REMINISCENCES

A SHORT HISTORY OF AN ERA (1869-1881)

by

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Much has been written about Mahmud Tarzi - particularly about his contribution to Afghan nationalism, independence & modernization during the first decades of the 20th century. In comparison, little is known about the last four years of his life which were spent in exile (his second), imposed by the overthrow of reformist King Amanullah by Habibullah, commonly known as "Son of a Water Carrier," which shattered Tarzi's dream of a bright future for his country.

However, these years provided him with the opportunity to embrace his first love, poetry. Stimulated by the beauty and culture of his beloved Istanbul, he wrote two collections of poems, "Distressed" and "Withered", which he published in 1934. They included his thoughts and feelings about the important social, political & philosophical questions of the day. The first collection also focused sharply on the disillusionment and anguish of the writer whose vision of reform and progress was turned into a nightmare by the reactionary forces of ignorance and bigotry. Intensely critical of the weaknesses of a feudal and tribal society, he particularly blamed the mullahs for this state of backwardness.

During these years, his eldest son, Abdul Wahab, constantly but unsuccessfully implored him to write his memoirs. Then one day in June 1933 he finally turned to writing his reminiscences. Unfortunately, his death in November of the same year at the age of 68 prevented him from completing more than the first part covering 1869-81. (A biography covering his life up to 1911 when he launched his most enduring & influential project, the bi-monthly newspaper, Seraj-ul-Akhbar, has been researched and written by Abdul Wahab Tarzi and will soon be published.) Tarzi's early memoirs, falling within the reigns of Amirs Sher Ali, Yaqub and Abdur Rahman, are the story of a child of about five growing up to age 16 in the very heart of Afghan political and cultural life. Relying on his remarkable memory, he recalls events of his life, interwoven with the history of his country.

Mahmud Tarzi's early youth was greatly influenced by the intellectual and artistic gatherings of his father, Gholam Mohammad Tarzi, a distinguished poet, man of letters, and a noble aristocrat with strong democratic convictions. In his later years he was deeply affected by Ahmad Madhat, an Ottoman philosopher and author - a mentor he never met but knew only through his writings. The more he traveled, read and discussed the issues of government, science and culture with the Young Turks, intellectuals & politicians, the more he yearned for his own country's independence & progress. His abiding faith in education and reform finally persuaded him to return home to try to uplift his people.

Mahmud Tarzi was not a politician or a courtier; he never sought power. He was against imperialism and despotism. He believed in an enlightened Islam which would lead to reform and democracy and was convinced that the East had much to learn from the West, especially in science & technology.

I have translated & edited these reminiscences not only because it was the wish of the author and his son to have them published as a biographical and historical memento, but also because they are pointedly relevant to the present tragic crisis which haunts the Afghan people. I also share the belief that a nation cannot face the future with confidence while ignoring its past and failing to search for the truth in its history. I sincerely hope that
this writing may contribute to a better understanding of this bewildering
and seemingly endless misfortune.

Wahid Tarzi
Geneva 1997

* Editing has been necessary only to improve the readability of the text. It
should be remembered that the author was in poor health when writing these
memoirs. It should also be noted that some of the figures, based as they
are exclusively on memory may be on the exaggerated side. I wish to inform
my compatriots who do not read English that the Dari version is being prepared
for publication.
In The Name of God, The Compassionate, The Merciful

INTRODUCTION

To better understand the story which I am about to tell you, dealing with history & biography & based mainly on my reminiscences & on what I heard from my father, let me begin with a brief description of my clan, the Mohammadzais, who ruled Afghanistan from 1826 to 1979.

THE MOHAMMADZAI CLAN - SELECTIVE GENEALOGY & A BIT OF HISTORY

Sardar¹ Paindah is the progenitor whose sons have ruled Afghanistan. I can remember only some of his 21 sons from different wives.

Vizier Fateh as minister of Shah Mahamud (Sadozai) secretly hoped for the transfer of power to his own clan. Taking advantage of his position, he appointed some of his brothers as governors throughout the realm.

Sardar Azim was governor of Kashmir.

Amir Dost Mohammad, following the fall of the Sadozais & the capture of Kabul & Jalalabad by the British, was imprisoned by them in Lodiana. Through the efforts of his son, Vizier Akbar, & of the other sardars & tribal chiefs, the British army at Kabul was practically wiped out & a number of officers & women were taken hostage. The British agreed to the return of Dost Mohammad as Amir of Afghanistan in exchange for their hostages.

The Five Qandahari Brothers ruled Qandahar successively:

Sardar Purdel was the eldest.
Sardar Sherdel died in his youth
Sardar Kohandel ruled Qandahar for years.
Sardar Mehrdel was a distinguished poet. My father's initial exposure to literature, particularly poetry, was at his gatherings.

Sardar Rahmeld governed for only 6 months. The incessant feuds between him and his nephews (the sons of Kohandel) prompted him to ask his brother, Amir Dost Mohammad, to mediate. The Amir quickly left for Qandahar, accompanied by his imposing sons. But instead of reconciling uncle with nephews, he annexed Qandahar. Rahmeld fled to Persia & later died in Tehran. His son, my father, Gholam Mohammad Tarzi (Tarzi was his pen name meaning stylist) decided to accompany the Amir to Kabul. He lived there in honor & prosperity² until the Amir's death in Herat when he was imprisoned by Sher Ali, the Amir's son who had succeeded his father.

Sardar Sultan Mohammad & Sardar Yar Mohammad (two of the 5 Peshawari sardars): the former was called the "Golden Sardar" on account of his good looks & gold-embroidered clothes. He had around 100 wives & many more children than his father or brother, the Amir.

¹ A prince, a member of the nobility
² The Amir bestowed upon him the title of "Beloved Scholar" & granted him an annual salary of 120,000 rupias.

THE SIEGE OF HERAT & THE DEATH OF THE GREAT AMIR³

Amir Dost Mohammad, commonly known as the "Great Amir," took possession of all the provinces except Herat which was independent of Kabul, and appointed his sons as governors. For instance, Turkestan went to his son Afzal; Qandahar to Amin.

Towards the end of his reign, during the civil war in Herat, Sultan Ahmad, his nephew & son-in-law, with Persian support, captured Herat. This unexpected

³ As told by my father
development shocked & distressed him. He immediately ordered a military campaign backed by edicts sent across the country. Accompanied by his sons, including Sher Ali, & his nephews (including myself), he sped towards Herat at the head of a huge army. In addition, his sons, the governors joined with their provincial armies in his support.

The fact that this aggression had been launched from Persia & encouraged by its government implied political overtones which only reinforced the Amir's determination to suppress it. The British, too, considered it against their interests.

Herat was under siege for 9 months & battles raged every day. Then the wife of Sultan Ahmad passed away, followed by her husband. Their sons surrendered & Herat was taken. Unfortunately, after a brief interval, the Amir, too, departed from this world.

On the day of his death (1863) with his sons, the sardars & chiefs gathered around him, he asked Sher Ali to come to his bedside. With trembling hands he tied his sword around Sher Ali's waist & in a muffled voice declared him King. Carressing him, he said prayers for his success. No sooner were the burial & prayer ceremonies over than each of the sons with his army returned to his province and astonishingly, each proclaimed himself amir.

THE SECOND REIGN OF AMIR SHER ALI (1868 - 1879)

My first recollection of this decade goes back to an incident when I was about 5 & the Amir was on his way to Ambala (India). I vaguely remember that one day, all of a sudden, dozens of unshaven & uncouth soldiers & officials poured into our house & occupied the roofs & the doorways. By God, my sisters, the slave girls & the ladies-in-waiting in their chaurdaries were being moved from room to room in order to facilitate the thorough pillage of the house. I was in the arms of my nurse & constantly asking "Where is Daddy Sardar?" & "Why are they gathering our things?" She would answer that father had gone to see the Amir & that they were moving our goods to our new house. She was only trying to comfort me. Actually it was on the orders of the Amir that father had been imprisoned & our house & about 100 horses confiscated.

From my earliest childhood I had developed a deep love for my father. Apparently I had grown up more in his arms than in my mother's. As one could expect, the next day my mother dispatched me in the arms of my lála⁴ to visit father in prison. Aqchan was a tall, slender, black-bearded man from Qandahar who had been with us for many years. So instead of riding my beautiful, glistening, dappled Tibetan pony, I was carried on the shoulder of Aqchan to the prison at Bala-Hissar, the principal residence of the Amir & the center of government. There I saw father & was reassured.

These daily visits from morning to evening continued for the next three months. I remember the prison, a long room situated close to the Amir's residence. A couple of elders were father's fellow prisoners. To pass the time they would read aloud from books & recite poetry. Thanks to the generosity of friends & relatives, there was an abundance of pilau, fruits & sheer-chai (a delicious beverage made of green tea & garnished with milk & cardamom). I will never forget the taste of the chicken pilau which father would keep for me from the night before & which, upon my arrival, he would warm up on the hot brazier.

After his return from Ambala, Sher Ali set my father free & granted him a monthly pension of 1,500 rupias. The reason for his sudden imprisonment will be explained in a moment.

⁴ A male servant tending a child, usually outside the home.
To go back to the insurrection of his brothers, Sher Ali, after establishing order in Herat, returned to Kabul accompanied by my father. And thus the fire of feuding & killing among the sons & grandsons of Dost Mohammad was lit. Years of continuous fighting took place between Sher Ali & his brothers Amin, Afzal, Azam & his nephew Abdur Rahman (son of Afzal) & others. At times victorious & at times vanquished, Sher Ali finally prevailed. Linking the provinces with Kabul, he took control of the administration of the country. In the wake of these bloody civil wars, & the preceeding ones involving the Sadozais, thousands of people were slaughtered & the country devastated. Moreover, an enmity & deep hatred pervaded the people. This misfortune of discord has continued to this day & father's imprisonment was an outcome of this situation. More exactly, when Sher Ali was in Herat & Afzal & Abdur Rahman had occupied Kabul (1866), my father had naturally replied to their amicable letters. A couple of years later when Sher Ali retook Kabul, some informers submitted these letters to him; what followed has already been described.

CHILDHOOD & YOUTH DURING THE REIGN OF SHER ALI

During these 11 years, relieved of public office & the heavy burden of responsibilities at the Court, my father would spend his time in the blossomy gardens of Chahardehi & the residences of Kabul among poets & learned men, absorbed in a world of fine arts.

My brothers & I had a tutor named Akhund 5 Mohammad Akram, a devout & learned teacher well versed in the subjects of that period. But the real source of my education was at the gatherings of my distinguished father where I was a permanent & assiduous attendee.

Father had an attractive & rich library full of beautiful hand-written books, decorated in gold, some old, some new. He would employ & supervise talented scribes to copy from original books. I was allowed to browse & focused mainly on the classics such as Jami's "Yusef & Zoleikha" & Ferdowsi's "History of Kings".

5 Religious scholar

THE BATTLE OF KAJBAZ OR QALAT-I-GHILZAI 6

Towards the end of 1863, Amir Sher Ali left Kabul for Qandahar with an army of about 30,000 soldiers to punish his younger brother, Amin, who was intent on ruling independently as Governor of Qandahar. The Amir's son Ali, a tall & handsome youth, was commanding the army.

The battlefield lay between two low-lying hills. Thanks to an inexperienced officer, some artillery units were incorrectly & dangerously deployed on the slopes. Unexpectedly Amin mounted a fierce attack on the Amir's positions. Sher Ali's son counter-attacked but in a careless & hesitant manner. His ill-fated horse started to run between the two hills. The opposing forces had barely collided when the badly placed artillery on both sides of the valley began firing. Inevitably, both Amin & Ali lost their lives along with many other officers.

Qandahar was taken but at a very high cost to the Amir. The loss of his beloved son & brother was so painful that he temporarily lost his senses. For three months he remained in Qandahar oblivious to the affairs of the state. At night, in bare feet he would wade in the stream of the courtyard wailing, "Where is Mohammad Ali?" & showing other signs of instability.

6 As told by my father.
INVESTITURE OF THE HEIR APPARENT

The forthcoming celebration of Prince Abdullah Jan's 7 investiture as Crown Prince at the age of 9 was proclaimed to the whole nation by the Amir. This was an impressive event which has remained crystalized in my mind.

Naranjan Hill & the field beyond, located just below Bala-Hissar, had been selected as the site for the festivities. Dawn, the sounds of trumpets, drums & pipes in competition with each other echoed in jubilation. Crowds of tribal people, different in appearance & language, were occupying the top & the sides of the hill. Regiments of soldiers in colorful uniforms were spread out over the entire field of Chaman up to the streets & bazaars of Bala-Hissar. The sardars, their ladies & the elders were gathered tightly in the Royal Pavillion.

At a given moment, judging from the salutes in the form of martial music & cannon fire & the jostling of onlookers, one could tell that the Amir was approaching. Accompanied by his heir apparent, he appeared majestically amid the cheers of the crowd. He went straight to his throne & his son took his place standing beside him. Then either out of respect or to get a better view, the entire crowd rose & remained standing despite the Amir's wish to make a speech. He kept ordering the people to sit down while the chamberlains tried their best to make them obey. Nevertheless he was obliged to remain standing for about 15 minutes. The last one to be seated was my father & I vividly remember his words: "There is surely more comfort in sitting than in standing. Yet His Majesty's command is being accepted with such difficulty that it is doubtful that this investiture will find easy acceptance!"

The Amir read his eloquent speech introducing the 9-year-old Abdullah Jan. Shouts of congratulations & joy filled the air. The martial music concentrated exclusively on salutes to the Amir & his Crown Prince. Bursts of cannon-fire brought the royal celebration to a close.

Three days of public festivities of revelry, music & lights had been royalty decreed not only in Kabul but in all the provinces. In Herat, however, Yaqub, the eldest son of Sher Ali, was governor & reacted by declaring war against his father. However, with false promises of compensation sworn to on the Koran, Sher Ali convinced his son to come to Kabul. Immediately on his arrival, Sher Ali threw him in prison. In any event, Abdullah Jan wasn't destined to live long and in a few years passed away.

7 A term of endearment added to a given name, meaning life or dear.

THE CURSE OF TOO MANY WIVES

At this point, I cannot refrain from discussing the problem of polygamy among the kings & amirs of Afghanistan, a principal cause of the ruin of the country. If it were a question of taking up 4 wives within the requirements of traditional religious law, that would not matter. Unfortunately, they married from 20 to 100 wives & procured slave girls, all giving birth to countless children. Every newly-born son was called a prince & surrounded by maids, governors, pages & even a guard of honor. He thus grew up under the tutelage of ignorant & illiterate servants.

Obviously in such a milieu, the wives were always full of envy, jealousy & spite towards each other. These rivalries & hatreds would usually start with the governors & pages & end up with their ladies. They would then spread among the sardars & the sons of lesser nobles, resulting in ever growing feuds over power & inheritance. History bears witness to the magnitude of these conflicts among the descendents of Timur Shah (Sadozai) & the Mohammadzais who constantly killed & blinded each other.
THE ARRIVAL CEREMONY OF THE RUSSIAN ENVOY (1878)

The arrival of the Russian Ambassador (Gen. Stolietov) was another grand event of my youthful days. The preparations included new uniforms for the soldiers & repairing & leveling the streets.

One morning it was time to accompany father & his friends who were going to watch the arrival procession & also to have some mulberries from the orchards at the foot of Mt. Asmai. The valet & the tea steward had chosen an excellent spot under the mulberry & aspen trees overlooking the wide boulevard over which the Ambassador would pass. The pots of sheer-chai & wicker trays of seedless & Ibrahim Khani mulberries were ready to be consumed.

People were coming from all directions, gradually occupying the orchards, the slopes of Asmai & the sides of the roads. They were enjoying the mulberries & the sound of rebabs (a stringed instrument) & singing. Stalls for sweets, kebabs, fish & dried fruits were doing a brisk business. Some groups boasted gourmet dishes, dancing boys & girls & a bit of drinking. ⁹ Already both sides of the boulevard were packed with soldiers & onlookers.

At noon, as the trumpets sounded, the soldiers & inhabitants competed for the front rows. The sound of drums & the melodic tunes of their peculiar short trumpets signalled the arrival of the cavalry. Each unit with its special uniform & arms reflected its tribal or provincial origin. A moment later, riding the biggest elephant in Kabul & flanked by two columns of smartly dressed infantry, the Ambassador made his appearance. He was seated in a large, silvery, basin-shaped litter, next to the Amir's brother; both were wearing magnificent uniforms. Other sardars, commanders on elephants & the riders of the Mounted Chiefs ¹⁰ concluded the procession.

At the time, I could not fathom the political reasons for this visit. Yet, from the discussions that took place among my father & his friends & comparing them with my present understanding of the situation, I have been able to reach some tentative conclusions.

I learned that Peter the Great, in his will to his successors, included a paragraph to the effect that the Russian Government, to the best of its ability, should approach India, the treasure-house of the world, so that at an opportune moment it could seize that sub-continent & hence raise the banner of world domination. Following this advice, the Russians from St. Petersburg & Moscow have gradually reached the banks of the Amu River.

On the other hand, the British, even ahead of the Russians heeding Peter the Great, have occupied all of India & are looking for further conquests. Moreover, by their treaties with Shah Shuja & Amir Dost Mohammad, they have brought Afghanistan under their influence, particularly in foreign relations. Afghanistan could not have direct dealings with other countries, especially Russia, Persia & the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, she was a semi-independent state, having internal autonomy but externally under British protection.

It seems that our Amir, grasping the situation, became apprehensive over the latest British advances towards Quetta, Baluchistan, Khaibar & Chitral. Perhaps he had reached an understanding with the Russians. Perhaps the seriousness & speed with which he carried out his military build-up suggested the inevitability of war.

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⁹ During the reign of Sher Ali, in Kabul, Kohdaman & elsewhere, spirits & wines were made, sold & drunk. The parties of the Amir & of others included wine & dancing girls.
¹⁰ A branch of the military comprised of a number of chiefs & sardars who were given an allowance for maintaining from 50 to 100 riders. The other two branches were the troops, i.e., the infantry, cavalry & artillery; & the special regiments representing the gendarmery.
Kabul was seething with noise & clapping. The people were agitated & worried, rushing around; the soldiers moved like ants; the cannon foundry ran day & night; company after company of soldiers were moving towards the borders. The British had declared war & were advancing on several fronts. Throughout the land, the people were anxiously awaiting the outcome of this holy war.

Then, one day, the city was overwhelmed by commotion & wailing. Dreadful news had just arrived from the battle fronts. The troops of the Amir, one after another, had suffered defeat. In fact some of them were already returning to Kabul. What horrible news!

Lacking discipline they went out of control. People were beaten & stores looted. Famine spread throughout the city & with it the curse of inflation & financial crises. Owing to the 4 ruipa tax 11 introduced 2 years ago, the people had been moaning & groaning & suffering severely. Now, afraid of looting, they were burying their wealth & belongings under the ground of their homes.

People gathered every day, even in front of the Amir's palace, shouting "Release the lion of a lad!" They meant Yaqub who was a prisoner in Bala-Hissar.

The British continued to advance, taking Jalalabad & reaching Gandomak. Then the news arrived of the fall of Qandahar. The Amir was at a loss for a solution. He had no further means to resist. The soldiers were worried & disobedient, the people bewildered & protesting & the treasury empty. He had no choice but to go to Turkestan. He first moved the families, the luggage & a multitude of soldiers. Then early one morning he held a large durbar & introduced Yaqub dressed in regal uniform as regent. He made a very long speech of which I can hardly remember a word, climbed into his litter carried by 4 men, & left in a great rage.

On the way out of Kabul he would now & then tell the people who had lined up on both sides of the road to say farewell, "You want the 'lion of a lad,' well you can have him but I doubt if you know him as well as I do!" He added, "The British have not accepted our right to freedom & independence, & want us in captivity. I am leaving in order to unite with the Russians & acquire financial & military assistance so that I may return to avenge myself."

At other times he would reproach them in abusive language, "I have for the honor of your country, you ignorant 4-legged animals, fought the enemy of your liberty, but you so-and-so, unworthy of your country & not knowing the meaning of honor, have refused to cooperate with me with your property & lives."

In any event, Amir Sher Ali, his Queen (the mother of the late Crown Prince Abdullah Jan), & other fellow travelers reached Mazar-i-Sharif (Turkestan). After a while his chronic ailments of gout & tuberculosis, which for years had obliged him to move around in his special litter, suddenly recurred with such severity that in a matter of days he left this life (21 February, 1879).

11 For constructing the garrison town of Sherpur to accommodate a growing army & government offices.

REFLECTIONS ON THE REIGN OF AMIR SHER ALI

I heard that the Amir was a prudent ruler, inclined toward progress & civilization. During his 11-year reign, he accomplished a number of important tasks. For example, he opened a school of modern arts for the princes & their cousins at Bala-Hissar. He also organized a council of elders to advise him on government policy.
Under the guidance of Secretary Abdul Karim, an armaments factory was constructed which manufactured cannons, rifles, bayonets, swords, helmets & grenades. Conscription was introduced among the majority of the people & the army was organized into about 80 battalions of 800 soldiers. Their uniforms were copied from those prevalent in Europe. In as much as Afghanistan's primary source of military skills was its neighbor to the east (India), military training was based on the latest British standards. The Afghan soldier was not on the same level as his British counterpart, nor did he possess comparable arms. His training was of a practical nature; he knew nothing about military science. Unfortunately, the administration & maintenance of the army were in the hands of the Master of the Horse, Ahmad, an ill-tempered old man who knew nothing about management. The Amir's policy was to recruit most of the military & the civil servants from the Ghilzai tribes; he had little interest in the Mohammadzais. Kabul in those days was a military town: shouts, marches & trumpets were heard everywhere.

Although full of zeal & pride, the Amir was also ill-tempered & given to foul language & jesting. He had a passion for horses. This would prompt some of the wits of the day to whisper, "He is not only ill-tempered but a dung-head. Otherwise why would he have chosen the stables as his residence?" In truth, Sher Ali had built a small gazebo with an antechamber & hall in the center of a wide field encircled by the stables of his pedigreed horses. It served not only as his office but was also used for parties, which featured wine & music.

It is clear that the real reason for the downfall of Amir Sher Ali was the forward policy of British imperialism. But there is also little doubt that his military buildup, involving conscription, the 4 rupia tax & the oppression of the people by the military made matters worse.

It is worth noting that the Amir's military strength was not taken seriously by everyone - certainly not by my father's friends. According to one of them, "These troops of the Amir have not been trained to fight. On the contrary, they represent a fantasy & are purely for show. They drill in the Amir's courtyard in their beautiful uniforms to the sound of pleasant music only to please the ladies."

THE REIGN OF AMIR YAQUB

Against a background of British troop movements & a grief-stricken & agitated populace, Yaqub was suddenly released from prison & crowned Amir. The poor fellow was surprised, bewildered & delirious. It was said that his jailer, Haji Chaeae, a close confidant of Sher Ali & a very cruel & rough person, had forbidden Yaqub to talk with anyone & had even given him a few beatings. So the question arises: Can a man who has suffered the persecutions of 6 years of solitary confinement retain adequate intelligence to find a reasonable solution for saving the threatened country at such a critical juncture?

He sat on the throne surrounded by flatterers, which is characteristic of despotic rulers. His close companions, some of whom were secretly pro-British, would say to him, "It is all over! You must surrender to the British so that at least, as their Amir, you may continue in luxury & success." This advice appeared moderate & appealing to this weakened man. After attending his late father's burial & memorial service, accompanied by a handful of special nobles (including his father-in-law, Sardar Yahya), he went to Gandomak where the British army, under the command of Gen. Sam Browne, was stationed. He signed a treaty & returned. At a subsequent durbar, he is said to have boasted: "I have entered into such an agreement with the British that if after me I should leave no heir, this handkerchief would continue to rule."
It is interesting to weigh this statement in the context of British aggression & the appointment of their representative (Cavagnari) in Kabul. By formally accepting British protection, Afghanistan ceded Kurram, Pishin, Sibi & control over the Khaiber & Michni passes. One detects a close resemblance between this treaty & those signed with the biggest rajahs & nawabs of colonial India.

Cavagnari with his staff & a contingent came to reside at Bala-Hissar in one of the old government houses. At the same time, the British slowly started to evacuate their troops. The Amir was happy & making up for his miserable days in prison by revelling with his companions until dawn, enjoying the dance & song of a dancing girl called Sobi.

By contrast, a commotion & rancor inciting revenge was brewing among the Afghan tribes. Throughout the land, one could notice signs of a violent revolt, particularly in the disorderly conduct of the soldiers. Then, unexpectedly, one morning gunfire could be heard from the Bala-Hissar. The shops closed as excited & confused people started running in that direction. Friends came to report that Afghan soldiers were rioting & had attacked Cavagnari's house & that there was heavy fighting.

The shooting continued until early afternoon. Then there was silence. Cavagnari's residence was ablaze like a volcano. From the roof of our house we could see the flames in the distance. The High Commissioner, his staff & the guards were either killed or they perished in the catastrophic fire. Later that afternoon some people were seen in the bazaars wearing vests, helmets & boots belonging to the British soldiers, undoubtedly looted from the fire.

One wonders how all this happened. The facts are that, in the described atmosphere of turmoil, 3 battalions came to Bala-Hissar to collect their pay. As usual they gathered, without arms, in the courtyard of the Government offices. They claimed 3 months salary but there was only enough for one month. The soldiers were in an uproar. The clerks & officers tried to calm them, but in vain. The shouting became louder & there was foul language & name-calling. To make matters worse, they started throwing stones at the upper chamber where the clerks & accountants had their offices. The poor clerks fled but some were pursued & beaten. At this point one of the junior officers, a trouble-maker, cried, "Brothers! These cuckold will not give us our due. Since today we have another master, Cavagnari, let us ask him, the husband of their wives!"

These words jolted the soldiers & they rushed towards Cavagnari's house. The moment he saw them coming, Cavagnari closed the gates & armed & positioned his guards on the roof. As the soldiers approached & without any discussion, he ordered his men to fire, inflicting casualties. This unexpected turn of events enraged the soldiers who then rushed to their barracks to arm & return to attack the mansion. Fierce shooting erupted from both sides. At this point the artillery joined the battle as did hundreds of bystanders who thought they would be fighting a holy war. The threat of fire in the courtyard became apparent & in a matter of hours nothing remained of Cavagnari, his house nor his companions.

This was the tragic story of Cavagnari as witnessed by this humble writer. In evaluating the disaster, I feel that Cavagnari made a terrible blunder which is unexcusable. After all, the soldiers were there to get their pay & not to fight. An intelligent person would have reached an understanding with them by making the necessary payment. In fact, this would have been an excellent opportunity to win the good will of the soldiers, to increase the government's gratitude & to extinguish the flames of disorder. Later he could have reflected on a long-term solution.

At the palace, Amir Yaqub spent the night before the riot in his usual revelry until dawn. About morning he fell into a restful slumber. Why should His Majesty have any worries or scruples to spoil his fun & rest. After all, he had signed such a reliable treaty that even his handerchief could rule after him. He had formally accepted British protection. Why should he care if the country was in the hands of the enemy!
The nearby sound of gunfire caused the Amir to leap from his bed. He was upset & alarmed. "What is going on? What has happened?" he cried. His close associates & sycophants explained the situation. Fearful of its dangers, they recommended that he should not make a move.

When Gen. Roberts heard the news at Kurram, he quickly headed for Kabul. Upon arrival, his first action to assert his authority was to erect a gallows on the ruins of Cavagnari's burnt house in order to hang those people accused of involvement in the incident. In reality, people had gathered there to watch or plunder & some to engage in holy war. Many unscrupulous antagonists with hate in their hearts & the Shias of Chendawol, who spied for religious reward, exploited the situation by betraying innocent people. Others did so also, for even a bit of profit. Thus every day 10 to 20 persons were hanged to avenge Cavagnari. My eldest brother Gul Mohammad, & Abdul Khaleq, fearing slander & execution, were obliged to flee. The former joined the army of Ayub at Herat & the latter the troops of Sardar Sher Ali in Qandahar.

After consulting with his favorite courtiers, the Amir hastily left Kabul & surrendered to the British. He was sent as a prisoner to India, to a town called Dehradoon, where he was kept under protection until his death.

The vile & disgraceful treaty of Gandomak imposed on Amir Yaqub by the British & encouraged by his father-in-law, Sardar Yahya & his family in effect circumscribed Afghanistan as part of the British colonies & dominions. Yaqub's deception by British promises clearly shows that this worthless man had no concern for the nation other than to save himself & his submissive rule.

Following the Cavagnari incident, the soldiers returned to their homes. But the Amir's brother Ayub, with an army led by able generals, a treasury & a firm footing in Herat, was on his way to Qandahar. If Yaqub had gone to Charikar, at least the scattered people & soldiers could have come together, enabling him to join forces with Ayub. But alas, Yaqub's rivalry with his brother was so intense that, without the slightest hesitation, he preferred to be governed by foreigners rather than share power with his brother.

THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF KABUL

The news of the abdication & imprisonment of Yaqub was brought to Kabul by his uncle, Sardar Naik Mohammad. Riding a tall horse & followed by 4 riders, he entered the Shah Shaheed gate. "Oh people," he cried, "Your Amir has been imprisoned by the foreigners. Arise! Make an effort! Have honor! Fight a holy war against the enemy of your faith & country." With such words he toured the entire city, encouraging & inciting the inhabitants to engage in jihad. An intense excitement swept through the people & shouts echoed throughout the city. In contrast, of all of the troops which the Amir had so painstakingly nurtured over the years, not a single one could be found either in the city or in the large barracks of Sherpur.

During all these disturbances, our family, consisting at the time of my parents, 3 sisters, 2 older brothers (who soon had to leave Kabul), myself, our tutor, who never left the company of my father, & a few servants were living in the home of Lady Fatima, the favorite daughter of the late Amir Dost Mohammad. She had graciously invited us to stay there.

Father, as usual, stayed away from Court & kept busy reading, writing, gilding, drawing & composing poetry. As an exception, he went to the memorial service for Amir Sher Ali which was held by his son Amir Yaqub in his late father's garden. My father went straight to the public section & raised his hands in prayer. The chamberlain, on a gesture from the Amir, pleaded, "This is not your place, Sir, please do us the honor of going to the salon where the Amir, the sardars & chiefs
are seated." My father paid no attention. Another time, shortly before the Amir's surrender to the British, my father visited him. "What happened was destiny," he said, "my conscience & faith oblige me to give you this advice. Instead of submitting to the British, you should go to Kohistan & Panjsher & from there, establishing ties with Turkestan & Herat, proclaim jihad. Perhaps with pure intentions & determined effort, you might succeed & your name would live forever."

Our financial situation had reached a miserable point. The government pension had not been paid for a year. There were shortages & prices were at their peak. As Lady Fatima needed her house, we were obliged to move to a small, old, decrepit place where we lived in common misery. Of the servants, only 2 remained; the flag-bearer who had been with us since the princely days of my father & Raman who was in charge of shopping, cooking & fetching water.

One day Raman informed my father that for tomorrow's meal there was nothing left in reserve nor a dinar in his pocket & the store keepers in the area, who hardly knew us, were loathe to extend credit. I cannot forget my father's reaction: "A platter you know is for serving pilau; but if there is no pilau, it becomes useless. Sell a couple of our platters & with the money prepare tomorrow's meal!" The next day, with the pilau on the table & the whole family gathered around it, father asked, "Do you know the name of this pilau? Well, it is called platter pilau," & so in forthcoming days we also had samovar, carpet & kilim pilaus.

THE BATTLE OF THE PEOPLE OF KABUL

It appeared that Sardar Naik Mohammad's exhortations had inspired the people. They gathered everywhere - in the squares, bazaars & the streets. Some mullahs were preaching jihad. (This was before they would be manipulated by British intelligence.) The people decided that they would, with or without arms, come out to fight the infidels, thus fulfilling their religious obligation. This battle of the inhabitants of Kabul was indeed a strange & comical spectacle. As we know, country folk are usually stronger & braver than city-dwellers. Accordingly, the Kabulis were boasting a lot but had no idea of fighting, particularly with rifles & guns. Besides, they only had short daggers & a few double-barreled hunting guns.

The people also decided to gather outside the Jubah Gate & to take positions on the slopes of the surrounding hills. Since ancient times, following tradition, the people of Kabul have celebrated the Jubah Festival. Every Friday during March, with samovars, throw rugs, pots & pans, the people would gather there to picnic & have fun. Overnight, bazaars would mushroom, selling fish & jelabis (a sweet), the essential foods of the festival. Other sweets & kebabs would also be available. A race course & rings for cudgel-throwing would be set up. Music & singing would fill the air.

The meeting for jihad was organized roughly along the same lines. The only difference was that, instead of song & music, one heard the cries, "God is Great," & "Help us oh Four Companions of the Prophet," along with the occasional sound of gunfire.

There happened to be in the crowd a master carpenter who made stocks at the cannon foundry. Noticing the absence of any artillery officers who, in normal times, would be strutting in their glittering uniforms, he put on a general's uniform & a bronze helmet with plumes. Assisted by several artillery soldiers whom he had befriended, he managed to deploy 6 huge elephant & several ox-driven cannons. It was also reported that 3 battalions & 4 mule-driven guns under the command of a military instructor, Col. Mamad (colloquial for Mohammad) Jan were approaching from Charikar.
In the afternoon, the sounds of artillery, music & trumpets announced the coming of the British. The moment the first shell burst in the sky, the unarmed Kabulis, with samovar pipes under their arms & small rugs over their shoulders, started to flee towards the city. The guns of the master carpenter, nevertheless, kept firing, inflicting some casualties. A few show-offs & dare-devil youth, hiding behind walls & in pits, would ambush the enemy. These random attacks had little effect & by night-fall not a single ghazi was in sight. All hid in their homes & blocked the doors with earth. The next day the British army put on an impressive parade. Playing marches, they toured the city before returning to their barracks.

That day our family & the loyal & patriotic people of Kabul were gripped by sorrow & a dark sense of calamity. My mother, sisters & I were weeping bitterly. Our tutor was lamenting, "Oh Islam! Woe to the Faith!" Father was sitting on his prayer rug, praying. The flag-bearer was murmuring abuses & curses, both at the foreigners & at the betrayers of the country. Raman was bragging that if he had had the opportunity, he would have done this & that.

In other homes, however, there was rejoicing & parties. These were the people who had welcomed the foreigners & by their own admission had been "taken care of" & those (mostly Shia & Qisolbash 12 who lived in Chendawol, a separate inner-city protected by strong walls & a moat. In their sectarian fanaticism, they preferred non-Muslims to Sunnis.

As mentioned earlier, Mamad Jan & his battalions were on their way. Upon their arrival at midnight, they set up defenses on Mt. Asmai. I will always remember my feelings of intense joy when, waking the next morning, I saw the flag of the Afghan army on top of the mountain. An instant later I saw the British climbing Mt. Sherdarwaza. The "Battle of Three Days & Nights," also known as the "Battle of Mts. Asmai & Sherdarwaza" had begun.

It was quite a scene causing hearts to pound & tears to fall; friends to pray & foes to curse. At dawn's call to prayer, I would go to the roof, spy glass in hand, to stay until evening. My mother, who was afraid that a stray bullet might hit me, was most unhappy but I could not desist. The shells from the British guns, being fired only during the night, often missed their mark. The 4 small short-range guns of Mamad Jan, the champion warrior, kept hitting the center of the British force. But on the third night, surrounded by the British & with their supply lines cut, the Afghan troops had no alternative but to destroy their guns & escape to Panjsher & Chardehi. Following the defeat of Mamad Jan there was no resistance left. The British formally occupied Kabul & declared martial law. Sherpur was renamed Shahri-nau (New Town) & chosen as the barracks for their army.

Sardar Wali Mohammad, a younger brother of Sher Ali, an old man & loyal servant of the British, was appointed governor of Kabul by General Roberts. Others loyal to the British became his courtiers & officials, including members of the family of Amir Sher Ali & of the "Golden Sardar" (Sultan Mohammad). 13 At the same time, another supporter, Sher Ali (son of Sardar Mehrdel), was appointed governor of Qandahar.

In short, important parts of the country came under the flag of the British Empire & the victorious British were firmly established in Kabul, Jalalabad & Qandahar.

12 Descendants of the soldiers of Nader Afshar, who remained in Kabul.
13 Including his sons Sardars Zekrya & Yahya & their sons.
THE RESISTANCE GROWS

The continued hangings sowed anger & hatred in the hearts of the people. The peasants initially were content to sell their produce to the British at inflated prices. But as the traitorous sardars who had become governors & other officials started to oppress them - especially by buying their goods at very low prices - they became disillusioned. The tribes, who in normal times plunder & slaughter each other, realized that the country had been over-run by people of another faith & race and began to contact each other with the goal of fostering harmony & unity. Throughout the land the mullahs, often supported by the khans & the gentry, preached the true Islam, thereby rousing the people for jehad. Some tribes took an oath to save the country with their property & lives.

The center of the growing resistance was Ghazni & its environs. There a virtuous & learned mujahid, Mullah Mushk-e-Alam, was inciting the people to fight. He was joined by the famed resistance hero, Col. Mamad Jan, who was recruiting fighters on a large scale.

The British, deeming it essential to link the army of Kabul with that of Qandahar, decided to establish a military base at Ghazni. When the mujaheds heard about this they rushed to Governor Sardar Hasan & pleaded with him to be their leader. "We do not want a prince," they said. "You who are a prince should be our commander. If we win you will be our amir; your good name will live forever & God will honor you on Judgement Day." Hasan, true to his habitual lack of restraint, began to swear in his effeminate voice: "Oh you dogs of ignorant holy warriors! How can you compare yourselves with the British Government? How can you, barefooted & without arms, oppose the mighty British? Disperse you so-and-sos & mind your own business!" Outraged by this response, the mujaheds attacked the governor & cut him to pieces. Then, with only knives, clubs & a few rifles, they went to confront the oncoming British force at a place called Shish-Gow.

I heard about this battle from a British colonel (at the time commander of the British force) in Bangalore. He was stationed there as a brigadier & I was traveling in India after our exile. I do not recall his name but I do remember that he was tall & handsome with a bluish scar across his left cheek. He told me, "On the basis of reports from my spies, I deployed my troops in a hidden valley in order to stem the oncoming human flood. Just as the Afghans with their colored flags & the monotonous beat of their drums appeared in the distance, I ordered the artillery to fire without interruption for two hours. I thought I had inflicted heavy casualties & ordered a cease-fire. The smoke still hung in the air when all of a sudden I felt the hard blow of a club on my head. The pain almost caused me to fall off my horse & the result is this scar. My men wanted to cut the assailant to pieces but I stopped them.

"He was about 55, dervish-like in temperament & dressed in rags. Barefooted, he wore short, baggy trousers of canvas rags tied together with knots, a dirty ragged shirt of the same material & a vest of sheepskin whose wool had worn off to such an extent that the color was hardly distinguishable. His waist was tied with a strap from a sling. His only weapon was a wooden club. An old leather bag, full of holes & tied together with a string, was hanging from his shoulder. It held half a corn bread & a few bits of stone for his sling. After washing & bandaging my face, I summoned the little man and asked, 'Are you a soldier?' 'No,' he replied. 'Are you a chief of a clan or tribe?' 'No, I am a peasant.' 'Son,' I asked, 'What necessity, what coercion & power obliged you to come here in the midst of all this firing & danger?' 'Yesterday I was passing by the village mosque. A lot of people were there. The mullah was preaching: 'Oh people! Our land has been seized by the infidels. It is our duty to God & his Prophet to fight against the enemy of our faith & country. If we kill them, we will be heroes & if we die, we
will be martyrs. Either way, paradise will be our reward.'"

"I told my friends it is useless to kill such people. Instead we should cultivate them & profit from their pure beliefs by using them against the Russians."

The two-hour fusilade hardly advanced the British army towards Ghazni. The mujahedin realized that despite their vast superiority in numbers, to go against such heavy fire-power would be suicidal. But they decided to continue their march to Kabul, at the same time forcing the enemy to retreat in the same direction. They were not alone; in fact, tribal lashkars from all over the country were encircling the capital. To ease the pressure, Gen. Roberts asked Sardar Wali Mohammad to organize a display of cannon-fire & horse-trotting at Chardehi. This was to serve as a distraction for facilitating the British withdrawal to Sherpur.

Following the "Battle for Three Days & Nights," Kabul appeared relatively quiet except for rumors, first about the set-backs of the mujahidin, then of the British. Then one morning intense gun-fire from the British fortifications on Mts. Asmai & Sherdawza prompted me to rush to the roof. It was evident that the ghazis (holy warriors, usually victorious) from Ghazni were approaching. I also noticed that the enemy artillery were withdrawing to Sherpur. Presently Afghan flags started to flutter on Mt. Asmai. Praise Allah! I cannot describe the depth & innocence of my youthful joy. Alas, it was short-lived as a counter-attack by the British sent the holy warriors pouring into the city. Fortunately, a little later tribal lashkars from the Southern Province arrived on the scene & attacking from Mt. Takhte-Shah, they were able to save the day.

By evening not a single person belonging to the British Indian Empire remained outside; all of them as well as the loyal sardars were besieged in the fortress of Sherpur.

**BATTLE OF MAIWAND**

To give you some idea of this famous battle, I can do no better than to quote my 2 brothers who were directly involved:

Khaleg (a platoon captain in one of Nur Ali's regiments. You will remember that the British had appointed Sardar Sher Ali governor of Qandahar as a reward for his unconditional surrender & cooperation. In this betrayal of his country & loyalty to the British, he considered it his moral obligation to provide them with 6 well-equipped regiments. He appointed his eldest son, Nur Ali, as commander of the force & his other sons, brothers & other sardars as officers. They were to serve as a self-sacrificing shield against Ayub's army.): On the eve of the battle, I & 2 other captains were pondering our predicament. We finally vowed that we would not fight against our compatriots who were trying to save the country from foreign subjugation. Such a disgrace would have haunted us for the rest of our lives. We then had a word with our men so as to prepare them for the planned rebellion.

Early the next morning the decampment bugle sounded from outside the tent of the Commander-in-Chief & was echoed by the other commanders. The sounds of trumpets & horns, of neighing horses & of movement signalled the troops' readiness for war. The moment we were given the order to march, we darted away from the indicated direction & rushed up the hill & began firing on the British troops. Our colonels, who were the sons of Sher Ali, started to leave us for the main army. We pretended not to notice. Our action caused such a frenzy in the other battalions that a hellish uproar broke out. Nur Ali & his relatives chose flight over fortitude by seeking refuge with the main British force.

Gul Mohammad: After the Cavagnari incident we left Kabul & after an arduous journey reached Qandahar. Since I didn't care for British rule or for Sher Ali's
administration, I decided to go to Herat to join Sardar Ayub. Once there, I presented myself to the sardar who kindly asked me to join his entourage. With his army, under the overall command of Gen. Hafizullah, & the treasury of Herat in hand, we headed for Qandahar to liberate our country.

The forces of Gen. Hafizullah consisted of 9 infantry, 2 cavalry, 2 forward artillery, 2,000 horsemen belonging to the Mounted Chiefs & tribal Qandahari lashkars, some of whom were without weapons. Moreover, a large number of mullahs & talebs were sending moral support by preaching holy war. The tribal women also participated by carrying water skins over their shoulders & singing odes in praise of heroism.

On the way, various tribal groups kept joining our army. The Sher Ali regiments which had defected to us likewise added to our moral & material strength. At last, at a place called Maiwand, near Qandahar, the two sides confronted each other. It was still dawn when, to our amazement, British bullets from nowhere started silently to hit their targets.

Gen. Hafizullah devised a battle plan which rested on the fact that we could not compete with the enemy's long-range fire power. Accordingly, the infantry, protected by the rough terrain, would advance to the left of the British. The artillery & cavalry would move to a point beyond which the enemy would be within range & after taking position would begin firing. At the same time the other units would rapidly secure the nearby dam before the arrival of the British. Sardar Ayub & his entourage would join in the defense of this front. This strategy was carried out without a hitch. After a bloody battle, the dam was taken, the enemy distanced from the water & his line of retreat rendered vulnerable.

Brigadier Burrows, realizing that he was encircled, ordered his troops to form a triangle in order to resist the onslaught. There were heavy casualties on both sides. Finally, he had to give the order for retreat. At first in an orderly fashion but gradually under pressure from cavalry & infantry, it turned, amidst disorder & confusion, into a disastrous flight & defeat. Many prisoners were taken & their artillery destroyed. Brigadier Burrows & his officers managed to reach safety because of the persistent efforts of Sher Ali which included appealing to the Qandahari chiefs. In fact, this was a great service that Sher Ali rendered to the British & which, to a point, compensated for the defection of his select regiments. The British suffered heavy casualties. Many who were hiding in streams, wells & gardens perished at the hands of women who, from the roofs, hurled heavy objects such as millstones, rocks, well-pulleys & stone mortars at them.

And so, just as I had seen through my little spyglass the blockade of the British at Sherpur, I now heard from my brothers about the siege of their army in the fortress of Qandahar. And again, just as a number of sardars in Kabul, by betraying their country, had the "distinction" of being besieged with the enemy, now Sher Ali & his family (including an older brother of mine, Zaman, whose mother was a sister of Sher Ali) & other sardars were in the same position in Qandahar.

BACK TO KABUL

Often at daybreak hundreds of tribal ghazis, visiting the city, would pass by our house which was located at the intersection of 3 main boulevards. Dressed in different clothes & with different appearances & feverish voices, they would gather in groups. Some were tall, big & strong, their long hair greased in special oil, falling in curls down to their shoulders. Until then, I had not seen men like them. Every group had flags & one or two even-sounding drums. In harmony with the beat, they would sing a single-worded melody.
Their first duty was to ransack the homes of the traitors who were besieged at Sherpur. They recognized their houses so readily one thought they had a list in their pockets. They also knew the homes of the wealthy. For example, facing us was the house of an elder scribe who was in charge of the office of Wali Mohammad (the British-appointed governor). "This house is to be plundered," one of them shouted. Immediately they tore down its solid door & entering removed everything, even doors & windows. Glancing at our place & declaring it to be one of theirs, they went on their way. The ghazis not only continued to loot, but also tightened the siege with continuing attacks.

At this point I would like to give you the names of some of the prominent heroes of the resistance who were remembered with reverence & immortalized in odes:

Mohammad Jan (Wardak), famous as the hero of the "Battle of Three Days & Nights" & for his courageous exploits in Ghazni.

Mullah Mushk-e-Alam, a learned & wise cleric who had won the spiritual trust of his people. To buy war supplies, he had sold all his lands & even his books.

Mir Bacha (Kohdaman), whom the people of Kohistan had chosen as their leader. The fact that he was considered a descendant of the Prophet only added to their trust.

Gholam Haidar Charkhi, a popular war hero who was instrumental in forcing the British artillery on Mt. Asmai to retreat to Sherpur.

As the siege of Sherpur continued, the ghazis controlling Kabul decided to set up an executive council. However, these were men who could not accept the leadership of one of their peers. They felt obliged, therefore, to select a leader in name only but under their authority, i.e., Prince Musa, the 7-year-old son of Amir Yaqub. They also thought it necessary to have an elder of his tribe play the traditional role of vizier. Since no one was available except his father, they all agreed to serve in that capacity. But this impasse didn't last long because a few days later the ghazis suffered an unexpected defeat & vanished from sight.

What happened was that carpenters were dragged out of their houses & forced to make ladders for a huge assault on Sherpur. On the designated day at the call for morning prayer, bonfires were lit on the hilltops as a signal for the offensive. With cries of "God is Great" & "Help us oh Four Companions (of the Prophet)," they attacked from all sides. On one front they came so close to the walls that they succeeded in putting up their ladders. In fact, Mir Bacha & his warriors started to enter when the ghazis from the east suffered a terrible defeat. The British cavalry broke out, causing a horrible slaughter. As is always the case with tribal warfare, whenever a setback occurs at one point, its effect spreads quickly, just as salt dissolves in water. Thus the moment the attack from the east was ferociously repulsed, the ghazis on the other fronts were easily routed. Rumor had it that a treacherous leader (most likely named Mohammad Shah) had disgracefully accepted a bribe from the enemy.

In spite of their victory, the British were facing a critical & dangerous situation. They feared a repetition of the disastrous defeat in 1841 when their army of some 16,000 was practically wiped out. Only a doctor named Brydon had reached Jalalabad to tell of the disaster.

Once again their forces in Kabul & Qandahar were besieged; their communication routes cut; no help forthcoming from India; & the tribes on the whole united to destroy them. To make matters worse, they could not find a leader with whom, in order to buy time, they could negotiate an advantageous peace. The ghazis around Kabul were powerless & irresolute. To make peace with Ayub who, on account of his victories, had become very proud, aside from being vain by nature, would have been inexpedient.
But in his cousin Abdur Rahman, who had spent 12 years in exile in Bokhara as a guest of the Russian Government, they finally found a suitable & agreeable person to deal with. They sent messengers with letters to him & asked the Russians to facilitate his flight from Tashkent.

The moment this sardar crossed the Amu River & set foot on Afghan soil, he took the title of Amir & got into astonishing fights with the chiefs of Kolab & Badakhshan. Defeating them, he headed for Kabul. He had crossed the Amu with only a handful of people who had shared his exile. Now, as he was approaching Charikar, roughly 150,000 men were under his banner. At every stop on his long journey he initiated appropriate reforms & appointed governors of his choice. Letters of allegiance kept pouring in from all over the country. People were celebrating the Amir's accession by waving flags & playing their drums, oboes & tambourines. Poets sang odes to the heroes of the past & present & to victories over the foreigners.

This time the British had planned well. On the basis of a compromise reached with Abdur Rahman in Zimma, they succeeded in safely evacuating their army on their own terms. The same boundaries defined in the treaty with Amir Dost Mohammad & confirmed by the latest treaty of Gandomak were reconfirmed. The word "independence" was hardly mentioned & as usual, the foreign policy of Afghanistan remained under British jurisdiction. The truth is they have always aspired to control our country either directly or indirectly through a native proxy. Even today (1933) I see from the incoming news that at the request & with the aid of Nadir Shah, they have closed the border & imprisoned the tribe. (This refers to the Afridi uprising against the British. Nadir Shah refused to support them & detained their delegation as guests in Kabul for a period of time.)

AN UNEASY FLIGHT

Good God! What a night when the ghazis fled & what a morning when we went scurrying for shelter. Fresh rumors had been spreading that the British were placing artillery on the hilltops in order to destroy all of Kabul & its residents. The only exceptions were Chendawol & Muradkhani which had sided with the British. People were evacuating their families to the nearby countryside. Those having a friend or acquaintance in Chendawol would rush there.

As fate would have it, our own flight to the home of the Sahibzadas obliged us to seek refuge with people under British protection. The family connection was that either their daughter was staying with Sardar Wali Mohammad or vice versa, & his wife & her relatives, fleeing the ghazis, were hiding there.

It was just before dawn that a close friend of father, Mamad Jan (also known as Khan), with his son Abdullah, a friend of my age with whom I shared the same thoughts & dreams, came over.

Khan: "Since yesterday I have been looking for a haven & I have found the house of the Sahibzadas, our neighbor in Toopchi-bagh, where the family of Sardar Wali Mohammad has taken refuge. I suggest we go there immediately so as to avoid any harm from the British."

Father: "I don't believe the British will shell Kabul so why should we displace ourselves?"

Khan: "Even if they don't, there would be danger once their soldiers, harboring feelings of rage & vengeance, spread out. They could harm the ghazis & their supporters & you, who are well-known as the former minister of the Crown Prince, may find yourself in even greater peril."

Father: "Very well, as you feel this is right, let us go."

Since it was near the end of winter, it was still cold, the streets covered with frozen snow & mud. My parents & sisters with folded blankets over their shoulders. in the middle, Abdullah, the Khan & myself in front, & our tutor & Raman in the rear,
started on our way. The streets were empty & lonely. There wasn't a sign of the enthusiastic crowds, not a sound of the pipes & drums or the cries of the ghazis which yesterday had filled the landscape with a tumultuous fervor. One thought the ground under one's feet, like the moving stage in a theater, had suddenly disappeared.

When we got there, the Khan took father & our tutor to his home & Abdullah & I were asked to take the ladies to the women's quarter of the Sahibzada residence. The doors & windows were closed. Not a sound could be heard. Mother & my sisters sat on the steps of the antechamber. The garden with its trees & rose bushes seemed to have been transformed into a cemetery. Then, just as the all-embracing sun started to cast its first dim reddish rays on the highest peaks of Mts. Asmai & SherDarwaza, a tall woman wearing a white veil suddenly appeared. Taking a tambourine from her side, she started to play & sing in a loud voice the traditional song of joy & best wishes sung at wedding & circumcision celebrations. This was the signal for the blinds to be drawn. Instantly, an old fat lady, covered in a blanket & supported by down pillows, came into view. In a deep voice she cried:

"Mother of Jabbar, tell me quickly what's the news?"

"Oh dear lady, you must reward me for my good tidings. The ghazis, those dogs, have been defeated."

"Ah, didn't I tell you. How can you compare those bare-footed beggars with the British Government. Not a single one remains in all of Kabul! This had to happen. A thousand thanks to God for this day!"

The other ladies & their slave girls entered to extend their profuse congratulations to the elder lady, the wife of the sardar. And Mother of Jabbar entertained them with her songs & ridicule of the ghazis. Our miserable group was the only exception. With tearful eyes & heavy sighs we watched, hardly breathing, with the exception of Abdullah who, full of mischief & laughter asked me:

"Who are the infidels: them or Roberts & Chamberlain?"

"A curse on both of them!"

"Dear fellow, they are your relatives. Let us see how they will treat you!"

At this moment a young boy dressed as a woman came out of the next room. He must have been a son of the family who, fearing the ghazis, had changed clothes. This proved a goldmine for Abdullah's fun-making. I, too, spared no effort in acknowledging all that he said. Thus we got somewhat even with the sarcasm of the ladies & the go-between, Mother of Jabbar.

Up to this point we had gone unnoticed by the grand mistress of the house. Suddenly she caught sight of us. "Oh, who are they?"

"It's me, the mother of Master Mahmud. Don't you recognize me?"

"Oh yes, welcome! I trust you are doing well. I hope nothing is wrong that you have come so early in the morning."

"It is certain that the ghazis have been defeated & people say there will be a massacre. For this reason we have come to take refuge with you."

"I beg you find another place. I cannot give shelter to those who are ill-disposed towards the British."

Having said this, she moved from the window. Mother, too, got up & after saying a few harsh & sarcastic words we left. We had hardly taken a few steps when we saw father, the Khan, our tutor & Abdul Latif, the merchant, approaching. Latif,  

14 Sir Neville Chamberlain who was to have led a British mission to Kabul before the outbreak of the war in November 1878.
an old & sincere friend of my father, residing in Chendawol, out of thoughtfulness had come rushing to our house to take us to his place. Not finding anyone, he had gone to the house of the Khan & from there joined my father & the others & con-
tinued towards the Sahibzadas. What a happy coincidence!

We followed Latif toward Chendawol. The gate was closed except for a small window. Innumerable groups of men, women & children from Kabul had created a huge crowd. One after another they squeezed through the window which on that day should have been called "Rescue Gate." The merchant & his friends knew how to lead us through the multitude & with much effort & hardship, we finally managed to reach our destination. The entire household received us with respect. They sat us at warm & clean sandalis 15 After having a quickly prepared meal, we retired.

It was almost 2 a.m. when we heard the sounds of trumpets & bugles mixed with cannon fire. I jumped with hope & anticipation. I thought that somehow the ghazis had again mounted a counter-attack. In the corridor, I ran into the eldest son of our host. who asked me where I was going.

"I want to get to the roof to observe the latest attack of the ghazis."

"You must be dreaming. These are the British soldiers celebrating their victory; their bands are parading through the city."

These were painful words. I returned to my room, put my head under the quilt & wept floods of tears which, until then, had been dammed up. This considerably relieved my heartache.

15 A charcoal brazier placed under a low square table covered with a large quilt with people sitting on mattresses on all sides using large bolsters as back rests, their legs stretched under the table & quilt. This is the traditional Afghan way of keeping warm during winter.

FATHER'S MEETING WITH GENERAL ROBERTS

We spent 3 bitter & anxious days at the house of Latif. On the morning of the fourth, an official & 2 Indian attendants arrived with a letter addressed to father asking him to see General Roberts at Sherpur. This caused a dreadful outcry. We all knew that he would be interrogated & punished. Mother & my sisters started to cry & wail.

Father, accompanied by the Khan, our tutor, Latif, myself & Abdullah, &, of course, the British official & his attendants, set off for Sherpur. British troops were everywhere. The residence of the "Minister's Mother" (Amir Dost Mohammad's Queen & the mother of Vizier Akbar) had once again become the municipal & confis-
cation office of the British administration. Some ghazis were being taken there for punishment. As we approached Sherpur, we saw the coffins of British officers covered with regimental colors being carried on cannons to the cemetery. A military band was playing a funeral march & soldiers with rifles pointing down were slowly marching on both sides. On seeing our turbans, they would mutter, "mullah, mullah," grinding their teeth in rage. These alarming scenes forbade a sinister outcome.

Upon entering the cantonment, we were taken to a building which served as Roberts' residence, office & military command. Only father was taken inside. In the square by a stream, Abdullah & I wept while the others prayed. Our hearts were pounding, our bodies trembling & our eyes anxiously fixed on the door. Every minute seemed like a year. Then, at last, the blessed & serene face of honorable father appeared beaming in the doorway. He was followed by 2 attendants, each carrying a sack.
Khan: "I see you are pleased. I take it all is well?"

"Yes, God & the blessing of the saints blinded them. They were courteous & paid me 4,000 rupias, the balance of my salary. I will explain later. Let's take this favor of God & leave."

The rest of the household, anticipating terrible news, were still in a state of sighing & wailing. Upon hearing the unexpected good news, they came to life again. Father, after resting a bit, gave us the following account:

An Indian wearing a high turban got up to receive me. He turned out to be the General's deputy. He left & returned in a couple of minutes. "Please come this way, General Roberts is expecting you."

The general was pacing as I entered the room. He wore high boots with a few patches & a closed-collar uniform. Advancing a few steps, He said, "You are Sardar Gholam Mohammad? I am General Roberts. Please sit down." He sat behind a desk & gave me the chair in front. "You were the minister of Crown Prince Musa, isn't that so?"

"No, not of Crown Prince, but of Amir Musa." My indiscreet retort caused him some embarrassment & he dropped the subject. "Are you acquainted with Amir Abdur Rahman & do you receive a pension?"

"Yes, I was not only an adherent of his but also of his father, Amir Afzal, & his uncle. And that antagonized Amir Sher Ali so for the 11 years of his reign & that of his son, Yaqub, I kept to myself & managed to live on a small pension."

"Of course during these difficult times you may not have received an allowance?"

"That's right, not a penny."

He rang the bell & asked the attendant to bring his deputy. He said a few words to him before returning to our conversation. He asked about the battles of Amir Sher Ali with all his brothers, & about the character & ways of Amir Abdur Rahman until the return of his deputy with the 2 attendants, each carrying a sack. Glancing at the statement of the account, he said,"According to this calculation, you are owed 4,000 & here it is." We said goodbye & here I am.

THE FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF ABDUR RAHMAN (1880-81)

Rumors were circulating that the Amir was nearing Charikar. A reassuring royal letter arrived from Badakhshan. Among other things he wrote, "I will deal with my relatives & friends in the same manner that my grandfather (Amir Dost Mohammad) did & will try to reward you for your support & friendship."

Later it became clear that father's name was on the list of the Amir's friends, prepared by him at the request of the British. Before his arrival at Charikar, the British had already reached an understanding with him regarding the conditions for peace. The people were happy that an Afghan prince & heir to the throne had at last been found. The Amir for his part continued to send letters to the khans outlining his peaceful efforts, in line with national interests, to liberate the country from the clutches of the foreigners. He sweetened the messages with promises of rewards.

Father wrote a reply to his letter & arranged for me to deliver the letter in person. I was to accompany 3 brothers belonging to the Wazirkhel tribe, friends of my fathers, who were going to Charikar.

On the third day I fell off my horse & dislocated my ankle. My cries of pain reached the heavens. With much effort we reached the camp of the Amir that evening. Since one of the brothers had served as a messenger between the British & the Amir when he was still in Tashkent, they requested an audience & presented father's
letter to him. They also explained my predicament. The Amir commanded that I be brought to him. The brothers pleaded that I was in great pain & only after some treatment would I have the honor of presenting myself, but the Amir was adamant, "He should be treated right here in my presence!"

A couple of servants carried me to him. Trembling in awe, I presented my respects. "Oh, you poor one! So you are the favorite son of Uncle Tarzi?" He then summoned his personal surgeon, an Uzbek, to tend to my ankle. The surgeon got close & comforting me, lifted a corner of the carpet & with a knife dug a small hole in the ground. He made me lie down & without paying any attention to my moans & groans, placed my dangling ankle in the hole. He then pressed firmly with his foot until the ankle snapped back into place; then he bandaged it tightly. Right away the pain ceased.

The Amir was also kind in other ways. He gave me a dapple-gray pony & a tent with an attending footman & servant. I started to learn how to saddle a horse & put on the bridle. For the first time I felt an enthusiasm for soldiering & a yen for travel.

And so we accompanied the army of the Amir to Zimma, about 2 hours distant from the capital. A large tent, surrounded by other tents, had been pitched on a small green hill. There the Amir of Afghanistan & the British would sign a treaty of friendship after which, in 48 hours, the British would evacuate their army from Kabul & surrender the country to Abdur Rahman.

It may be interesting to glance at some of the more significant provisions of this treaty:
1. Bala-Hissar which, to avenge the Cavagnari disaster, had been completely destroyed would not be rebuilt.
2. The existing boundaries would remain valid & be demarcated by a special commission.
3. The political relations between the two governments would remain unchanged going back to the reign of Amir Dost Mohammad. In other words, the Amir would have complete freedom inside the country, but in his foreign relations he would continue to depend on the government of the British Indian Empire.
4. For defense purposes, against Russian aggression, the British, on a yearly basis, would advance to him 1½ million rupees.
5. A plenipotentiary envoy of Afghanistan would be received by the Viceroy & a Muslim Indian, representing the Viceroy, would be received by the Amir.

These articles clearly show that Afghanistan has lacked independence since the reign of Amir Dost Mohammad & one wonders why this happened. In my opinion, several factors are involved. 16

For one, the meaning of complete independence was not understood by the Afghans. It is no surprise that it has not been mentioned in either The Life History of Amir Abdur Rahman (Taj-ul-Tawarikh) or The Lamp of History (Seraj-ul-Tawarikh), both written on the orders of Amir Habibullah.

Then it appears that temperamentally & inherently the Afghans, motivated by religious prejudice, have a certain hostility to people of other faiths. Therefore, they considered it a blessing to have to deal with one rather than several infidels. Had the meaning & implications of independence been fully known at Zimma, a more honorable treaty could have been signed. After all, the British army in Qandahar had been thoroughly defeated & besieged, & people in general were in favor of jihad. In Kohistan alone, 150,000 warriors were awaiting orders. Had they & others, as well as the ghazis of Qandahar, combined their forces, the British would have been obliged to grant the Afghans full independence.

But alas & a thousand regrets! The problem of rivalry & rancor between the sons of 2 brothers (i.e., Amir Abdur Rahman & Sardar Ayub) had placed them so far

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16 Here, for the first & only time, the author expresses severe criticism of Abdur Rahman's despotic rule.
apart that they felt much closer to the British. Even among brothers & half-brothers there was so much aversion that Amir Yaqub used to say, "God forbid that I should gain the throne with the help of Ayub."

At Zimma the situation was similar - even worse. To illustrate, the British, as a favor to Abdur Rahman, struck at Ayub in Qandahar. Ayub reacted by asking the clergy under his jurisdiction to proclaim holy war against his cousin, implying that he & his men were no longer believers. As always, the British were only too happy to exploit these enmities & spiteful rivalries.

Finally, it is worth noting that Abdur Rahman's concern about the unruiness of the Afghan tribes who had defeated the British was very real. To put them down he urgently needed money & arms. To return to Zimma, General Roberts sent some troops, luggage & a number of "honorable" sardars allied to him to Peshawar. Then, at the head of his select army, he marched 17 to Qandahar to relieve the beleaguered troops from defeat. His second objective was to deliver the city to the officials of the Amir. In a fierce battle at Mushki, Roberts defeated the Afghan tribes & joined by the previously besieged soldiers, he dealt them such a blow that Sardar Ayub & his troops fled all the way to Herat without stopping. For this victory, Roberts was given the title "Roberts of Qandahar."

In the meantime, Abdur Rahman entered Kabul & established his temporary headquarters at the Qandahari Gate of Sherpur. Father presented himself to him & from that day on became a royal companion. Every day I would accompany him to the court & stay there until evening. Consequently, there was a complete change in our life style. From the day the Amir gave me the dapple gray pony, I developed an intense interest in horses to the extent that I even saw them in my dreams. I was also provided with servants & guards - a necessity for the sardars of the court. My father's salary was increased four-fold & a fine house was put at our disposal. These experiences not only extended my knowledge but stimulated me to prepare myself for the many new challenges.

Thus I joined the Mounted Chiefs & was given the expenses for the maintenance of 50 riders. You can imagine all the things I had to do: hire 50 able young riders; buy 50 strong & healthy horses as well as the necessary arms, clothing, etc. I also had to learn all about soldiering. Most afternoons I would go riding with the Amir. Here I must confess that having to learn Arabic grammar in the midst of all these exciting new activities was not only a nuisance, but quite unbearable, especially as the grammar of our own languages was entirely neglected. When I would present these mental reservations to my tutor, he would reply that without Arabic grammar, one could not read correctly the Holy Koran.

Earlier I mentioned the serious problem of the unruiness of some of the Afghan leaders among the sardars, the khans & the clergy. They had, in fact, acquired so much power that they considered Abdur Rahman a mere protegé. For instance, whenever Mullah Mushk-e-Alam would go to court, his devoted desciples (fighters) would line both sides of the road all the way from his home to Sherpur. Another leader, Mamad Jan, enjoyed a similar status. They were simply intoxicated with power & splendor. The Amir concluded that their elimination required both an efficient military & a shrewd policy. In a matter of months he was able to train 3 regiments of 800 men & equip them with modern arms. He was ready for his first move. One day when the two leaders were at court (as prearranged), he had his soldiers encircle & disarm their men. The two were then imprisoned & Mamad Jan was sent north that very day, only to be secretly beheaded & buried some where along the way. The Mullah was put under house arrest.

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17 337 miles in 20 days (11-13 August 1880) with only one day's halt. (Dupree, L., Afghanistan, 1980 edition).
SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF THE 1st YEAR OF THE REIGN OF AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN

The first thing that comes to mind is the wedding of Abdur Rahman with his cousin, Lady Halima. The ceremonies followed the traditional pattern. On the day of her procession to the Amir's residence, the bride, seated in an exquisitely gilded & polished domed litter for ladies, was carried on the shoulders of several men. She was followed by hundreds of jappans & a number of elephants carrying the sardars & chiefs. Bands & battalions in front marched in special steps & stopped every hundred feet to fire their guns. The sons of the nobility, including myself, the royal pages & other youth displayed their arms & horses as they paraded in front of the bride.

I also remember two other big ceremonies which took place at our home, a wedding & a memorial service. The wedding was that of my sister Hamdam to the son of a Sadozai vizier. This magnificent affair was at the request & command of the Amir & entirely paid out of his purse. For a whole week, our house was turned into a paradise of fun & delight.

The memorial service was for my grandmother, Lady Hawa, who died in Qandahar. The Amir attended as a bereaved member of the family. He closed the service with much respect & dignity. Lady Hawa, a respected & distinguished person, had lived for generations in Qandahar. She had bought land, orchards & a large house in Mianjoy, a village with a pleasant climate at the mouth of the Aqhandab River. It happened that before his exile to Russia, a wife & son of Abdur Rahman had been put under strict surveillance in Qandahar by Amir Sher Ali. Lady Hawa, nevertheless, visited regularly & helped them in every way. Considering she was the wife of his uncle, Sardar Rahmel, Amir Sher Ali did not object. On the contrary, he always showed respect for her feelings.

Another wife of Abdur Rahman remained in Russian Turkestan & was the daughter of an illustrious chief of that area. Commonly known as "The Chief's Daughter", she was unable to have children of her own so she presented one of her foster daughters, a slave girl, to the Amir. From that union two sons were born. The Amir named one Habibullah (who succeeded him to the throne in 1901) & the other, Nasrullah. Before embarking on his military expedition to Qandahar, the Amir arranged for both his families to be brought to Kabul.

As the completion of the fortress of Sherpur in accordance with Amir Sher Ali's plan would have required considerable time & money, Abdur Rahman decided to construct an attractive, well-protected, but much simpler fortress-like palace, calling it "Arg."

18 A litter for carrying one or two persons.

THE QANDAHAR EXPEDITION

Meanwhile, in Herat, Sardar Ayub was busy planning the seizure of power. There were reports that, with a large army, he had left for Qandahar; later, that Abdur Rahman's troops had been defeated & had withdrawn to Qalat-e-Ghilzai; finally, that Qandahar had fallen to Ayub. The Amir was shocked. Within a week he gathered his troops & sped towards Qandahar. His army consisted of about 25,000 battle-tested & well-armed soldiers. By coincidence, his 3 commanders were all named Gholam Haidar & were distinguished by their tribal names, i.e., Tookhi, Orakzai & Charkhi. Charkhi, by his devotion, boldness & intelligence, had advanced step by step to become Commander-in-Chief.

19 A fortress town on the road to Kabul at a distance of 3 days from Qandahar.
The Amir wanted to reach Qalat as soon as possible in order to avert a further attack on his defeated troops. His failure to have done so would have greatly reduced his chances for victory. Fortunately, Ayub & his companions, after the capture of Qandahar, had started to drink & make merry. We spent a day at Ghazni. I was deeply disappointed as I had read so much about its grandeur, culture, wealth & beauty. All I saw were shrines & ruins. Actually it is a fort on a hill with another fort on a still higher hill, giving the impression of a citadel. We did not enter the city, although as my birthplace. I very much wanted to see it.

The Amir managed to reach Qalat in a week. The day of our arrival was a day of celebration. A 3-day stop-over was authorized to rest & reinforce the defeated troops.

Before leaving Kabul, Abdur Rahman had instructed one of his commanders, Sardar Abdul Qudous, to move on Herat from Hazarajat. The aim was to deny Ayub a fall-back position in case of defeat. En route, Qudous, by offering typical promises of reward from Abdur Rahman, persuaded lots of people & their leaders to join him. Herat was captured without difficulty.

Like a lion approaching its quarry, Abdur Rahman in 3 days slowly & deliberately reached the walls of Qandahar to register his awesome presence. With no reaction from the other side, he realized that Ayub had adopted a defensive posture. He immediately ordered a large military parade to celebrate the fall of Herat, which took Ayub by surprise. The Amir's purpose was to demoralize his foe by publicizing his newly-acquired power.

At midnight the troops were deployed on the hills facing Qandahar. The Amir, seated in his tent & surrounded by his commanders, was sketching his battle plan in the light of 2 candles. My riders were in high spirits. I had no worry about the perils of war. My only preoccupation focused on how I would excel in battle thereby drawing the attention of the Amir. Most of my dreams concerned battles in which my horse galloped ahead of the others.

Early next morning as the first rays of the all-illuminating sun touched the top of the mountains, our artillery fired salvoes, followed by parades & manoeuvres. The goal was to divert Ayub's attention to the east while we struck from the west, where practically our entire army had slowly gathered. It was too late for the opposition to effectively redepoly their forces & fighting broke out between the advance units. Based on personal observation, the following is a brief description of the battle:

Qandahar was on our right & facing us was Mt. Negar, a wall-like mountain notched at the top with the famous town of Nimroz (now called Shahri-Kohnah, Old Town) at its end. Fields & gardens extending from its slopes were on our left. The cavalry of Sardar Ayub, numbering some 2,000, were positioned on the slopes for an assault on our base & left flank. The Sardar & his companions were having breakfast on a ruined tower (Burje Dedah) among the crumbling walls of the still sturdy fortress of Shahri-Kohnah. Qandahar as a whole had been converted into a stronghold & a secure route of communication established.

The Amir had 3 regiments under his personal command & the Special Guard, who in their red vests & white trousers resembled a field of tulips, were deployed behind the groves & ditches to our left. The Mounted Chiefs were lined up in a position which enabled them to reach any point at will. The Amir's objective was to isolate Qandahar & keep it under siege & constant attack. He appeared to be in full control of the battle. Riding his light bay horse & ignoring the rain of bullets, he was everywhere deploying & reinforcing his troops. At one point, I saw him dash to a crippled cannon to supervise its repair & to have it tested personally.
While his forces defended Shahri-Kohnah, Ayub, in contrast, remained seated in the same place enjoying his breakfast. The volunteers of Qandahar, in loincloths & with knives & clubs, at the urging of the mullahs & talebs, were gathering for a holy war. Two prominent mullahs, who held the trust of the people, had been forced by Ayub to declare a "fatwah" (a religious interpretation) that fighting the Amir would be the same as fighting the infidels. Considering the gates of heaven wide open, the Qandaharis kept hurling themselves against the hail of shells & bullets.

Then I came upon a strange scene. Facing our front was a row of guns with their gunners but with no reinforcement other than a group of mullahs & talebs who were chanting, "Oh Four Companions (of the Prophet)! It is holy war! It is holy war against the infidels!" It turned out that the supporting cavalry, out of greed, had deserted them to plunder our camp.

Abruptly the battle scene changed. The sound of artillery from the other side ceased. Following our repeated & vigorous poundings of Shahri-Kohnah, Sardar Ayub, from the top of Burje Dedah, dashed his cup of tea to the ground &, leaping on his horse, fled, by tortuous paths, to Persia. Qandahar surrendered. Amir Abdur Rahman had won a complete victory & the entire country had come under his rule.

My father, as a ranking member of the Amir's entourage, tried to save as many Qandaharis as he could. Arriving on the scene, we followed his example. Despite the Amir's orders that all those involved in the fighting against him should be massacred, we managed to save some 200 men from the bayonets of the victorious soldiers. Out of respect for my father, Abdur Rahman tolerated our efforts, but bore a grudge.

The widely scattered bodies of the dead & wounded had turned the battlefield of meadows, gardens & undulating plains into a field of slaughter. Seated on a rise with all his commanders & important sardars standing around him, the Amir watched his troops march by. As soon as the parade was over everyone rushed to his tent. On reaching mine I realized how tired I was & the moment I saw my bed, all I could do was unfasten my belt & rifle & throw myself on it.

I was in deep slumber until dawn when I was awakened for the morning prayer. Father wanted us to go to Mianjoy to protect our home & family from the marauding soldiers. The Amir had proclaimed that the surrounding area of Qandahar, up to 6 kilometers, could be plundered by the soldiers. This would serve not only as a reward, but also as a punishment for the vanquished who, on the instigation of the mullahs, had dared cross swords with him. I got up feeling weak & listless. With the rest of our men, 5 of whom had been either killed or wounded, we started for Mianjoy. On the way through the countryside we heard & saw nothing but the cries & anguish of the people & the looting of the soldiers. They were, nevertheless, forbidden to kill or excessively pillage the fields & gardens.

We entered the small compound of my late mother. The inner court with its 2 orchards formed the private residence. Normally used as a summer house, it was complete with rooms, bath, kitchen & everything else. The soldiers for the fourth time had completely ransacked the place. The entire household was waiting to receive father. My half-brothers Gul Mohammad & Khaleq & their mother were there. What embracing, sighing, weeping & laughter there was after such a long separation. Although this humble writer is by origin a Qandahari who spent his first 2 years as an infant there, this was, sadly enough, the first time that he was seeing his native land, a mother, a sister-in-law & a nephew. In particular, seeing his brother Khaleq, who was also a loving friend, brought tears to his eyes.

We were sitting in the hall & had barely touched the tea when we were informed of the arrival of General Faramurz. Considering his special devotion & friendship for my father, we assumed that he had come to spend the day with us & to enjoy the kebabs, pilau & sheer-chai.
Paramurz & a couple of cavalry officers in uniform were pacing the floor as we walked in. He rushed to hug father, myself & Khaleq &, looking at my father, said: "Please Sardar Sahib, this is not the way of friendship to come here without us to picnic & enjoy yourselves. Besides, it isn't an appropriate day because the king is holding court & everyone is going there to offer congratulations."

My father responded: "Thanks for the information but I came here to rescue my house from looters. I had no idea of today's court. Let us have a cup of tea before going there."

A bit later we mounted our horses & headed for Qandahar. By force of habit, I was galloping & jumping my horse over the streams & ditches when I saw my aide approaching me. "Gallop, dear sir, gallop to your heart's content. I fear this may be your last ride. Look around you!"

I saw that groups of cavalry were surrounding us & that General Paramurz had distanced himself from the center. Their attitude led us to suspect that we had been dismissed & that they had orders for our arrest. The moment we entered the Amir's residence, our conjecture became reality. As we dismounted, the royal footmen rushed to our men & horses. The tent of the Amir was thick with officials, sardars & khans. The Amir asked my father to sit in front of him. Showing him a piece of paper (no doubt favoring Ayub), he asked, "Is this your writing?"

Father read the paper & replied, "No, it is not mine!" "How can you deny it? Who else writes this way?" 20 "I don't know who else writes this way but I do know that it is not mine. And that's it!" At this point, a khan from Kohistian took out of his pocket a letter father had sent him a few days ago. "Let's see if these two are similar." A couple of other friends also presented recent letters from my father. I, too, had a couple of poems written by him which I produced for all to see. They were not the same.

The Amir was the first to speak. "Look here! These writings do not resemble each other. Evidently he can write any way he wants!" "This is an excuse," said my father, "actually you have certain reforms in mind which you have discussed with me in the past. Now, in implementing them, you are starting with me." "I have nothing in mind other than to have you go on the pilgrimage to Mecca." "This is a great kindness & favor which you bestow upon me." The interrogation came to an end. The Amir ordered his chamberlain, Bai Mohammad, to keep us in custody until our banishment. From that moment on our endless good fortune changed to dire adversity.

20 The senior Tarzi had a distinguished beautiful handwriting.

A SCENE FROM HELL AND ITS GUARDIANS

Yes, without exaggeration we were to experience samples of hell & its guardians as described in the Holy Koran & other scriptures. As beckoned we followed the chamberlain, an ugly, clumsy, illiterate, hangman-looking Uzbek whose face revealed cruelty & a bad temper. He brought us to the end of the garden where he & the other servants had their quarters in a row of tents. Next to them was a long tent which was the prison. Several prisoners with heavy chains around their necks & ankles were sitting, half-naked, on a couple of crumbling steps.

Once inside, we were told to sit on the ground covered by a dirty rug. The chamberlain, seated on a square stool, ordered two crude & burdensome servants: "Take off their clothes, they are of no use." They rushed to father to remove his expensive, gold-embroidered shawl & overcoat. Father in his typical Qandahari Mohammadzai rage chased them away, saying: "It is not necessary for them to take
off my clothes. If Mr. Chamberlain is in need of clothing, I will take them off myself." He started to undress & tossed the valuable garments, including the overcoat, a very fine caftan & embroidered waist & head bands, which had aroused the chamberlain's greed, to him. Since we were not wearing anything expensive, they paid no attention to our garments. They did, however, take my belt, sword, revolver, boots, with the attached dagger which was the style, a small notebook containing poems written in a fine hand & a tiny Holy Koran which my mother had put around my neck. I insisted that they leave my notebook but to no avail.

In a little while they brought in one of my father's valets who had with him clothes & other things. They grabbed everything & threw him out of the garden. After sunset the tents presented a hideous & hellish scene. A deep darkness descended. The fire lit in front of the prison, aside from rendering the surroundings a bit more visible, emitted a dense bitter smoke which filled the prison & our eyes, our tears mingling with sores of anguish over this sudden tragedy.

Two hours later, Bai Mohammad arrived from the Amir & sat on his little stool to pronounce the following decisions: "First, esteemed Gholam Mohammad Tarzi & his sons, until arrangements are completed for their journey, will be under the surveillance of Chamberlain Bai Mohammad. Second, the Sardar will receive every morning & evening 2 platters of pilau with its stews from the government kitchen. Third, the Sardar is forbidden to communicate with the outside, but may receive from home such items as food & clothing. These were the commands of the King in your regard. Pray for him!"

Father: "We shall never do so. Prayer should be spontaneous & come from the heart." "You know these things. I don't," replied the Bai. He then ordered that the Brigadier be brought forth. Two servants entered the tent & from among half a dozen prisoners in chains seized the one wrapped up in a shawl & dozing. They dragged him by the arms to the chamberlain.

"Come on, Brigadier, tell us the truth. Why trouble yourself & us. As one of the close companions of Ayub, you should know who sent those letters." The poor Brigadier, a short Herati, replied in his native accent," Mr. Chamberlain, with all due respect, since yesterday you have been asking me the same question. You have dealt my back 100 rods. As a soldier my work was on the outside. How should this poor soul know anything about what went on inside?"

The chamberlain flew into his proverbial Uzbek rage. (The saying goes that the mercy of an Uzbek compares with the rage of a Pashtoon.) "You are not telling the truth! I will show you what the truth is." He signaled a servant to tie the sole of the Brigadier's foot on a split wooden peg. The man inserted a wedge, & holding a mace, waited for further instructions. I now fully understood how the wedge was used as an instrument of torture.

Father, in order not to witness the tragic scene, slipped into his clean bed-clothes & covered his eyes with the tail of his turban, went to sleep. But Khaleq & I waited breathlessly to see what would happen next.

"Talk! Will you or will you not?" "Sir, what should I say? How can I talk about something that I hardly know?" "Oh, you cursed unbeliever, you are hopeless!" Then he ordered the servant to hit the mace. The helpless Brigadier cried out, "For God's sake, by Allah, I don't know," & started to moan & cry. The chamberlain, swearing & cursing harshly, motioned the servant to continue. The cruel fellow struck with so much force that blood gushed out the tips of the prisoner's toes. With a heart-rending cry, he fainted. The servant untied his foot to allow him to regain consciousness.

Then it was the turn of the scribe, another ill-fated Herati, a member of Ayub's accounting office. "For God's sake," he cried, "I can no longer bear the wedge. My hands & feet are crippled." The cursing chamberlain shouted in rage,
"Don't worry! I will no longer hurt your lovely hands & feet. Tonight is the turn of the hot oil! Hot oil!" Crying & pleading, the miserable accountant was dragged away by the two servants. A moment later they poured some oil into a pan & placed it on a 3-legged brazier. On seeing this the wretched man pleaded, "Mr. Chamberlain, I will a thousand times give my life for you. I can't take it! Kill me at once!" "Mr. Accountant, the matter is in your hands. Tell me where are the missing 150,000 rupias?" "Oh, the same question! I have told you so many times that only the State accountant knows that." "This so-&-so infidel doesn't tell the truth. Bare his back!" He dipped a broom in the oil & let a drop fall on the man's back. The accountant in a muffled voice gasped, "Dear God," & lost consciousness.

It was now the turn of a third prisoner. "Come out, Commander!" called the chamberlain with a foul curse. A tall youth with a pleasant disposition rose with dignity &, holding the end of his chain, amidst a lot of clatter, made his appearance. "Mr. Commander, come now, tell the truth. Why torture yourself & us. Who from Kabul sent letters to Ayub?" The expression & behavior of the commander revealed his noble background & that this was his first experience with interrogation & torture.

"I was not a close companion of Ayub. I would visit court once a day. At times I would greet him & leave; on other occasions I would have lunch before returning. How would I know about such private matters? If you don't believe me, check with any good Muslim. I know that you will anyhow torture me like the others. As I cannot bear the wedge, I will commit suicide. It would, therefore, make more sense for you to name the person you want me to accuse so that I may do so & hence earn my freedom." "Had a letter arrived from the Hazara Hasan Ali?" "This is the first time that you mention the name. How would you like me to answer? Yes or no?" The chamberlain was surprised, upset & agitated. "This man is very impudent," he told the servants. "It would take a whole day & the application of all our means & instruments of torture to get him to sing like a nightingale. Go, you vile fellow, sleep well, so that you will be ready for tomorrow." This was the last act of the drama of Bai Mohammad's cruelty & torture after which he got up & left.

The crimson smoke from the infernal oil-smelling wood was dying down. The guardians of hell were returning to their tents. Soldiers with fixed bayonets were spreading out. The foul odor of burnt skin & facial hair, combined with the choking & heaving moans, shattered my senses, robbing me of sleep & filling my eyes with bitter tears. We don't know whether these acts of the chamberlain on the orders of the Amir were to frighten us or had other purposes. They could have been carried out in another tent.

The sleepless & fearful night came to an end. In the morning the chamberlain arrived to announce, "All night long I labored to furnish a room for you in the basement of the building in the garden. You will be more comfortable there. Get up, let's go!" The cellar was damp & the floor covered with a couple of ragged kilims. A wooden bed with rope bindings had been found for my father & two cotton-filled mattresses, two pillows & two dirty blankets for me & my brother. A water jug & a scoured copper bowl completed our necessities. On the positive side, some good home-made meals, fruits & other things started to arrive from home.

What sustained me & lessened the torment of imprisonment was the hope for our exile, i.e., father's arranged pilgrimage. It would arouse in me a keen enthusiasm for travel & kindle wonderful expectations & fantasies. Every day my first question to the chamberlain would be, "When will they send us on the pilgrimage?" "Don't worry, it will be soon," he would reply.
Two days later, unexpectedly, the Amir's soldiers caught our brothers. Gul Mohammad & Sher Mohammad & brought them to our prison. Father was upset that they apparently had deserted him at a critical time & shook hands with them with aversion. Khaleq & I, although regretting their imprisonment, were very happy to have them with us. We were not only brothers, but good friends.

If I were to describe in detail what happened every day it would be endless. Briefly, our imprisonment lasted 3 months. We moved 4 times & the number of the chamberlain's prisoners kept growing. The present jail was a corridor with porches on both sides. Father & we 4 brothers shared one & the others were occupied by other sardars & khans including Sardar Sher Ali's brothers & cousin Anwar, who had been wounded. Those on the floor of the corridor included a notorious & strange person, strange because of his frightful appearance & figure. He was very tall with corresponding limbs. His beard, like the branches of a weeping willow, started abruptly below the corner of his eyes & then, like a bush, descended to his navel. His eyes, half covered by his eyebrows, gleamed like those of a wild animal. He was wearing a short canvas shirt, so dirty that the material could hardly be recognized. The open & buttonless collar of his coat revealed an intermingling of the hairs of his chest & beard which were competing in length. And the hairs of his shins & forearms would put those of a goat to shame. A dirty, long, dragging fur coat of crude sheepskin covered him from head to toe. He had a chain around his neck which went to his ankles & must have weighed about 6 kilos. Except for us 5, all the prisoners had chains.

The man's name was Sado, a friend of the infamous bandit Dado. These two & others like them had for a long time subjected the heights of Latabad & its valley to their terror. They would attack caravans going through, seizing the cattle & money, killing the men & capturing & selling the women & children. Before leaving Kabul, the Amir had sternly ordered the Commander of Kabul to eliminate these outlaws. The Commander had his soldiers & cavalry surround the area & they captured most of the bandits, including Sado & Dado whom he presented to the Amir as gifts.

At dusk, as an extra precaution, Bai Mohammad would put the prisoners on the floor in stocks & slip the key to the padlock into his pocket. This caused them a lot of suffering & sleeplessness. Father, who in comparison had special privileges, constantly argued with the chamberlain in their defense. "Considering that they are in fetters & there is only one door guarded by 12 soldiers, why do you deny them sleep & rest when there is no possibility of escape?" "This is my business. You have no right to interfere in my affairs!"

In a flash, father picked up the water jug & flung it at the chamberlain. Had he not ducked, it would have hit him squarely on the head, undoubtedly cracking his skull. Instead, it hit his shoulder & chest, causing him much pain. He went straight to the Amir to complain. The Amir said nothing, only ordering consideration & caution. However, the stocks were removed & the prisoners finally got a little rest.

Several days later winter arrived & it became very cold. Even the pond froze. Mr. Sado, with his burly beard & wild appearance, was duty-bound to bathe. He flung his huge fur coat around his shoulders & dragging his heavy, clattering chain behind him, strutted towards the door. He muttered something to the guard who immediately marched him to the pond. Sado removed his clothes &, breaking the ice with the end of his chain, entered. He submerged himself 3 times in accordance with religious rites. He put on his clothes as bits of ice melted on his hair, beard & body & returned to the prison. The other prisoners had put a lot of wood on the stove so that a warm fire awaited him. Without a word of thanks, Sado, like a tower, sat next to the stove & dried himself.
What is worthy of attention & thought here is how the mullahs & spiritual teachers have been able to inculcate into the minds of these wild unruly people such contradictory fanaticisms. He sleeps, has a sensual dream & is relieved, in which there is no sin. Nevertheless, Mr. Mullah calls it reality & regardless of the circumstances, commands him to bathe. And the command is carried out with such conviction & compulsion that any concern for the cold & ice are put aside. At the same time, he tortures & kills people, destroys homes & engages in unlimited slave trade. All these crimes have been strictly forbidden, not only in the true religion of Islam, but also in other religions. Sado, & others like him who can be found by the thousands throughout our country, are led to believe that the commandments against evil are exactly the same as those for good, such as bathing after a sensual dream with its reward of eternal paradise. If not by the mullahs in their religious schools & the spiritual leaders, then by whom & how have these ignorant & misguided people been led astray?

At last, one morning to my usual question, the chamberlain answered, "In a week! The Amir will be returning to Kabul & you will be sent to India. But rest assured, you will be a prisoner there, too. When you see the foreign jailers, you will remember me with kindness."

Anxious waiting made each day seem like a year. Daily, our servants would bring us things from home. Today, they informed us that the soldiers had advised the ladies, "Prepare yourselves & pack your things. You will be leaving for Zaker, the first stop to India." This had led to commotion & sorrow. "Why sorrow?" I asked. "What a question! The houses have been looted & the Sardar & the rest of you put in jail. Worse still, you will be expelled from your ancestral land & imprisoned by the infidels. And you still ask why?"

"We will not be imprisoned," I replied. "Even so it will be in a big country like India whose towns should be much better than this wretched prison. I know because I have heard an earful from Latif the merchant." "Sir, I must tell you that the slave girls & maids are overwhelmed with joy." "But why are they so happy?" "They say that India is the land of the Raj & a free country. Once there they will declare their freedom & be free."

Once again we are confronted with a paradox. According to the true religion of Islam, slavery is annulled the moment one recites & attests in his heart the good creed, "There is no God but Allah & Mohammad is his Prophet." We also find statements such as "There is no slavery in Islam" & "Be the servant of justice so that you may be free." Equality which confers equal rights on all has exceptionally deep roots in Islam. If this fundamental Islamic equality had been universally respected, by law there would have been no master or slave, rich or poor, & the world would have become a paradise. Unfortunately, efforts in this direction have hardly been successful.

In fact, these legal precepts of Islam lasted for less than 20 years & today we witness a situation where the young slave girls, in order to win freedom, opt for exile to a foreign land. This is understandable when we consider the oppression to which they have been subjected. I for one, in my heart, certainly shared their happiness.

It was early the next morning when the chamberlain & a cavalry officer arrived. Like a shepherd delivering his sheep to a buyer, the chamberlain counted everyone before surrendering us to the officer. We expressed our thanks & said goodbye to Sado & the other prisoners. As we left the house, 16 horsemen of the Special Cavalry joined us. We had a stop-over of 3 days at Zaker to allow all the people who had been condemned to exile to assemble. We finally did so but what a scene! A group of about 60 women, consisting of 15 ladies & the rest slave girls, concubines & ladies-in-waiting, was to accompany us. I was responsible for looking after my 2 half-mothers, known as Bibijan & Bobojan. This was the first time since my infancy that I was meeting such close relatives (the families of brothers,
both present & absent). I was 2 when I went to Kabul & they stayed behind in Qandahar. For years I hoped & dreamt that I would return to Qandahar & my family, but not for an instant did I imagine that it would take place in such dismal circumstances. This was a sad & heart-breaking reunion. It was especially hard on our mothers to see their husband, after a 15-year separation, a sardar of noble blood & an accomplished & peerless jewel of the family, in a state of imprisonment & anguish. We were weeping, embracing, shaking hands & saying tender words.

Despite all this emotion, it didn't take me long to realize that large families, especially if the head has more than one wife, have their own distinct politics & diplomacy. To illustrate: each spouse, with art & wisdom, tries to win the heart of the patriarch. In our case, as father's favorite, I suddenly became the center of attraction. (The fact that I was sick & separated from my mother also played a role.) I had everything that my heart desired as the wives, in their competition to win the heart of my father, outbid each other in their warmth & kindness towards me. Our caravan included other families such as that of Sardar Sher Ali with about 50 ladies & countless concubines, slave girls & pages. There was also cousin Anwar & his family & some khans with & without their wives. Aslam, who was 11 & a relative, was the only one to become a close friend. As to transportation, the tall & amiable donkey of the region was our mainstay. Only Aslam's grandmother & another lady who was over 80 had a camel. Cousin Anwar, somehow, had both a camel & a horse which he would let me ride only to please father. Each morning we would set out under the custody of the cavalry armed with lances & scimitars. Their ineffective weapons & feeble horses would tempt the rebellious nature of Khaleq. "Were it not for the fear of father," he would say, "I would easily overpower these ass-drivers & escape with their horses & arms."

I would now like to leave our journey for a moment to tell you about the Amir's encounter with the 2 illustrious mullahs of Qandahar who had been forced by Ayub to proclaim in a fatwa that fighting Abdur Rahman could be considered as a holy war against the infidels, according to what we heard in prison.

By slaying them on the steps of the Holy Mantle 21 mosque, an act without precedent in Afghan history, he abolished the sanctuary status of this & other shrines where criminals took refuge. This sinful heresy had, in effect, paralyzed the application of civil & religious laws on punishment.

After Friday prayer, standing outside the mosque, scimitar in hand, Abdur Rahman ordered Mawlavi Wasey, a stout man with a long henna-colored beard, to be brought to him. "Mullah, listen well!" In a gruff & loud voice, Abdur Rahman professed the words of faith in Arabic. He then asked his companions & soldiers to do the same. A dreadful echo reverberated through the vaults & porticos. Glancing at the clergy & divine scholars, he asked, "What is your religious verdict? What are we?" "You are all Muslims, pure Muslims!" "Good, what then is your judgement on someone who sentences to infidelity believers who not only are themselves but whose forefathers were Muslim?" The leading priest replied, "According to the 'Commentary of Elias' 22 that person is the infidel."

"I have never issued a fatwa naming you & your troops," retorted Wasey. "All I said was that aiding the infidels was blasphemous. I know that if I had not said that much, Ayub, by torture, would have coerced me to sign."

The Amir shouted in rage: "How have I helped the infidels? Surely not like Sher Ali of Qandahar or Wali Mohammad of Kabul or that Peshawari sardar who, side-by-side with the unbelievers, fought against the Muslims! I arrived to liberate the country from the occupation of foreigners. Oh, you cursed one! You, & not I, are the infidel!" He unsheathed his Caucasian scimitar, took a step forward &

21 The mantle supposedly belonged to the Holy Prophet & was brought to Qandahar by Ahmad Shah who built this mosque as a shrine.

22 Most likely a book of ethics.
struck the right shoulder of the mullah with such force that he was split to the waist. He then asked the other mawlawi, Abdur Rahim, to be brought forth. With one stroke he severed his head from his frail body & threw it out like a football.

These assassinations & the earlier imprisonment of father induced fear & terror in the hearts of the young & old of Qandahar. The significance of the second factor was magnified because of father's prominence among the existing sardars of Qandahar. His closeness to the Amir & the latter's regard for his feelings were also common knowledge. His accompanying Abdur Rahman to Qandahar had filled their hearts with hope. Finally, his valiant efforts to defend people who had unwittingly become involved in the fighting had been deeply appreciated. Amir Abdur Rahman, therefore, concluded that unless he first took care of Sardar Gholam Mohammad Tarzi, it would be impossible to carry out his reforms.

ARRIVAL AT THE BORDER (EARLY 1882)

The trip, which normally takes 4 days, took us 10 days, but ours was a caravan of donkeys. We finally reached Fort Abdullah, the last bit of territory in our country which, due to our oppression, appeared in the distance like a dreadful purgatory. The guards were relieved that they had been able to deliver us to our destination without anyone escaping. Their pride & rejoicing, however, appeared entirely inappropriate & unjustified. The slave girls & pages were glad they were attaining their freedom. And while their masters & mistresses were sad because they were losing their wealth & lands, the fact is that no one in the convoy, including myself, had any feelings of country. From the advent of British power & influence & its extension to Afghanistan, ideals of patriotism, liberty & independence had been gradually erased from the minds of the populace. Their restitution occurred much later. I sympathized with the slave girls but more than that, I wanted to leave a land which had caused me so much pain for no discernable reason.

Our colonel, shouting his gruff & abrupt orders, obliged us to get ready early in the morning. Fearing that one of us, by taking advantage of the neutral zone, might escape, he asked the British to come over for the transfer. His request was ignored because British entry into Afghan territory would have been illegal. As we crossed the neutral zone towards the border, 3 civilian riders wearing tall turbans & dressed in ordinary khaki suits made their appearance. One of them turned to us and said, "I am the tax collector of these parts."

Colonel: "I am Colonel Yaro of Hashda-Nari. I have brought the prisoners & need a receipt."

Tax Collector: "My instructions are to receive them & provide them with food & water up to Chaman, the military base."

Colonel, muttering some obscene & sarcastic words: "Mr. Tax Collector, we don't follow you. I will surrender the prisoners to you one by one. You will count them & give us a receipt. That is all!"

Tax Collector: "You & I are not buying & selling sheep that I should count heads. Leave the prisoners & return." He wrote a few lines regarding our arrival on a piece of paper & gave it to the Colonel. "Here is the receipt, Sir."

The Colonel knew that he could do nothing against 3 unarmed civilians. "Oh, if it were not for the fear of Amir Abdur Rahman," he grumbled, "I would have given you the lashing of your life."

He ordered his horsemen to recount the prisoners so as to be sure no one had escaped. He then lined up his men & signaled them to return. And thus, our handover by our own people & from our own land to foreigners & a foreign country was concluded.
Mahmud Tarzi

Abdur Rahman

Mahmud Tarzi in his later years