership varied widely, from lawyers and professors to ordinary tribesmen, but the seven are usually described as three 'Islamic Nationalist', led by Sibghatullah Mujaddedi, Sayed Ahmad Gilani, and Maulvi Mohammed Nabi, and four 'Fundamentalist', headed by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Abdul Rasul Sayaat, and Yunis Khalis.

Except for Rabanni's Jamiat, which is largely Tajik, all are predominantly Pushtun, and most of them have received support from Pakistan as well as outside countries. (The Tajik and other non-Pushtun groups were either headquartered in Iran or managed to stay inside Afghanistan, emerging with considerable power when the Russians left.) The many Western journalists and authors who went into Afghanistan when the Russian Occupation was big news were sponsored by one or the other of the groups and, of course, that is the one which emerges as heroes of the resistance in that particular account.

The situation was further complicated by large numbers of Islamic militants who swarmed in from all over the Arab World to assist in what they considered a jihad against the godless Great Powers and their way of life. Some joined existing organizations; others brought their own with them; a few used the Frontier as a way-station to other causes, e.g., the people involved in the blowing-up of the World Trade Tower in New York. Thousands stayed on in Peshawar after the Russians left Afghanistan, until early in 1993 the Government of Pakistan began pressuring them to leave.

Throughout the battle against the Russians, Pakistan supported the Afghan refugees with unprecedented generosity. The military quietly provided training and arms to the fighters who went back and forth to pursue the war and served as unofficial liaison for weapons coming in from the outside. When Russian pressure intensified, it reinforced its own borders and sent up its aircraft to challenge Afghan Government and even Soviet forays against Mujahiddin activities in Pakistan.

The civil authorities did the best they could for the real refugees, the old, women and children driven from their homes across the border, who could not go back to fight. In the beginning, there was little more than tents, blankets and wheat rations, but soon a well-organized support organization was functioning. In the mid-1980s, when the Soviets were still very much in Afghanistan, I visited Katcha Ghari RTV (Refugee Tented Village) on the Khyber Road outside Peshawar. There was hardly a tent to be seen, the original shelters having been replaced by sturdy buildings of adobe roofed with sheet iron.

The refugee community was practically indistinguishable from the other settled areas which had grown up in the area—except perhaps for its greater bustle. No check points, barbed wire or locked gates were in evidence. Commuters on bus and foot passed in and out. Troops of school children rushed back and forth. Girls and heavily-shrouded women carried pots of water. Men and boys carried leather and wool between workshops.

I was shown a dispensary, food store, school, administrative centre, and a depot for the storage and distribution of relief supplies. Taken to the carpeted and cushioned *hujra* (guest house) identical to the ones in which I had spent so much time in my youth, I was introduced to a dozen camp inhabitants, given green tea, and told by a young government official that everyone was prepared to tell me anything I wanted to know.

There were about 10,000 families in the camp, predominantly Pushtun, albeit also some Hazaras, Tajiks, Turkomans and Nuristanis. At one time there was a whole tribe of Kirghiz, Rahman Gul's people from the Wakhan Corridor, but they had resettled in Turkey. My question as to the total population, as opposed to families, drew a non-responsive answer. 'Why don't you just multiply by five?' the official suggested. 'Better by ten or fifteen!' suggested someone else.

There were, I was told, three primary schools and a middle school in the camp, also classes in cobbling, tailoring, welding, weaving, electrical work, masonry, bee-keeping and poultry-raising. The older boys went regularly to a special refugee high school in Peshawar. Curricula were Afghan because the young people must be ready to pick up their studies when they returned home. Well, that wasn't true of the boys who were at college, but then Pakistanis and Afghans shared the same values in higher education.

The official explained: 'We have been able to spend money on education here because we don't have to worry much about animals. Two million refugees have come to the Frontier; they brought more than three million animals, but most of those have settled further away from the city. In Balochistan it is even worse. There they have one million refugees and four million animals.'

'What's the problem with animals?' I asked.

The answer was simple. Goats, sheep, cows and camels must be fed. They have diseases which must be controlled and cured. They eat the vegetation and contribute to erosion. They cause quarrels with the local people.

Most of the men in the *hujra* were young, gathered, I suspected, for their knowledge of English, which they had learned during the one-third to one-half of their lives spent in exile.

'Do you all want to go back to Afghanistan?'

The answer was a unanimous 'Yes!'

'Why?'

'We are Afghans!'

'What will you do there?'

'Kill Russians and traitors!'

Wondering if I was hearing only the bravado of youth, I asked if it would be possible to talk to a family in its own quarters. One young man instantly volunteered but the rest sat silently and the Pakistani official shook his head unhappily.

'Journalists always ask that,' he said, 'but it is difficult. Everyone is busy at their work. Perhaps if next time you were to bring your lady wife, she could...'

Then I understood. *Zan*, women, were considered by Pathans and Afghans alike to be their own very private business. Forty years ago I had done a chapter on women drawing on my wife's knowledge. She was gone now, and my dealings with the subject would have to be minimal the 'second time around'. But that wasn't what I had in mind at the moment. 'What I mean,' I explained, 'is that I would like also to talk to some older men who have spent most of their lives in Afghanistan. Perhaps you who know English will interpret for me?' Sighs of relief followed and we all trooped off toward the further end of the camp.

What I got from half a dozen greybeards sitting around a bubbling teapot was even more militant. One said that his son

was in the surgical hospital in Peshawar recovering from bullet wounds. As soon as he recovered, they were returning together to Jelalabad to kill Russians and the traitors who had taken their land. Another told me that his older brother had been killed fighting near Gardez. He himself had earned some money and used it to buy an automatic rifle. When it was delivered, he was going back to take revenge for his brother and to die fighting too.

A third greybeard, wearing a karakul hat rather than a turban, was identified as a 'city man' whose home was in Kabul before he fled ten years earlier. 'And you, sir, do you plan to go back too?' I queried.

The target of the question smiled and said nothing, but there were chuckles and comments from the others. 'He goes back all the time,' an interpreter explained. 'He just returned here last night. He sets bombs. A few weeks ago he got a whole lorry full of Russians, including a General!'

As we walked back through the camp, the Pakistani official pointed at the Khyber Hills beyond which the border lay. 'They can be a nuisance sometimes,' he remarked. 'Even in camp, they act as if they were out there. And there's fifteen hundred miles of border. They come and they go. They live and they die. They're a brave people. They're going to win their jihad and go home.'

I was convinced.

When I visited the camp again in 1993 I found that most of the able-bodied males were indeed back in Afghanistan, some of them sowing their fields; many of them fighting each other for supremacy. Katcha Ghari, however, had a reputation as a 'five star' camp, and those who had left permanently had been rapidly replaced by people from other camps. Many elderly, disabled, women, and children also remained. The bustle was gone, however, and now the heart of the camp seemed to lie in the cemetery, where flags of martyrdom waved over the remains of those who had died in the struggle for freedom. Eventually, I suppose, Katcha Ghari will become another urbanized village on the outskirts of Peshawar.

In 1993 there was one disconcerting note to be heard all up and down the Frontier in terms of the civil war in Afghanistan. Refugee Afghans and Pathans alike were beginning to see it as

a struggle between Pushtoos and non-Pushtoos. In Miran Shah in the heart of Waziristan, for example, I was sitting in a petrol station when a dozen Afghans came by, from their features obviously not Pushtoon, although whether Tajiks, Turkomans, or Hazaras, I couldn't say. The Pushtoos with whom I was sitting looked at them coldly and did not exchange greetings.

'Look at them, walking around as if they owned our country!' the proprietor commented bitterly. 'They can't go home too soon for me. And if they think they are going to take power in Kabul, they're dreaming. The Punjabis may run Pakistan, but the Pushtoos have always ruled in Kabul and it's going to stay that way! Gulbuddin Hekmatyar [the most extreme of the Pushtoon Mujahiddin leaders] will see to that!'

On the other hand all of the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Kirghiz and other non-Pushtoon refugees (representing probably more than half of the total population of Afghanistan) to whom I spoke over the years in Peshawar, Quetta and points in between, felt equally strongly that they never again wanted to be subject to the Pushtoos. They had, they pointed out, done more to drive the Russians from their country. The conflict of views does not bode well for peace, stability and integration in Afghanistan.

I had not been in Afghanistan since 1969. When I started coming back to Pakistan in the 1980s and 1990s, I was barred by the war and our lack of relations with the Communist Government. Then, when the Soviets had gone, the civil war got in the way. There were plenty of Afghan refugees in Pakistan to help me catch up with all that I had missed, but it wasn't quite the same thing as actually being in their country.

So, in early 1993, I set out to go back after an absence of almost twenty-five years. Son Stephen, working with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Quetta, provided the opportunity. The still unfinished battle for Kabul, essentially between Pushtoos and non-Pushtoos, was under way but things had been quiet for a while in the south. UNHCR was moving its office up to Kandahar and Steve was to be in charge. He had already made three or four trips to the Afghan city and had established several employees there when father and younger brother Bill arrived. He had more things to move up and allowed himself to be talked into letting us come along.

I thought I had made proper preparations, getting a double-

entry visa at the Pakistan Embassy in Colombo and warning Bill to do the same in the US. As my visa was issued the Ambassador stopped by to wish me well on my visit. He asked where else was I going. I replied that I might go into Afghanistan for a few days.

‘Don’t!’ he advised. ‘The place is a mess. You’ll get into trouble. Your own Embassy won’t want you to go, either.’

I equivocated. The Afghans had always treated me nicely in the past. I could take care of myself pretty well. I wasn’t an official any more, so there was no possibility of an international incident. What could happen to me anyway?

‘They’ll kidnap you and our boys will have to go in to get you out. That’s what could happen!’ he snorted.

When we got to Quetta a controversy was raging over an ‘illegal visit’ to Afghanistan by a conservative Pakistani politician. He had entered without a visa and Afghan diplomats and some other Pakistani leaders were protesting strongly. He had also accused the US of creating unrest and instability in Afghanistan. So we looked up the Afghan Consul and got visas.

Thus equipped, early one morning we joined a UNHCR convoy for Kandahar. The two white Toyota Land Cruisers were marked ‘UN’ in huge letters. They carried three Spains, five Afghan UNHCR employees, miscellaneous supplies, and canisters of cooking gas strapped to the roofs. Avoiding road blocks manned by Scouts with notoriously erratic standards for passage, we went up through the snow-covered Khojak Pass and down to the border town of Chaman. Most of the traffic crossing the border drove around the Pakistani Customs and Immigration office, but we got properly stamped out.

There were no such formalities on the Afghan side. We passed mile after mile of abandoned adobe villages where displaced persons from deeper in Afghanistan had lived during the worst of the war. In Spin Baldak the local residents gave us tea and fruit and advice about whom and what to avoid in Kandahar and how to deal with the various Mujahiddin commanders who controlled the road ahead. No one could say for sure whether the rivers were fordable or whether we’d have to be ferried across by the lorry drivers who made a good living doing so with captured heavy-duty Soviet trucks.

After thirty miles or so we came on our first Mujahiddin

encampment. A Soviet anti-aircraft gun, a prize of war, was mounted on a hillock at one side and a swarm of armed men, every second one carrying a rocket launcher, inhabited tents and caves on the other. We stopped to see the Commander, whom Steve knew. He wasn't there, but we were told everything was peaceful in their territory. Indeed, except for a possible problem with the rivers ('Those lorry drivers are thieves! When we cross we show them our guns'), all was well all the way to Kandahar.

Twenty minutes later, bowling along in the lead Land Cruiser, three Spains suddenly became conscious of a thumping noise to our rear. Three men had jumped out from a rock beside the road. They were firing at us with AK-47s! The bullets kicked up dust nearby but not a single one had hit the vehicle when the driver gunned it and took us out of range to stop a thousand yards down the road. But the second Land Cruiser had slowed, and within seconds the attackers had taken it over. It promptly started toward us.

Steve used the radio to inform anyone who was listening of our location and that we were 'under fire by unknown armed men who have control of our other vehicle and are approaching us.' (It turned out later that UNHCR Kandahar had picked up the transmission and informed UNHCR Quetta, but since that was our last chance to use the radio, no one knew what happened next.)

Conscious of my status as 'greybeard', and feeling that forty years in diplomacy should have prepared me to take over in an emergency, I estimated that we still had five hundred yards between us and our attackers (who didn't seem to be able to drive very well). 'Shouldn't we make a run for it?' I suggested.

'No,' said son Steve. 'They're probably just screwed-up Mujahiddin and their commander will have their heads for this. Anyway, they'll be sensitive about foreigners, and if we run, they may kill the Afghans in the other vehicle.' (They all happened to be Tajiks.) 'We'll stay and deal with them.'

That proved difficult. They wouldn't talk to us or our Pushtu-speaking Afghan driver. They didn't seem to have a leader. A fifteen-year-old, AK-47 still hot from the bursts he'd fired and with razor-sharp bayonet affixed, won a scuffle with one of his companions to take control of our vehicle and set out to drive

it. He didn't really know how but he managed to get it moving and the other captured Land Cruiser followed along.

When he finally managed to get into fourth gear, he reached over and plucked Steve's glasses from his nose. He put them on. It didn't help his driving but neither did it dampen his spirits. He next turned to the back seat and grabbed for my wrist-watch. Determined to maintain some dignity (which probably wasn't a bad idea in dealing with Pushtoons), I slapped his hand. He made a threatening gesture with his bayonet, but left it at that, and went back to struggling with the wheel.

After a while we turned off the main road and went a few miles into the hills. When we stopped, another couple of dozen armed men swarmed out of hiding. Again a demand of 'take us to your leader!' was of no avail. They were busy scuffling with each other over vehicles, suitcases and cameras. After a short time one of the newcomers came over, and with gestures indicated that we were to walk away. All eight of us started to do so, left with only the clothes on our backs, although we still had passports, money and whatever else happened to be in our pockets. Our attackers had forgotten to search for these because, I suppose, they weren't used to carrying such things themselves.

No shots in the back came and nothing exploded in the fields we had to cross to get to the main road. (All over Afghanistan the Russians had littered these with butterfly mines.) A passing lorry gave us a ride back to the Mujahiddin camp. The leader was still absent but one of his lieutenants expressed outrage at our story and sent half a dozen men in pursuit of the brigands.

Several hours passed while the hospitable Mujahiddin provided us with tea, bread, and a tent to rest in. We whiled away the time talking of what would be done to the outlaws when they were brought back. I even indulged myself in thoughts of a second meeting with the young desperado who had gone after my watch. In fact, however, the chances of overtaking the powerful Land Cruisers didn't seem great as their pick-up truck had a fuel pump problem and could go only fifteen miles an hour.

The posse eventually returned unsuccessful and just at dark we were put on a passing bus for Spin Baldak, where the Mujahiddin commander was said to be. Steve found him there. More outrage was expressed and more condolences offered—

and the advice that we should go back to Pakistan. He and the Kandahar *shura* (Council) would take care of the matter.

It was night now. There could be no 'official' travel but we found a taxi. The Pakistani border post was closed and there was no one to stamp us in. (As a result, when we left Karachi a few days later, our passports showed that we had left Pakistan twice but entered it only once.) In Chaman we found a place to sleep on the floor at the Red Crescent Society Headquarters. The next morning Steve got on the telephone to UNHCR in Quetta to ask for someone to come and get us. The people there joyfully spread the word to diplomatic and official sources in Islamabad that we were alive and well after all, precluding whatever events the Pakistani Ambassador in Colombo had feared. By afternoon we were back in the Baloch capital.

It never came clear who or what was behind the attack. One rumour, fuelled by an identical ambush a few days later of another UNHCR convoy on the road between Peshawar and Jelalabad in the north in which four people were killed, was that Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was behind it. Another held responsible one of several southern commanders who was disgruntled by the amount of UNHCR resettlement aid he was getting. My own guess is that it was simply low-quality Mujahiddin, demobilized after the Russians left, who had turned to banditry, as happened in Kansas and Missouri at the time of the American Civil War.

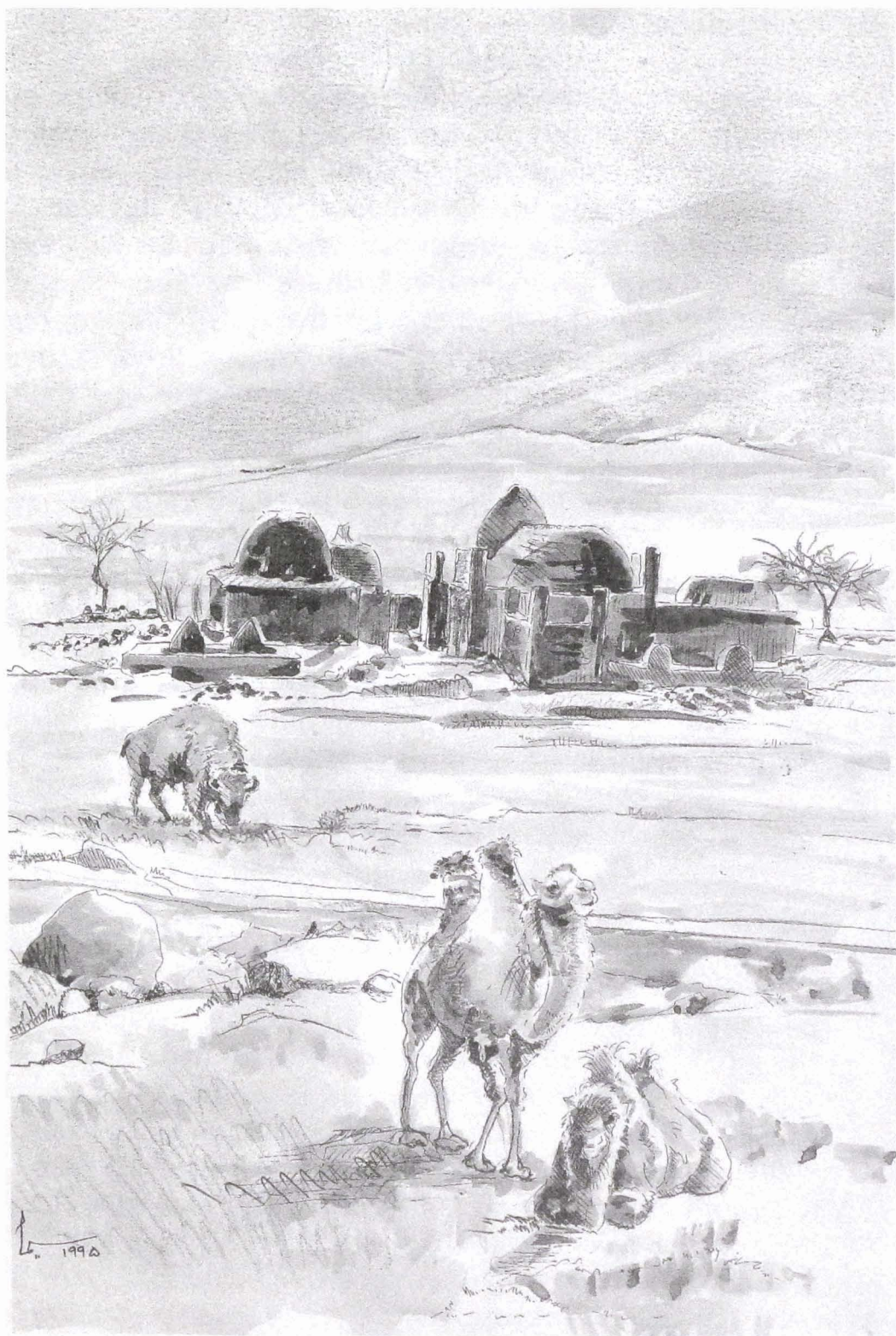
In any event, there was some reparation. We never saw our personal possessions again (including several rolls of film that were supposed to provide pictures for this book). However, after Bill and I left, Steve went back to Kandahar and complained to the *shura* that, contrary to all Pushtoon rules of decency, he had been shamed in front of his father. The vehicles were eventually recovered and returned to UNHCR—and a sheep was killed and eaten as compensation for the slight to his honour.

Our stay in Afghanistan had lasted less than twenty-four hours but it was enough to demonstrate that the more things change, the more they remain the same. The Soviet Occupation did enormous harm to the country. The civil war is exacerbating the damage. If no single leader capable of bringing unity and integration emerges, the intensifying Pushtoon-non-Pushtoon conflict may split the country, with the western part linking up

with Iran, the northern with the already troubled former Soviet Muslim Republics, and the eastern and southern joining Pakistan, with all the disruption to the political balance of that country that another six to eight million Pushtoos would bring.

As of this writing, the situation in Afghanistan remains in chaos, sent there by greedy and irresponsible Russian and Afghan leaders, and, yes, by some Arab, Pakistani and American ones too. Large-scale fighting has spread from Kabul to the rest of the country. In the capital, government and commercial activity has ceased. Education and health facilities have been almost totally destroyed. Food is short. People live only by selling off their personal possessions. Hundreds of rockets fired by the different factions fall on the city daily. A new wave of Kabuli refugees has fled to Pakistan, bringing with them their predominately Persian language and culture. More than one of them to whom I talked in Pakistan even looked back favourably on the days of relatively stable rule by the Soviet puppet Najibullah (who is still in Kabul, having taken sanctuary in a UN office).

But Afghanistan has survived worse situations over the millennia. It will probably survive this one too. And, although I didn't even consider a visit while on the Frontier in 1994, *inshallah* ('God willing') some day I will get to go back again.



The Road to Tashkurgan

Chapter 11

The China Connection

For almost a thousand miles north and east of Peshawar there sprawls a tangle of the highest mountains in the world. Although the various tribes who sparsely inhabit this area are not Pathans, many Pathans administer and soldier in the mountain tract, much of which has been incorporated by Pakistan as the Northern Areas of the North-West Frontier. Beyond lies the Frontier's 'other' frontier, The People's Republic of China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

To Pakistan China is a powerful and valued ally in regional geo-politics, a counterweight to a usually hostile India. To solidify the Islamabad-Beijing relationship the two governments set out to construct a road across the mountains connecting their countries. Work began in 1960 to open Pakistan's northern regions. In 1966 a joint project was agreed with the Chinese to extend the road all the way to Kashgar in Xinjiang. Work went on for twenty years, with more than five hundred lives lost on the Pakistani side of the border alone. The Karakoram Highway (KKH) was finally fully opened in 1986.

The KKH hadn't even been dreamed of, and the fabled Silk Route from China that had once brought out the precious cloth to the Romans, Byzantines and pre-Crusader Europe, was a dim memory when I made my first venture into the great mountains in October 1954, while on a Ford Foundation Fellowship. After waiting several days in Rawalpindi (Islamabad did not exist then either), I managed to get a seat on the occasional Orient Airways C-47 which flew up the Indus Valley past Nanga Parbat, 'the killer mountain', recently conquered by German climbers after years of failure and loss of life, over the fourteen-thousand-foot Babusar Pass to Gilgit. There was no hotel in those days, so the long-suffering Pathan Political

Agent had to put me up. (As it turned out, I got sick and stayed two weeks.)

After I returned to the US my illness was diagnosed as a duodenal ulcer, but in Gilgit, assuming the problem was some form of intestinal disease, I treated it by eating only parched corn and whisky (both of which were generally presumed free of amoeba). There was little to see or do in Gilgit in those days. The principal 'sights' were the craters left by Indian bombs when they had attacked the place by air during the Kashmir jihad a few years before, and the two-thousand-year-old rock carving of a Buddha just outside the town. The single-street bazaar was well stocked with powdered milk and patent medicines, but only a single tattered snow leopard skin and a few pieces of frayed and dusty silk were to be found, relics of another era.

Amazingly, the corn and whisky got me back on my feet long enough to accompany the Political Agent on a two-day horseback tour of a high lake area north-west of the town. In those conscience-free days, my host supplied me with a rifle and made no effort to conceal that his purpose was a snow leopard hunt. No leopard were shot or even sighted. The *shikaris* (hunters) around the lake informed us that they never came below twelve thousand feet until December. So it was back to Gilgit, where my sore bottom (from riding) kept my mind off my sore belly (from whatever) long enough for me to start out on a trip to Hunza.

Hardly fifty miles from Gilgit as the crow flies, almost double that on twisting surface trails, Hunza, to the extent it was known at all in the outside world, was associated with the 'Shangri-la' of James Hilton's novel. The Hunza Valley was said to be extraordinarily beautiful and its people, thanks to their diet of apricots, were hale and lusty even at one hundred years, to which age many of them lived. Nevertheless, even by Gilgitis it was regarded as 'the end of the earth'.

Accompanied by a new assistant political agent who knew no more about the area than I did, a jeep took us the first half of the trip up the Gilgit Valley on what was more a goat trail than a motor road. We left the jeep in Chalt and crossed the Hunza River on a foot-bridge. After a brisk walk we settled down for the night in a village. The next morning ponies were

waiting for the second part of the journey up the Hunza Valley. We got to Baltit, the capital, in the late afternoon.

Despite the beauty and fertility of the valley, its primitive poverty was obvious. Most of the people seemed happy enough but they were in rags. The principal food available in the tiny bazaar was apricots, fresh and dried. It took half an hour to find and buy a few packets of matches. Aspirin was totally unavailable. There was no hotel or rest house.

We were taken as a matter of course to the Mir's (ruler's) multi-storeyed, square, bristling palace-fortress, the origins of which were said to date to the thirteenth or fourteenth century. Mir Jamal Khan was not in residence. He always spent the winter in Karachi, we were told by a retainer, who showed us the Mir's arsenal, his private quarters faced by a great circular wooden verandah with a magnificent view of the Valley, and the Tibetan prayer tower on the roof before assigning us rooms.

The history of the state and the family was as Central Asian as you could get. The resident retainer gave us his version, always deferring to whatever the 'Mir Sahib' would have said if he was present. In this received history, the Mir and most of his people were descendants of Alexander the Great. You could tell by their brown, sometimes blond, hair and their blue eyes. A thousand years ago they had embraced Islam and founded the kingdom on both sides of the Hunza River. In Mughal days a Mir had split it to give one son the Baltit (Hunza) side and the other the Nagar side. One new king soon killed the other and the two principalities have fought ever since. Nagar always loses because it is on the shady side of the river gorge, while the people of Hunza take strength from the health-giving apricots and the bright sun on their side. One hundred and fifty years ago the Aga Khan sent a missionary to Hunza, and all the people joined his Ismaili sect of Islam.

The people of Hunza had always wanted to be left alone, although they had long and close ties with China. They held pastoral lands across the border and went often to Kashgar, sometimes to trade and sometimes to raid. But unfortunately in those early days there was disharmony among the royal family, with sons regularly killing their fathers and brothers to inherit the throne. Some of these 'bad people' began to conspire with the new British power in India. In the 1890s a 'bloody-minded'

Captain Durand had come up, killed many *Hunzakuts*, enslaved the state, and severed the China connection. In 1947 Hunza was released from this condition by Pakistan.

When I got back to libraries in London, New York and Washington, I checked out the account. It turned out to be correct, if a little oversimplified. In any event it reflected how the *Hunzakuts* saw their history in 1954—which is perhaps more important than how it really was.

Accompanied by son Bill and two friends, I set out into the mountains again in October 1993, destination Kashgar in China. This time the KKH changed everything. Well, almost everything. The beginning at the Rawalpindi/Islamabad Airport was pretty much the same. Whether or not the daily scheduled flights to Gilgit went depended on the weather. Told of a five-day back-up of passengers in front of us in Rawalpindi and an even larger one waiting in Gilgit, we rented a van and drove up through Besham and Chilas in the Kohistan District, bypassing Gilgit and coming to Hunza around two sides of 25,550-foot Rakaposhi. Doing the first part of the journey by surface rather than air added three days to the round-trip to Kashgar, but it seemed to be the only way of making sure that we would get there at all.

The high mountain areas of Kohistan and Hunza show more change over forty years than any other place I revisited on the Frontier. Movement through the area and between places within it has increased enormously. On the KKH it takes less than three hours to get to Hunza from Gilgit. Sust, the last town in Pakistan, is a mere half-day's drive from Hunza. The Chinese border is scarcely two hours beyond that.

The princely states of Hunza and Nagar still exist in concept but they are integral parts of Pakistan. Several small new hotels are thriving and a dozen more under construction. The freight trade is booming. The population has expanded. The people look healthy and prosperous. The bazaar is well stocked with goods of both Pakistani and Chinese origin. Ironically, it is difficult to find a supply of the traditional apricots.

To get from the KKH to our hotel near the Baltit Fort we had to switch to a four-wheel drive vehicle. The fortress-palace where I first stayed was closed for renovation as a historical site. The familiar face of the Mir of my day appeared in an

occasional picture hung in a shop, and we were told that his son has a house in the new town of Karimabad (named after him), but no one could remember when they had last seen him in Hunza. The obliging jeep driver took us to prowl through the even older Altit Fort a little distance away. On the way back, just at sunset, we all stopped to join in the obligatory sneer at Nagar, barely discernible in deep shadow across the river.

Our hotel, not far from the ancient polo field. (the game was invented somewhere around here—Hunza? Gilgit? Chitral?), offered reasonably clean sheets, huge piles of blankets, adequate dinner and breakfast, a token amount of hot water in a bucket before retiring and after rising, and endless demonstrations of goodwill and eagerness to please. The next day we rummaged through half a dozen neat new shops all obviously designed for the tourist trade. Their offerings were all the same: 'Souvenirs, Antiques, Treks'. With amazing readiness the proprietors took a credit card for the modest purchases we made.

Baltit is at about 8,000 feet. The road beyond it rises steadily to peak at 16,000 feet in the Kunjerab Pass just inside the Pakistani border. Military check-points (where passports are inspected and names and numbers of travellers and vehicles recorded) are frequent. Tea houses are often collocated with them, lengthening the time required to pass through.

As south of Gilgit in Indus Kohistan, new farming plots with their own tiny irrigation systems are much in evidence. (If a family has a few vegetables or baskets of grain left over from its own needs, now it can sell them.) Electric lights, fed by mini-generators running off nearly vertical falls and streams, dot the night. Sturdy modern suspension foot-bridges of a common design cross the rivers at convenient intervals.

It is in this area that, as a roadside sign proclaims, two continents collided: South Asia coming up on what is now the Indian Ocean smashed into the great central land-mass, producing the whole sprawl of mountains from Nepal to Afghanistan. The geological results are spectacular: hundreds of peaks above 20,000 feet, huge live glaciers stretching down almost to the KKH (four within a dozen miles between Gulmit and Batura alone), enormous strata of rock standing on end, deep gorges twisting across one another, a plentitude of rushing water, and a dearth of top soil. The cataclysm happened in

recent geological time and the area is still unstable. Scanning a vista, one can often see boulders tumbling down and hear full-fledged avalanches in the mountains.

It is incredible country through which to build a road. Delayed by earthquakes while under construction, the KKH was hard hit again in September 1992 by torrential rains which triggered hundreds of landslides across it. In October 1993, when we went by, as much as one-third of the graded asphalt surface that had been swept away was still missing. However, the earth-moving machinery that was in sight everywhere had managed to cut rough paths through the debris or detours around it.

Initially both Pakistan and China established posts at the border. But the problem of sustaining permanent installations at 16,000 feet soon brought a pull-back to Sust on the Pakistani side and Tashkurghan on the Chinese. In Sust we passed easily through exit formalities and abandoned our Rawalpindi van and driver to rent a pick-up truck from the one Pakistani trader authorized to send a vehicle into China—and that only as far as the Chinese customs office on the western side of Tashkurghan. An astonishingly urbane and cosmopolitan Wazir Pathan from Wana in faraway South Waziristan, he undertook to take care of our things until we returned. ‘Boy, will you be glad to see me and the rest of us Pakistanis again next week!’ he told us with a grin.

Most of the area between Sust and the border is encompassed in the recently created Kunjerab National Park. As in the high reaches of the American Rockies, the land is rock with a few evergreens here and there. The geology grows ever more spectacular as it climbs to its 16,000 foot pass. History and geopolitics are real too. At this point the eastern tip of the Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan, devised a century ago to keep the expanding British and Russian Empires separate, is a scant fifty miles from the KKH. The Tajikistan Republic of the former Soviet Union is about the same. And, of course, China lies just ahead.

These mountains are the home of the Marco Polo sheep (*ovis poli*) and the snow leopard, although all we saw of these two were high-tech signs placed regularly along the road by an international wild-life foundation exhorting us to protect them. (From what we learned from a ranger that was about all the park had received from the foundation.)

At the actual border we shook hands with a single friendly sentry on the Pakistani side and, a few hundred yards further on, traded coins with a single cheerful Chinese one. More recently completed here, the KKH ran down the centre of a wide level valley, enabling the truck to pick up speed. In the distance on both sides lay glorious snow-covered mountains, this day gleaming in the sun of a cloudless sky. Alongside the road it was pure moonscape, broken now and again by clusters of small, domed, uninhabited mud structures which we decided must be tombs.

Life, exotic enough to suit any traveller, soon appeared. Long-haired, doubled-humped Bactrian camels sleeping by the roadside came into sight. When one of my companions approached to take a picture, they struggled to their feet snapping their jaws and sending him quickly back into our truck. Then small herds of silky-coated yaks appeared. It took us a while to identify them, the task being made no easier by other animals called dzho, which we found out later are a hybrid of a cow and a yak.

Here and there, nudging yaks and cuffing camels, were squat, bandy-legged men with square fur hats and antique leggings and boots. We had no idea whether they were Uighur, Kazakh or Kirghiz, but their Mongol heritage was evident when they jumped on horses and galloped away, swift black shadows against the shining mountains, more graceful and at one with the animal than the most accomplished American cowboy or European dressage rider.

After this Tashkurghan was a disappointment. It is generally agreed that the oasis town has been there forever, but all it has to show for it is a mention by the Greek geographer, Ptolemy, its own version of the Greek myth of Danae, the beautiful daughter of a king of Argos, who bore a god-conceived son destined to kill his grandfather, and an ancient, crumbling tower in which it is all supposed to have happened. The tower was noted by the seventh century AD Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hiuen Tsang. It is still there. Today Tashkurgan is home to China's small Tajik community and a hardship assignment for a few hundred Han Chinese who run the government offices, post office, bank, and transport service.

We passed through customs and immigration with manageable difficulty. It took an hour at the bank to change our dollars into Foreign Exchange Certificates (FEC), which multi-lingual

signs proclaimed were the only money foreigners were permitted to use in China. An official forbade our driver to take us on the mile or so to our hotel; he and his vehicle could go nowhere but straight back to Pakistan. When asked how we were going to get to the hotel with our baggage, the official indicated that a bus would go in an hour or so—maybe. When that didn't satisfy us, he pointed at the road, suggesting that we walk. The New Pamir Hotel is aptly summed up in Lonely Planet's excellent *Survival Kit for the Karakoram Highway*: 'Staff are dedicated to doing as little work as possible. Food is a misery and grossly overpriced.'

Western China's great affliction is that the whole country is on Beijing time, although the sun appears three hours later than in the capital. Thus, the 9:00 a.m. bus, the only way to get to Kashgar, is actually at 6:00 a.m. Again we walked to the bus station, getting there shortly after 5:00 a.m. (real time). It was closed and locked. After shouting for a while we were rewarded by the appearance of a security man who was sleeping in a fully-lighted kiosk in plain view. He looked at us, spat on the ground, and ostentatiously returned to bed. An hour later he reappeared to let us and a growing crowd of would-be local passengers in.

Another hour and we were rolling along, packed in with a mixed bag of Tajiks, Uighurs, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Pathans, and a few Han Chinese. The last were going on leave, so they were relatively cheerful, and the others were a jolly lot, inspecting our possessions, offering exotic snacks, and piling on and off the bus at its occasional stops. The road ran downward all the way and, having been less damaged by the previous year's rains than on the Pakistani side, made for fast, smooth travelling.

The Kirghiz disappeared into a group of yurts at Kara Kul, beside a beautiful lake. Nearby was a make-shift restaurant presided over by a pretty young Han woman, cheerful, obliging, and English-speaking. She explained that she was a student of a foreign language institute who earned her education by working in 'hard places'—and, besides, she was going on leave the next day.

Kashgar, situated not much above 5,000 feet, is a big, bustling market town on the edge of the Takla Makan Desert, surrounded by the Pamir, Tien Shan, and Kunlun Mountains. It has perhaps 100,000 permanent inhabitants, whose number doubles on

Sunday when the country people swarm in for the great market. The costumes of the women are particularly dashing: Western-cut skirt and jacket in bright colours, a pill box hat wrapped round with a brilliant scarf, and coloured, embroidered stockings. Language and people are Uighur, eastern Turkic rather than Chinese. Much of the vocabulary is Turkish, which made possible some communication for me and my son who had carried away from three assignments in Turkey a working knowledge of that tongue.

Men have lived the urban life here for thousands of years. The Han Chinese first exercised control when the 'silk route' developed in the first century AD. Driven out by Mongols and Turks, they were back in the seventh and eighth centuries under the powerful Tang Dynasty, only to yield to the Turks again in AD 752. Islam came and persisted, surviving rule by both Chingiz Khan and Tamurlane in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

In the eighteenth century the Manchu emperors of China regained control. Muslim revolts against the declining power in Beijing were frequent in the nineteenth century. The British and Russian imperial governments established competing consulates that sometimes provided the only real government in the city. But the Chinese clung to control through the Manchu and Kuomintang nationalist regimes, and the rule of the present Communist Peoples' Republic seems to be firmly established.

The city had its ups and downs through all this. When Marco Polo was there in the middle years of the thirteenth century, he described it as 'a temperate, fertile place, with beautiful gardens full of vines and fruits, with huge stocks of fine cloth and merchants who go through all the world doing trade'. A scant twenty-five years later, the Chinese Nestorian Christian monk, Bar Sauma, of all unlikely things on a mission for his emperor to the Pope to urge European unity to prosecute the Crusades, found Kashgar 'depopulated and devastated', with its Nestorian Metropolitan bishop and congregation departed. (My library efforts to find out what happened in between have been unsuccessful.)

Astonishingly, some impressive architectural relics survive: a piece of the fifteenth-century city wall, double-tiered and thirty-five feet high; the huge yellow-tiled Id Gah Mosque built in 1442, and dozens of smaller mosques, some as old; a few tombs

dating from the twelfth century; and the elegant seventeenth-century mausoleum of Abakh Hoja and his family. The residences of the British and Russian consuls, now annexes to modern hotels, are notable examples of nineteenth-century colonial architecture.

Sensing that the flavour of Kashgar could be sampled in many ways, we took only a passing look at the landmarks and spent all of Sunday at the weekly fair, which we had been assured was 'the largest medieval market in the modern world'.

Assuming that we'd have no trouble finding a place so large and important, we set off in a square horse-drawn cart. We were hardly under way when the Uighur driver jostled a Han policeman and, after an altercation, had the license plate removed from his vehicle. Upset by this, he insisted on putting us down in a crowded but unimpressive cloth bazaar. Equipped with no more to guide us than the word 'Yekshemba', which we were told was Uighur for Sunday, it took another hour and a taxi to reach the market ground on the edge of the city.

It was like plunging into another world and another time. Literally tens of thousands of colourfully-dressed people swarmed through narrow aisles between hundreds and hundreds of booths, with the only open space reserved for the camel and horse markets, where the animals were displayed and put through their paces on well-beaten ground among piles of elaborate trappings. All over were fresh food stalls and tiny restaurants offering delicacies which had no name in English.

Whole aisles were devoted to the sale of hats, various shops specializing in the headgear favoured by different ones of the fifty or more official minorities of Xinjiang. There were rows and rows of knife-makers offering a similar selection of hardware, some examples of which were more vicious than anything I have seen among the Pathans. My young companions stocked up on both, one of them losing a hundred dollars to a pickpocket in the process (a risk that no doubt transcends the centuries). The only exotic merchandise that we couldn't find was carpets, though ample supplies of those were undoubtedly there somewhere.

Side by side with weapons and horse gear designed a thousand years ago stood vast areas of modern manufactured goods from China and Pakistan: tinned food and drink, clothes, textiles, electrical appliances, and plastic utensils and toys. Interestingly,

the most colourful country people were gathered around these, looking for a novel treat to bring home to a child or a bit of high-tech twentieth-century work to beautify their yurt with money just earned from the sale of a bridle or handmade blanket or hat. My first reaction was to lament the passing of the preference for 'good old things', but then I realized that Kashgar was just trading now as it had since snatching up the first piece of new-fangled silk two millennia ago.

Back in the Chini Bagh Hotel, situated in the compound of the former British Consulate, where we spent our nights in Kashgar, we discussed plans. The Chini Bagh was not bad. Most of its clientele were friendly Pathan traders, happy to offer advice on coping with the mysteries of China in fluent English. Thermos bottles of water for tea were kept piping hot in my room and only one pane of glass was broken in it. Good, cheap Chinese beer was available in abundance in the lobby. While guests were not permitted to take personal charge of their keys, there was usually an attendant in the hall to let one in and out.

We never could find a place to eat in the hotel, but we discovered the cheap and tasty Seman Road Restaurant a fifteen-minute walk away. There a diminutive Han woman (perhaps a sister of the one in Kara Kul?) competently and happily produced marvellous ginger chicken and other Chinese dishes (including 'American Chop Suey'). Her cooking alone was enough to tempt a longer stay.

Nevertheless, we decided to start back to Pakistan the next day. Memories of the altitude, cold and dust on the way in were vivid and we wanted to get the return trip out of the way. A helpful Pathan advised that we might be able to avoid the rigours of the Kashgar-Tashkurghan bus trip and go all the way through to Sust in a single day if we approached one of the Chinese transport authorities at night. My son set forth and returned with an 'off-the-books' deal for a jeep that would take us all the way for US\$ 500. The arithmetic was easy: \$125 each, minus another night in Tashkurghan. We sent him back to close the deal.

Our Chinese driver appeared to have no English and our efforts to tease him about 'moon-lighting for the people' were unavailing. Indeed, he didn't say a word on the whole trip. Otherwise, going back up the Valley and over the Kunjerab was

a delight. It had snowed while we were in Kashgar, and the moon-scape was an even blanket of white, with the black forms of yaks, bactrian camels and their herders looking even more timeless and universal than on the way up. The officials at Tashkurghan stamped us out of China quickly and retreated to their stove. The bank wasn't open, so we couldn't re-exchange our FEC. We had no choice but to take them out with us, even though we had been warned that the only other place in the world where they had full value was the Bank of China in Hong Kong.

At Sust we passed easily through customs and immigration and were checked back into Pakistan. We switched to a local vehicle to take us on the few miles to where we had left our van and driver. In the process, one of son Bill's bags was left behind, and he went through a worried night until we got prompt and voluntary word the next day, miles down the road, that the driver had found it and was holding it for him.

Our Wazir friend turned our van and driver back to us. He wished us joy of our leisurely three-day trip down to Rawalpindi and was impressed that we were going to sample the luxuries of the new Serena Hotel (owned by the Aga Khan) in Gilgit. Then he inquired with a grin whether we were glad to get back as he had predicted. We must have waxed a little too eloquent in our replies for he moved quickly to restore good feeling.

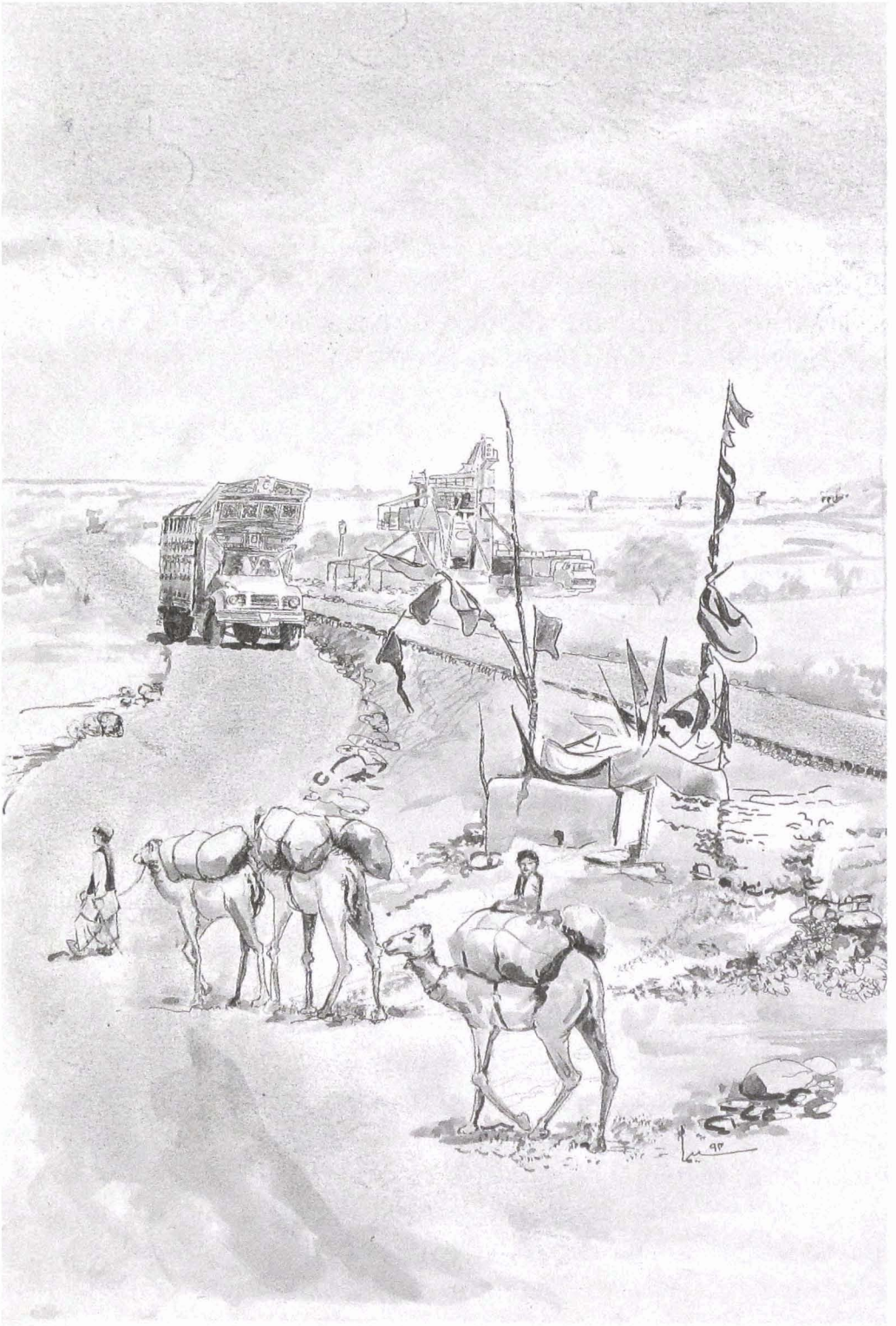
'You shouldn't be impatient about China,' he advised. 'The Chinese are just indifferent to foreigners, and, well, different from other peoples too. But if you had been sick or in danger, they would have taken care of you.' His words were echoed, with a twist, by a political leader in Islamabad a few days later. 'They've been good allies', he told me. 'They don't have as much to offer as you Americans but they're more reliable'.

Looking at the shifting allegiances that have determined the course of human life in High Asia for thousands of years, it is rash to assume that it has now reached a lasting political equilibrium, but it may well be so. Development and communications, rather than warlords and armies, determine events today. Almost half a century of Pakistani-Chinese friendship in the world arena has been enhanced by the KKH and the events of the past few decades. Building the road required an enormous input of resources, effort and trust. Trade is booming.

Restrictions on the movement of people and goods are diminishing daily.

With chaos in Afghanistan and much of the Muslim area of the former Soviet Union, the appealing direction for Pakistan is north-east, to develop its own vast under-exploited territory and to make the most of its proximity to China. It's a safe guess that much of the energy will come from the North-West Frontier. Pathan traders are already in Kashgar in numbers, their common bond of Islam making relations with the local population easier for them than for other outsiders. Behind them, more and more Pushtu is heard up and down the valleys of Kohistan.

For the Pathans, the China Connection seems likely to be a fruitful one for many years to come.



Old and New on the Indus Highway

Chapter 12

Good Tomorrows

Historians urge their fellows to document and interpret the past, not project it into the future. However, having done a certain amount of looking forward in my first book and not being altogether ashamed of the results, I can't resist the temptation to speculate a little on what the next half-century holds for the Frontier. If nothing else, it will expand my personal association with its history from one-sixtieth of the twenty-four hundred years since Alexander the Great passed through to a more satisfying one-thirtieth.

Still, prediction is a dangerous business. Unforeseen things have a way of happening in the world and anticipated ones often don't happen or turn out not to be important. The break-up of the USSR is a case in point. As Khushal Khan Khattak put it (in D.N. MacKenzie's translation):

*No river runs to please the raft,
Whatever men may say;
It flows as it chooses to go,
Pulling the raft with it.*

Then, too, there is Lord Curzon's injunction, given ninety years ago, towards the end of his viceregal responsibilities, in a speech accepting the Freedom of the City of London: 'No man who has ever read a page of Indian history will prophesy about the Frontier.'

But this latter-day round of the Frontier leaves me with an advantage. I won't be here to have to defend my predictions forty years hence.

Bad things could happen. There are plenty of issues between the Pathans and the Government of Pakistan on which either

could provoke a major confrontation by acting irrationally—or just irascibly. The Pathans could take to fighting among themselves. Small-scale clashes such as that between the Kunikhel and the Lisyani in Kurram at the beginning of 1993 are going on all the time. They could become so aggressive and exploitative in Indus Kohistan and Western China as to provoke violent reactions there.

But the odds do not favour any of these things. The Pathans and Pakistan have learned how to live with each other since Independence. Greater issues than any now on the horizon, such as 'Pushtoonistan' and 'one-unit', were real in their time, but solutions have always been found. Despite a long history of internecine battling, the tribes have seldom, if ever, united into large-scale factions against one another. And again, no real issues are currently apparent. As to their Chinese neighbours to the north-east, the Pathans know a good thing when they see it, and permanent alienation with loss of opportunities and benefits is hardly in the cards.

More real dangers lie in possible catastrophes outside the Frontier. The Pathans survived the breaking off of East Pakistan virtually untouched, but if a similar fission should happen in today's Pakistan involving Punjabis, Sindhis, Baloch or *mohajirs*, the Frontier would likely be caught up in it. Major changes in the situation in Afghanistan could bring them into conflict with the tribes on the other side of the border or, conversely, unite the Pakistani Pathans with their Afghan Pushtun brothers in all-out war against the non-Pushtuns of northern and western Afghanistan.

The odds in favour of these eventualities are not great, but the last will remain for some years a threat to the status quo. A more likely scenario would have the Pakistani Pathans continuing to stay out of the struggle across the border but the Afghan Pushtuns losing dominance to a non-Pushtun government in Kabul and the north and west. The Afghan Pushtuns might then conclude that they had no choice but to join Pakistan. The permanent addition of several million of them might strengthen the Pathan hand but would wreak havoc with the delicate ethnic and political balance that keeps Pakistan integrated today.

Even the chances of outside catastrophe seem less than forty years ago. Great Power confrontation has ceased. The US installations at Badabhar and in support of the U-2 are gone. So are the Baghdad Pact and the Central Treaty Organization. Just

a few years after massive (and often short-sighted and heavy-handed) US covert support of the Mujahiddin ended, there is little or no evidence that it had ever been. The Soviet Union has not only left Afghanistan, it has vanished from the face of the earth. The Kashmir issue remains, and Pakistan and India are now capable of nuclear war, but India, perhaps because of its unfruitful intervention in the Singhalese-Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka in 1987-9, seems less interested than formerly in activism in the peripheral areas of South Asia.

One thing can be forecast with more confidence. Economic development will continue. Whether or not the Gadoon Industrial Estate gets going, throughout the Frontier investment in education, medical and physical infrastructure has been steadily increasing for decades, and the level of human resources has risen. Promising new opportunities are developing in Kohistan and western China, where natural resources are virtually unexplored. If peace comes to Afghanistan and the Muslim Republics of former Soviet Central Asia are straightened out, there will be new prospects for trade there.

Afghans as well as Pakistanis are eager for this. In November 1994 an experimental thirty-truck caravan started from Quetta with gifts and trade goods for Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It was seized by guerrillas not far from the place where my sons and I were kidnapped the previous year. Armed Afghan refugees still in Pakistan went in and released the caravan after four days of battle which left fifty dead. Then they went on and—at least temporarily—took the city of Kandahar itself.

Plans are under way to connect the feeder air services that already tie Peshawar to Dera Ismail Khan in the south and to Swat, Chitral, Gilgit and Skardu in the north to additional points in the Pathan hinterland. Even the distant port of Karachi is getting closer as the new highway pushes south, presenting in its construction stage a classic picture of a modern asphalt plant next to a *pir's* (saint's) shrine beside a tangle of nomad camel caravans and modern lorries on the road.

It seems to me more likely still that the Pathan way of life, as I first saw it forty years ago (and Curzon a hundred, and Elphinstone almost two hundred), will persist. Peshawar remains urbane and cosmopolitan; its citizens show no sign of the schizophrenia that afflicts other peoples forced to deal at once

with both the old and the new; its hitherto invisible women are beginning to assert themselves. The 'no-go' areas in tribal territory have shifted about a bit but the Pathans there are still as unsullied by modern ways as any place in the world.

Pushtu remains a live and vigorous language, being explored and expanded in the colleges and at the University of Peshawar at the same time as it is cherished and preserved in the remote villages. And both kinds of Pathans communicate with each other easily and thoroughly. *Pukhtunwali's* emphasis on victims' rights and collective responsibility (the latter in the tribal sense of being one's brother's keeper, as opposed to the punitive sense of the Frontier Crimes Regulations, which can end up with the arrest of goats), has a good deal to contribute to the world's legal systems.

As Khushal Khan says:

*Who fight and keep the peace with equal zeal,
Such are true men, who seek the common weal.
Redeem their sorrowing with laughter gay,
Their rampaging with honesty as real.*

Apart from the aphorisms I quote to end this account, Khushal Khan and other Pushtu poets write of the complexities of love, the sorrows as well as the glories of war, and the nature of the universe more stirringly than those in most other tongues. As native Pushtu-speakers conversant with other languages and literatures (rather than Western 'orientalists') bring their talents to bear, this truly remarkable body of work is likely to catch the attention of a world given to increasingly cosmopolitan literary tastes.

A final thought from an amateur antiquarian: the Graeco-Buddhist-Kushan Gandhara school of art of roughly 200 BC to AD 600 (which gave rise to all the Buddhist iconography in the world) will come into its own in the international art world in the next half-century. The vast amount of well-preserved stone sculpture not yet catalogued or even unearthed will turn out to be a major asset for the Frontier.

And, what better way to end than with more Khushal Khan:

*The nature of the world, you see,
Is like a raging elephant,*

*But when one mahout loses his life,
Another always mounts its back.*

I hope that my grandchildren will go take a look at the Frontier and that they will find the Pathan elephant as fascinating and unchanging as their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents did.

Bibliographic Note

The availability of literature on the Frontier has improved greatly over the years. When I first turned my attention to the subject in the early 1950s, the only place where an ample supply of both primary and secondary material could be found was in the India Office Library and the British Museum in London, although out-of-print nineteenth and early twentieth century works turned up now and again in speciality book shops.

The only two 'modern' books readily available were:

C. Collin Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier*, (Cambridge: The University Press, 1932), and

W.K. Fraser-Tytler, *Afghanistan*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

Then came:

Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans: 550 BC-AD1957*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958; and Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1990), which was and is likely to remain the definitive work.

Good things have happened since. Oxford University Press, Karachi, has brought back many of the earlier works through its 'Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints' series. The war in Afghanistan in the 1980s inspired a spate of new books, although many of the journalistic works of derring-do with the Mujahiddin are more ego-trips than contributions to knowledge.

However, some very useful works have also been produced in the past twenty years. I have undoubtedly missed some of them. Favourites of those I know (to most of which I am indebted for one thing or another in this book) are:

Akbar S. Ahmed, *Millenium and Charisma among Pathans*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1976),

Mohamed Amin, *Journey through Pakistan*, (Nairobi: Camerapix, 1982),

Raja Anwar, *The Tragedy of Afghanistan*, (London: Verso, 1988),

Fredrik Barth, *The Last Wali of Swat*, (New York: Columbia, 1985),

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D.N. Mackenzie, *The Divan of Khushal Khan Khattak*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1965),

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Victoria Schofield, *Every Rock, Every Hill*, (London: Buchan & Enright, 1984),

Andre Singer, *Guardians of the North-West Frontier*, (New York: Time-Life Books, 1982),

Arthur Swinson, *North-West Frontier*, (London: Hutchinson, 1967),

Charles Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986),

My own *The Way of the Pathans*, (London: Robert Hale, 1962; as *People of the Khyber*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962) has

managed to stay in print for more than thirty years, thanks largely to the Oxford University Press, Karachi, reprint series. My dissertation, *The Pathan Borderland*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1963) has been reprinted (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1985) and put into Urdu as *Pakhtun Sarzami*, (Peshawar: New Darul Kitab, 1991).

The latter contains a fairly comprehensive bibliography of the India Office and British Museum materials and the early works of such writers as William Barton, Henry Bellew, C.E. Biddulph, Alexander Burnes, Winston Churchill, George Curzon, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Josiah Harlan (an American), Thomas Holdich, Charles Masson (who claimed to be an American but wasn't), Theodore Pennell, Henry Raverty, Henry Rawlinson, Percy Sykes, and Frank Younghusband.

It is easier than it used to be to learn about the Pathans—and more worthwhile than ever.

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