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Western Afghanistan's Outback

I. Social Structure

II. Famine

(Report based on a trip by horseback through the Morghab River area from Qalaa-i Nao to Chaghcharan to Maymana in July 1972)

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CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Foreword	..
Map	..
Glossary	i - iv
General Information	1
I. Social Structure	3
Geographical Outlines	3
Communications	5
Ethnographic Outlines	7
Pashtuns	7
Aymaq	12
Herati Merchants	15
Cultural Differences	16
Relations	18
Nomad Traders	19
Technology	20
Power Structure	21
II. Famine	30
September-December 1971	30
January-April 1972	34
April-mid-July 1972	38
Summer 1972	40
Social Results	44
Structural Effects	46
Future Prospects	50
Appendices - Qalaa-i Nao	52
Chaghcharan	55
Maymana	55
Camels	56
Cast of Some Characters	58

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FOREWORD

Early this summer I learned that Michael Barry, a young American student of Middle Eastern culture, was again going to visit the roadless gorges of the Morghab River in eastern Badghis Province to investigate further the unrecorded remains of the 12th century Ghoriid Kingdom. Knowing that he was fluent in Dari (Afghan Persian), travelled as a brother in Islam in native dress and was familiar with the area and its people, I asked him to prepare for USAID a report on the economic social and political structures and functions of this area beyond the reach of any wheel. This was a unique opportunity to learn something of the quality of life in isolated, rural Afghanistan which might help us in the conduct of agricultural extension, primary education, and food-for-work programs.

What follows is Barry's report: the first part being so much as could be done this year of what was asked for, the second part being his eyewitness record of the terrible wake of drought, blizzard and human inadequacy. All the specifics in Barry's account are his responsibility and have not been checked by USAID. Likewise, the views expressed are his and do not necessarily correspond to those of this Agency or any U.S. Government official. However, the general tenor of his account of famine and greed is in line with reports from Peace Corps Volunteers and others in nearby areas.

He has made a major contribution to realization in Kabul of the truly desperate conditions in major areas of the mountainous interior and to galvanizing the Royal Government of Afghanistan to a relief effort without parallel in the history of the country. We are very grateful to him.

Bartlett Harvey, Director
USAID/Afghanistan

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GLOSSARY

- ^ : Circumflex accent marks long vowels.
- â: A long, drawn out a, as in ball, bawl, bawd.
- ê: Like the e in yellow. Or more like French "ée" as in "Désirée".
- î: Like the i in machine.
- ô: Like the e in core, lore.
- û: Like the u in prude, nude; or like oo food.
- gh: a dry gargle etc.
- Âbî: Persian for 'watery'. Designates irrigated land.
- Arbâb: Chieftain elected on the basis of wealth by the property-owning males of a community. Other titles are Khân, Malek.
- Aymâq: Tâjik peasant or semi-nomad of the mountains of Bâdghîs and Ghôr.
- Bâdghîs: Province in Western Afghanistan. Capital: Qalaa-i Nao.
- Bâshî: Foreman of work crew.
- Châdorî: Drab coloured veil of the Afghan city woman. Sewed to a Skull-Cap fitting snugly over the head, it falls in numerous pleats, sometimes all the way to the ground. The Eye-Slit is covered with netting, so that the wearer's eyes may not be distinguished. (vision under a Chadori is poor.)

Chapattî: Supple thin bread of India and Pakistan. Wafer-Thin "paper chapatties" are baked for feasts by nomad women of Afghanistan.

Commandant: Military officer with police powers, attached to a Hâkim.

Faryâb: Province of North-Western Afghanistan. Capital: Maymanâ.

Ghôr: Province of Central Afghanistan. Capital: Chaghcharân.

Godâm: Store house, especially for wheat. The store house keeper is a Godâmdâr.

Hâkim: Sub-governor. He administers an Uluswâlî, or subdivision of a Province. He is hierarchically inferior to a Wâlî.

Hazâra: Persian-speaking inhabitants of the East-Central Hindû-Kush, of Mongol descent. Detested in Afghanistan for belonging to a heretical Muslim sect.

Jarîb: Measure of land, equal to one-fifth of an hectare, or one-half acre.

Kâbulî: "Of Kâbul". In Western Afghanistan, used to designate Pashtûn nomad traders from the East.

Khân: See Arbâb. Title popular among nomads.

- Kûchî:** Persian for 'Wanderer'. Term of contempt used by the Kâbul bourgeoisie for a nomad. The polite term is 'Mâldâr' (q.v.)
- Lalmî:** Dry-farming, dry-farming land. Used in opposition to 'âbî' (q.v.)
- Mâldâr:** 'Possessor of Mâl', i.e. Animal Wealth. Polite term used for nomads in Western Afghanistan.
- Malek:** See Arbâb. Title popular among settled Pashtûns in southern and eastern Afghanistan.
- Mazdûr:** Hireling or tenant.
- Mollâ:** Muslim cleric or divine. Something like a Protestant Pastor.
- Nân:** Flat Afghan bread.
- Pashtûn:** Group of tribes of Iranian race. Their homeland is the Kandahâr, Paktyâ, Jalâlâbâd region, but they conquered and migrated to Central, Western and Northern Afghanistan in the 19th century. Their language is Pashtô. They are the original 'Afghâns'. The nomads of Western Afghanistan are Pashtûn.
- Raoghan:** Cooking oil. Either clarified butter or melted fat.
- Sâr:** Measure of weight, equivalent to seven kilograms.

Tâjik: Persian-speaking people of Central Asia, original inhabitants of the Hindû-Kush.

Uluswâlî: Subdivision of a Province. Formerly known as a Hukûmat, it is still administrated by a 'Hâkim', appointed by the Central Government.

Uzbek: Turkic people of Central Asia, north of the Hindû-Kush.

Wakil: Deputy or representative of an Uluswâlî to the Kâbul parliament.

Wâlî: Provincial Governor, appointed by the Central Government.

Pronunciation key:

ê: Circumflex accent marks long vowels; ê=ee, ê=like "e" in mellow and yellow, û=oo.

a: A long, drawn out a, like in ball, bawd, bawl.

gh: A dry gargle.

kh: a vigorous expectoration.

q: k pronounced in the throat, approximately where one coughs.

r: trilled.

Western Afghanistan's Outback

General Introduction:

Mountainous Central and Western Afghanistan, served by poor roads, is more isolated, less developed than Eastern Afghanistan. Mountain geography in both wings of the country is much the same: narrow fertile valleys, enclosed by seemingly barren hills - on which, however, dry spring crops can be planted, and animals grazed. In the East, a number of villages now enjoy relatively close access to motorable roads and large markets. In the Center and West, and still in many parts of the East, most villages depend on animal transport for manufactured goods; and for survival, on their own food production: grain, fruit, and livestock.

It is officially accepted that two years of drought, ending with the severe winter of 1971-1972, caused serious wheat shortages and destroyed flocks throughout Afghanistan. To relieve grain shortages, wheat shipments were trucked to provincial and district capitals during the fall of 1971 and early 1972. The wheat was to be sold at Government storehouses for 52 1/2 Afs. a ser. * (Afs. 7.8 or 9¢ per kilogram.)

But from late December 1971 to mid-April 1972, mountain roads were blocked by heavy snow and rain. No wheat reached such provincial capitals

*\$1 = Afs. 80 approximately. 1 ser = 7.2 kg or 16 lbs.

as Qalaa-i Nao and Chaghcharan. A very little reached Maymana by camel caravan. Wheat rose to prices of 150, 210, 250 Afs. a ser in the Western provincial capitals. This wheat was not being sold by the Government storehouses, which remained closed throughout the winter, but by private dealers.

Officially, the wheat situation has now improved. Roads have reopened, wheat shipments have been resumed, winter snows and spring rains brought about an abundant harvest. In Qalaa-i Nao, a ser of wheat on the open market cost only 45 Afs. in July. (1)

Yet 150 kilometers inland from Qalaa-i Nao, in Jawand Bazaar, capital of Jawand Uluwali, Badghis Province, a ser of wheat still costs 110 Afs. and the writer observed conditions bordering on famine. These conditions worsened as the writer rode higher into the mountains, towards Chaghcharan. They bettered slightly on his way back down into Faryab. No ameliorations were expected, and differences between the malnutrition of Badghis and Faryab, and the outright starvation of Ghor, might be obliterated when winter falls.

On a horseback and walking trip inland from Qalaa-i Nao to Chaghcharan, and from there north to Qaysar (near Maymana), in July-August 1972, Michael Barry and Lloyd Baron gained firsthand knowledge of conditions in Eastern

(1) This summer, Government storehouses were not selling to the public. Stocks were reserved for holders of Food for Work coupons or other officially accepted recipients.

Badghis and made forays into the back countries of Ghor and Faryab; in other words, the Morghab river system and its surrounding high plateaus.

I SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Geographical outline:

The Western Hindu-Kush is a brown-yellow plateau of undulating hills, averaging 2500 meters in height. It is sliced by the parallel river systems of the Morghab and the Hari-Rud.

These rivers flow from East to West. They take their source in a region virtually unexplored, the Central Hindu-Kush, 4000 metres high, a watershed cutting the Western Hindu-Kush from the Hazarajat and the Kabul region.

As the Hari-Rud and the Morghab flow down to the West, they and their tributaries cut through the barren plateau in steep, interlocking gorges. These gorges are often 1000 metres deep and only fifty metres wide; thus direct summer sunshine in these chasms lasts only from 9:00 to 3:00. Grass, mulberry and apricot grow along the narrow banks in summer. In winter the sunless gorges are frozen and uninhabitable.

Only when the Hindu-Kush slopes down towards the Iranian steppes do the gorges open up into broad river valleys.

The high plateaus surrounding the gorges are waterless, monotonous rolling hills spotted with camel thorn. But they are blanketed with snow in winter and flower briefly in spring, before summer sunshine burns them back into thorny desert.

Because of the gorges, motorable roads are rare. Afghanistan's Central Road (through Chaghcharan) follows the Hari-Rud valley and skirts the south of this area. Lorries from Chaghcharan, after fording the Hari-Rud, can roll over sections of undulating plateau, but cannot plunge into the gorges. 150 kilometres East of Qalaa-i Nao, a tributary of the Morghab carves the impressive Darzak Gorge (the "Cleft"). The Darzak runs south to north some forty kilometres until its unnamed stream merges with the Morghab. The Darzak is 1000 metres deep. It prohibits further lorry traffic and seals to machines, other than the occasional daring jeep, the western approaches to the area.

Between the Western Hindu-Kush and the northern Maymana plain lies the Band-i Turkestan, a mountain barrier 3000 metres high, impassable to cars.

In brief, between the Central Road and the Northern Road stretches a plateau 2500 metres high, riddled with chasms by the Morghab and its tributaries, shielded to the north and east by high ridges, and devoid of motorable roads. The air-distance from Chaghcharan to Maymana over this territory is about 180 kilometres.

The plateau is administratively divided between the Provinces of Badghis, Faryab and Ghor. The central, most isolated part is covered by Jawand Uluswali, Badghis Province.

Communications:

It takes a man seven days to walk from Chaghcharan to Qaysar (near Maymana, on the Northern Road). The trail leads through Jawand, on the confluence of the Jawand and the Morghab rivers. Jawand is a collection of five mud shops and a courthouse squeezed between three cliffs, and serves as a Center for Jawand Uluswali. A crude telephone line connects Jawand with Qalaa-i Nao, and the place is one of the last bazaars in the country to be supplied entirely by animal transport.

Trade reaches Jawand through the Darzak Gorge. It is a six hours' walk from the bazaar to the bottom of the path leading up the wall of the Darzak Gorge. This is followed by an hour's climb. (Skilled riders on fresh horses can reach the bottom of this path from Jawand in three and a half hours - but no faster, because of the difficult terrain). In ideal cases a lorry waits at the top of the Darzak. The lorry's load can then be transferred to camels, who take forty-five minutes to lumber down the Darzak again and another six hours to plod back to Jawand - 30 kilometres away.

But few lorries roll beyond Qades, a bazaar 100 kilometres west of the Darzak. So most people have to walk, ride or push their animals the whole 130 kilometres to Qades. Four days on foot, or three days on horseback.

Four days from Qades; three days from Qaysar; four days from Chaghcharan: Jawand is as isolated from the motor roads as any village in the Hindu-Kush. If lorries came regularly to the top of the Darzak, Jawand would be only a day away from wheeled vehicles, but still two days from Qalaa-i Nao.

Animals for riding and burden in the Western Hindu-Kush include camels, horses, oxen and donkeys.

The camel, which can carry loads up to half a ton, is used by nomads on the plateaus. (The nomads know a string of waterholes that enable them to travel with their camels on the plateaus from the Darzak to Chaghcharan). The camel can also negotiate the track from the Darzak Gorge to Jawand bazaar. Beyond the bazaar, however, the narrow and difficult Morghab and Jawand gorges make the camel useless:

Here slippery tracks have been carved into the cliff-faces. Paths lead down from the cliff-tops to the streams through degrees so steep they become stairways, jutting with outcrops and slabs of rock worn smooth by generations. Along the banks jealous proprietors have erected stone walls crowned with thorns, and dogs snarl at the gates and leap out to attack passers-by. (These dogs can kill a man, but will shy away from a stick). So usually a traveller has to wade his horse down the middle of the stream; a man on foot can barely hug the strip of bank left between the property walls and the stream. Hollowed logs are sometimes thrown across the stream for foot travellers, so horsemen have to clamber up the bank to avoid them, and get into quirt-fights with the farm dogs.

The common beasts of burden in these gorges are donkeys and oxen, goaded along the narrow banks and through the water by men on foot armed with sticks to stave off dogs. (Occasionally an ox enjoys its bath in the middle of the stream and refuses to climb up to the other side, despite shouts and showers of pebbles from the men on the banks.) The horses of the Hindu-Kush are almost as sure-footed as goats - no other horses could

climb these cliffs - and they carry men and their equipment through the streams without getting them wet, while affording some protection from the dogs on the ground. But in this terrain they can hardly move as fast as a man, tire easily and are expensive to maintain in an arid land. The ideal beast for the Afghan highlands, combining the sobriety and endurance of the donkey with some of the speed and strength of the horse, would be the mule, which hasn't been heard of in Afghanistan since medieval times.

By following the Jawand river to its source, one eventually emerges from the Jawand Gorge onto the highlands of Chaghcharan.

The Jawand Gorge is by no means unique. The whole area is criss-crossed with such gorges. In the Lalabay district north of Jawand bazaar winds a gorge so narrow that its inhabitants call it the "Street". (Kuchayi Lalabay.) Villagers had to carve their dwellings into the cliff-walls to leave space for the fruit trees along the stream.

Ethnographic Outline:

The Western Hindu-Kush is inhabited by Pashtuns and Aymaq-Tajiks, with Herati merchants dominating in the bazaars.

PASHTUNS:

The Pashtun tribes entered the Morghab area as the conquering armies of amir Abd er-Rahman Khan, in the '80's and '90's of the last century. They gradually dislodged the Tajiks from the lower, more fertile valleys wide enough to cultivate wheat. Thus the fertile tract of land from the

Darzak to Jawand bazaer, as well as most of the middle Morghab, is solid Pashtun country. Much of the plateau between Qalaa-i Nac and Jawand is Pashtun, though with sizable pockets of Aymaq-Tajiks.

Western Pashtuns are Durrani and speak Pashto with the "soft", Kandahari accent. Because of extensive (and often aggressive) dealings with Aymaq-Tajiks, most Pashtun men of the Morghab area speak Persian with the Western or "Herati" accent, in addition to Pashto.

Some of the tribes have settled into the wider valleys as sedentary wheat farmers. Others remain entirely nomadic on the plateaus, herding camels, goats and sheep, exchanging tents for the shelter of mud dwellings only during the severest winter months. The most powerful tribe of the Morghab basin is the Khel - clan - of Hajji-Sultan-Khan, which is semi-nomadic. Hajji Sultan Khan's people live in permanent mud dwellings in winter, at the confluence of the Darzak stream and the Morghab; they sow crops around the village in spring; they migrate to Chaghcharan with the flocks for the summer; and return to the village for the fall harvest.

The migration itself is a small affair, seven or eight 'stages' at most separating winter village from summer camp. Even among the fully nomadic, migrations in the Western Hindu-Kush extend little more than seventy kilometres, usually between valley floor and highlands.

Social distinctions between settled and nomad Pashtuns are few and relatives are amicable. Emphasis is on wealth. One is either a 'hireling'

an independent property owner, or a Khan. Nomads are politely referred to by settled folk as 'Maldar', Possessors of Mal, i.e. Animal Wealth. A man who owns herds can be known as a Maldar regardless of whether he is a nomad or not; but the odds are that he will supervise summer grazing by camping on the highlands, anyway, thus indulging in some 'nomadizing'. The name 'Kuchi' or 'Wanderer' is a term of contempt used by the Kabul bourgeoisie, and is never heard in Western Afghanistan.

A man is accounted quite wealthy, and worthy of the status of Khan, if he owns 5000 sheep. He is considered very well off with a flock of 2000 sheep. Most independent Maldars own about 200 sheep. Or 200 goats and sheep mixed.

The average nomad family owns two or three camels to carry its belongings. But camels are used only as beasts of burden. They are neither fleeced, milked nor eaten, and seldom ridden - a tragic underuse of the beast. Donkeys supplement camels as beasts of burden. Horses are ridden by the wealthy; the ordinary Pashtun walks.

Settled Pashtun also own oxen for plowing.

Crops include wheat, barley, oats and maize. Sowing takes place in April, harvesting in August.

Diet consists of bread supplemented with milk products. Bread ("nan" in Persian) is not the flat fan-shaped loaf of the bazaar. It is smaller; a round thick loaf, dark and dry, sometimes a mixture of whole wheat with other grain like oats or barley. (Foreigners call this "Uzbek Bread", but

it is really the common bread of rural Afghanistan.) Rural bread is hard to chew, difficult to digest, but filling; and Afghans prefer shredding it into a bowl of clarified butter or soup, to moisten it and make it easier to swallow.

Flour is ground in local water-powered stone mills and baked in a "tandur", or oven, a bell-shaped concavity in the ground with a fire at the bottom. The flour is kneaded and then pressed against the walls of the concavity, while being baked by the fire below.

For feasts, nomad women prepare a delicious, wafer-thin, supple bread called "chapatti-i kaghazi" or "paper chapatti". In 1971, even Aymaq-Tajik husbands were urging their wives to learn to bake "chapatties" in the nomad way, but the 1972 famine wiped out the spread of this fashion. Ewe's milk is immediately churned into butter, then melted. Impurities are strained, and the liquified, or clarified butter, known as 'raoghan-i zard' or 'yellow oil' (the ghee of India), no longer solidifies. Served hot and sopped up with bread, it forms the basis of nearly every meal. 'Raoghan-i zard' is usually rancid, however, because tiny impurities have not been strained: the taste is something like liquid roquefort. Another milk product is qurut, or buttermilk, usually dried into hard, bitter chunks, stored for winter. Yoghurt is also eaten. If it can be afforded, a sheep will be slaughtered once a week for family consumption. Boiled and melted sheep-tail fat ('raoghan-i chaq', 'fat oil') is added to the clarified butter

or sopped up with bread by itself. Flesh is boiled and appreciated with much fat. The cooking water is sopped up as a soup.

Nomads barter clarified butter and fat for grain from the sedentary folk, although the latter will try to own some sheep. Most self-sufficient are the semi-nomads like the people of Hajji-Sultan-Khan.

Cow's milk is prized above ewe's milk and the wealthy will own several cows and a bull. Rice, cooked in raaghan-i zard, is a luxury. Fruit, meaning mostly melons, is seasonal and rare. Vegetables even onions, are nonexistent.

Tents are of the Arabian pattern: black goathair, with open flaps. Houses are mud-cubes with felt-covered dirt floors. Ceilings are mud with wooden rafters. Tyrannical Middle Eastern influence causes most roofs to be flat, an inanity in this climate, but some now tend to be sloped to shed off snow. Fuel is usually camel-thorn, which gives off a mildly unpleasant smell, and is burned in cheap bazaar-made tin stoves.

Dress is drab and functional for summer. It is inadequate for winter, especially footwear. Pashtuns believe that a man catches cold through his head - feet are unimportant. In winter a man will shuffle in the snow bare-foot in sandals, while he wraps his head in a turban and a shawl with an overcoat on top. Many women don't even have sandals. But East of the Darzak any man who can afford to wears a gun.

AYMAQS:

The Aymaq-Tajiks are the aboriginal, Persian-speaking inhabitants of the Hindu-Kush. Driven from the Hazarajat by invading Mongols of the 13th century, and from much of the Western Hindu-Kush by Pashtun tribes in the late 19th century, mountain Tajiks now live mostly in the highest valleys of Badghis and Ghor, in the Kohistan area north of Kabul, and in the Pamir. In Western Afghanistan mountain Tajiks are referred to by their medieval Turkish name of "Chahar-Aymaq", the "Four Tribes", or simply as Aymaq.⁽¹⁾ So here, following Afghan practice, "Aymaq" is conventionally used to designate the mountain Tajiks of Western Afghanistan. Many Pashtun speakers in the West call the Persian language itself "Aymaqi".

The economy of the surviving agricultural Aymaq communities of the Qalaa-i Nao plateau resembles that of their settled Pashtun neighbours. Villages are built along small rivers, and are surrounded by a core of irrigated farmland (abi). But much vaster, beyond this irrigated land stretches dry-farmed plateau (lalmi). On the plateau, winter snows and spring rain permit an April sowing of wheat, barley, oats, maize and melons,

(1) The tribal names still exist: Jamshedi; Taymani; Feroz-Kohi; and Hazara-yi Qalaa-i Nao. They have little more than geographical significance: the people of the Jawand gorge happen to be Jamshedi, those around Chaghcharan Feroz-Kohi. The Hazara-yi Qalaa-i Nao bear no relation to the Shiite Mongols in the East. As the Aymaqs are little known by foreigners, their Turkish name "Aymaq" has led to nonsensical speculation about a Turko-Mongol origin. The Aymaqs look like Tajiks, speak like Tajiks, and consider themselves Tajiks. Numerous Turkish titles in Afghanistan like 'Khan' or 'Bey' simply recall medieval Turkish hegemony.

while animals graze on the fresh spring grass. In August, crops ripen in the midst of a yellow, desert landscape, and the flocks are feeding on thorns and withered alfalfa. Then fodder is stored for winter and the animals are herded into open stone corrals, heated by the pressed masses of their own bodies.

If plateau Aymaqs don't own sheep and cattle, then they barter grain for raoghan from the nomads. Thus their diet is identical with the Pashtuns'.

The Aymaqs of the high valleys and gorges are semi-nomads. They alternate between life in stone villages on the cliff tops in winter, and felt tents at the bottom of the gorges in summer. In the Jawand gorge, summertime finds the Aymaqs encamped beneath their mulberry trees along the stream-banks, with a few herders grazing the sheep on the high plateaus. The Jawand Aymaqs also own cows and these are kept grazing at the bottom of the gorge in carefully preserved grass plots. The Jawand Aymaqs are fond of cow's milk, and because they use numerous bovines for riding and carrying, their neighbours often call them 'gao-sowar's' or 'cow-riders'. In late fall it gets very cold in the gorge, and the population folds its tents and moves up the natural stone stairways etched into the cliff-walls. This involves hardship. There is no water on the cliff-tops, so a vast quantity must be carried up in skins on the backs of the bovines. Only the coming of snow solves the water problem. The snow is immediately packed into large stone cisterns surrounding the villages. When the cisterns dry out in late spring, the Aymaqs move back down into the gorge.

There is much 'lalmi' or dry-farming on the plateaus in spring before the descent into the gorge: wheat, barley, oats. In August reapers climb up to the cliff-tops while the rest of the population sits in the shade below. Late July and August are the mulberry season. The valley floor in mid-August is covered with ripe mulberries and the gorge fairly reeks with the scent. Little girls gather the mulberries in the folds of their skirts and spread them on adobe platforms in the few hours of sunlight to dry. Not only are fresh and dry mulberries consumed by handfuls, but a dried mulberry cake is prepared to last throughout the winter. This is 'talkhan'; it is almost unbearably sweet, but nutritious; and mountain Tajiks as far away as Panjsher praise the dark brown little cake as a source of strength and sexual potency.

Thus to the basic Afghan diet of bread and milk products, the Aymaqs add an important quantity of fresh and preserved mulberry.

Other fruit trees in the gorges are not numerous, but include plum, apricot, and walnut.

Aymaqs of the Chaghcharan highlands, however, or around the Saozak Pass between Qalaa-i Nao and Herat, are not so fortunate as the Aymaqs of the gorges, and have no mulberries. Like most Pashtuns, they must rely entirely on bread and milk.

Mud houses are similar to Pashtuns', but the ground above the cliffs is often so rocky that stone is used instead of mud. Where the Jawand gorge widens at one point to one hundred and fifty metres, stands the permanently inhabited village of Rabat, forty houses built entirely of stone. (Rabat was the seat of a tyrannical 19th century Tajik Arbab, Shah-Pasand Khan,

whom Aymaq legend has already transformed into a fabulous ancient prince who buried numerous treasures, guarded by spells, throughout the Jawand gorge. A number of ruined Ghorid towers in the area are ascribed to him, while Rabat was the capital of his 'empire'.)

Tents are of Mongolian pattern: circular dome felt yurts, stretched on a wooden screen frame with a smoke vent on top. A wide band of boldly decorated material runs around the lower half of the tent, and can be removed in hot weather to open the tent to breezes.

Clothing is much the same, and just as inadequate for winter, as the Pashtuns'.

HERATI MERCHANTS:

Herati merchants dominate the bazaars of Badghis and Ghor. Qalaa-i Nao, Chaghcharan, Qades and Jawand are virtual suburbs of Herat. Some merchants left Herat thirty years ago to open shops in the outback, but most maintain contact with the big city where they have relatives and still own land. Import and export are sometimes handled between the small bazaars and Herat by members of a single family, with one brother in Herat, and another, say, in Qalaa-i Nao. And since Qalaa-i Nao and Chaghcharan are growing government centers, numerous Herati younger sons are eager to leave the city and exploit new business opportunities in the outback. Even the merchants in tiny Jawand are Heratis. Certainly they face hardships, and have to bring their goods down from the Darzak on their own horses and

donkeys. But they are biting into a market hitherto held by nomad traders. Peasants are technically destitute and have to buy all manufactured goods. The Heratis sell them these goods, the prices of which rise in proportion to transport difficulty from a major city. In Qalaa-i Nao goods are 10% more expensive than in Herat. They are 50% to 100% more expensive in Jawand. Credit arrangements between merchants and peasants, if any, await further study. But the situation seems profitable to the merchants, for new shops are being built in Jawand, even in the midst of famine, and more Heratis will be coming in. The chances are that famine conditions among the peasantry, with forced sales of family treasures (especially carpets), brought important profits to the merchants in 1971-1972.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES:

Petty officials in Badghis and Ghor are also Heratis.

As Persian speakers the Heratis are technically Tajiks, but the Aymaqs, as 'mountain folk', recognize no kinship with these 'city folk'. Even in the tiniest bazaar, the merchant colonies exude a city air - the rigidly secluded women, and the indulgence in hashish and young male concubines, known as 'apprentices' (shagird). Puritanical 'mountain folk', both Pashtun and Aymaq, frown on hashish and opium (except to kill pain) and no boy-love, but accept them as 'city vices'. The merchants feel intellectually superior to the mountain folk, whom they call ignorant and backward, but admit them to be stricter Muslims. Mountain folk agree that they are ignorant and admire 'city folks' learning and cunning, but also

feel that they themselves are not only better Muslims, but therefore kinder, more hospitable, and less prone to lie, and also that they are braver and stronger, than the city folk.

In fact, cultural differences between Aymaqs, Pashtuns and 'city folk' mostly boil down to sexual attitudes. Homosexuality, for example, is winked at by urban Islam, and is punished by stoning - to this day - among mountain folk.⁽¹⁾

All groups treat women like chattel, to be 'bought' or 'sold' in virgin condition - a respectable price is 100,000 Afs. Adultery and fornication are sins against God and property. In villages, transgressions are punished by stoning.

But a Herati merchant will take pride in the fact that his wife has not left the compound in twenty years. This shows he is a bourgeois, a man of means; his wife need not work in the fields, and there is a servant to shop in the bazaar. Thus his woman is respectably hidden from prying eyes, shut up in a box as a luxury. In Qalaa-i Nao, Jawand or Chaghcharan, one doesn't even see chadori's - the women are all hidden in compounds from which they emerge only to be married or buried.

Among mountain folk women do not wear veils because they work - often harder than men. Women milk, occasionally reap, make felt carpets, goat-hair ropes and tentcloths, strike the tents, as well as cook and wash.

(1) If stoning occurs within a village the government is simply told that so-and-so fell off a cliff - usually politely accepted at face value.

A Pashtun woman is little better than an animal to breed and labour. Almost all contact with men outside the family is forbidden.

Aymaq men, on the other hand, consider women to be children who will never grow up, and treat their wives with strict paternalism but some kindness. Aymaq married women may speak, even joke with men if their own men-folk are present - in the mountains, the boldness of Aymaq women is proverbial. Unmarried girls, distinguished by shaven pate with a fringe left over the forehead and two sidelocks, are more reserved. Richer Aymaqs, however, view these habits as lower class, and shut up their women like bourgeois.

RELATIONS:

Relations between groups are complex. There is the fundamental clash between city and mountain folk; but city and mountain Pashtun feel a measure of solidarity with each other, while there is none between Aymaqs and Heratis. There is also the antagonism between nomads and settled folk; but relations between Pashtuns, nomad and settled, are mostly cordial. Clashes occur between Pashtun nomads and Aymaqs; and gun-battles may erupt when nomads with flocks brazenly trespass on Aymaq land (as in the Chagh-charan highlands, in 1970; there was a casualty on each side, and honour was satisfied). But the clashes are tempered by mutual respect. Both groups are Sunni Muslim and adhere to the identical puritanical standards of 'mountain folk'. It is heretical Shiite Hazaras whom Pashtuns loathe,

even Western Pashtuns who rarely see them. No such ideological difference opposes the people of Western Afghanistan like the famous Shiite-Sunni hatred, compounded with land conflicts, of the Hazarajat. And Aymaqs join Pashtuns in their disdain for the Shiite Hazaras.

NOMAD TRADERS:

A fourth group, quite small, is formed by the Eastern Pashtuns, called 'Kabuli's' in this area. These are nomad traders from the East who branch out from Chaghcharan with camels to set up the famous 'nomad bazaars'. These are collections of some twenty white tents, pitched in areas inaccessible to wheels. Goods sold include rice and oats, cloth and second hand clothes, tea, sweets, matches and cigarettes, green tobacco, powder, guns and ammunition. There is also a gunsmith. Traders accept carpets and other woven goods but at first insist on cash. During the hardship years of 1971 and 1972, goods seem to have been sold on credit, for individual traders were seen walking down the gorges to collect debts in the summer of 1972. In 1970, no Pashtuns were allowed in the gorges.

Western Pashtuns have blended into the area; with their drab shawls and turbans, they are often indistinguishable from Aymaqs. But the Eastern Pashtuns, in jewelled vests, slicked-down hair, pencil-thin moustaches, rings in their ears and embroidered gunbelts, stand out like Mexican gamblers in old Western border towns.

TECHNOLOGY

In all groups, the level of technology is abysmal. An Afghan village has neither carpenter, blacksmith, tailor, potter, or leatherworker. It can neither shoe itself, clothe itself, carve its doorframes nor harness its animals. All manufactured goods, including the most basic - housewife's cloth and needle and farmer's plow - have to be imported from a bazaar. The level of technology has declined sharply since the turn of the century, when villages tanned their skins, forged their horseshoes and carved posts, door and windowframes for their houses. There are no more potters. The most remote villagers drink out of Duralux glasses, and shave with Gillette blades.

Craftsmen are found in bazaars, and they are badly trained. Work is done quickly and shoddily. The metal of plows, hoes, shovels, horse and donkey shoes and nails is crude and brittle. Woodwork is unpolished. Leatherwork may be the worst in the world. This is especially serious in dealing with animal harness. Crude yokes, packs, bits and saddles constantly chafe and wound domestic animals like oxen, donkeys, camels and horses. Their health is impaired and their work capacity seriously undermined.

The only exception to the plummeting quality of rural Afghan technology are the products of women, admittedly a cheap and exploited labour force: carpets and embroidery.

Although the goods from the bazaar are inferior, except for such international products like Duralux glasses and razor blades, the Afghan

villages desperately need to maintain contact with the bazaars. Some form of foot and donkey path links the most remote Afghan village with a bazaar, usually on the motorable road. And in the mountains, the most remote Afghan village is never more than four days' walk from either bazaar or motorable road. It is food products (except for rice, tea and sugar) which sometimes may not move between bazaar and village. Small manufactured goods always do. If necessary on animals. Some cement is imported for government building, like the court house in Jawand.

POWER STRUCTURE:

The languages differ, but social practices coincide. On the plateau, among Aymaqs and Pashtuns, the same feudal patterns emerge, while in the gorges there is more independent landowning. The social structures depend less on tribal divisions and more on geography.

But feudalism in Western Afghanistan has not jelled. It is in formation. In one village a single man may own all the irrigated land. A few miles away, a number of independent landowners vie for power. The Pashtun conquest is a recent thing: 1880 to 1900. Since then, some Aymaq feudal lords were dispossessed; others retained power; many fled into the gorges; while Pashtun tribes settled on the new lands and divisions between tribesmen were created or reinforced. The 1971 drought strengthened the trend towards feudalism.

Feudal titles include Arbab, Khan and Malek. Roughly they may be translated as something between 'country squire' and 'baron'. Aymaqs and

settled Pashtuns in the West use the term 'Arbab' for feudal leaders. It is an Arabian title, being the honorific plural of the work 'Rabb', 'Lord', cognate with Hebrew 'Rabbi.' Nomads use the Mongolian title 'Khan'. The Arabian title 'Malek', 'King', popular among the settled Pashtuns of the East and South, is rare in the West.

Society is essentially divided between landowners and stock holders on the one hand, and 'hirelings' (mazdur) on the other.

Landowners have water rights. The land which they rent is 'abi'. It is irrigated or has access to water. 'Lalmi' or dry-farming land is technically free.

'Abi', then, or 'water land', is rented by landowners to 'hirelings' or tenants for about 500 Afs. a jarib yearly. The landlord provides seed and tools while the hireling contributes animals and labour. At harvest time, the hireling pays his landlord between a third and half of his crop.

On the Qalaa-i Nao plateau there are still a number of villages where independent, small landowners live side by side and employ few hirelings. But in most villages of the plateau, a cluster of landlords surrounded by numerous hirelings is now the rule. And in some cases all the inhabitants of a village may be the hirelings of a single landlord.

Where there are several landlords, the richest and most powerful will be elected to hold the title of Arbab. If there is only one landowner, the title falls to him by default.

The Arbab commands obedience and respect. To maintain his position he may collect certain taxes, like a 500 Afs. yearly grazing right for stock holders grazing on village grounds. But his responsibilities are numerous and costly. He must maintain a guest house and throw lavish feasts for important members of the village when a guest of note arrives. He endows the village mosque and pays its Molla. The Arbab represents his village to the government and furnishes tax and military draft lists. When work gangs are levied by the government, usually for road repair, the Arbab must provide workers.

Only the 'greybeards' (usually men over thirty-five) of the landowning families may elect the Arbab. The election stands for an indeterminate period of time. Theoretically, should the Arbab prove unsatisfactory, the greybeards may depose him and elect another, but the occurrence is rare.

The Aymaq township of Langar, one of the surviving Aymaq communities of the Qalaa-i Nao plateau, may be described as a barony. Langar valley is traversed by a stream, and there is both irrigated and dry-land farming. Crops include wheat, maize, oats, barley, and melons. Langar village has a bazaar and is accessible by lorry from Qalaa-i Nao, via Qades.

The Arbab of Langar personally owns all the irrigated land in the valley. He rents it at 600 Afs. a jarib yearly, supplies seeds and tools, and collects 50% of the harvest.

There is no rent on 'lalmi', or dry-farming land. But to the men who dry-farm, the Arbab also supplies tools and seeds, and collects 50% of their crop.

The Arbab's family also owns the entire bazaar. The family built the shops and rents them to Herati traders. In 1972, one of the Arbab's brothers was collecting rent on the shops, but marriage between their children will keep the revenues in the family.

As there is only one landowning family in Langar, the Arbab's leadership is confirmed simply by the Greybeards of his own family. The Arbab's only possible rival is his brother, who owns the shops. But since the Arbab is wealthier by far, (he controls the agriculture of Langar), it is unlikely that his family will depose him.

The Arbab takes his duties seriously. He maintains a guest house and is proud to restore Langar's ancient mosque with its beautiful sixteenth century marble tombs. He depicts himself as the father of his people and claims he distributed wheat from his stores and waived rents during the lean years of 1971 and 1972.

Food for Work programs have replaced government levies of work gangs. The Arbab provides the labourers for the Food for Work road projects and appoints the 'bashi' or supervisor whom the workmen are supposed to 'elect'. Wheat coupons collected by the bashi are surrendered to the Arbab, who apportions them as he sees fit. In 1972 the Arbab was very keen on having an improved road built from Qades to Langar for the prosperity of his family's bazaar. He suggested the project himself. And the wheat to pay for the project will eventually fall into his hands, increasing his power over his people as he will now control most of their food.

The Arbab of Langar is an extreme example of feudal power in Badghis. He is by no means unique. A number of Pashtun Arbabs, especially Agha-Ju, master of Gahzestan and the Darzak Gorge, wield similar power.

Little in their life-styles distinguishes these Aymaq and Pashtun feudal lords. Both the Arbab of Langar and Agha-Ju of the Darzak are fundamentalist Muslims, contemptuous of infidels. But while the Pashtun, Agha-Ju, is an arrogant know-nothing, the Arbab of Langar, as an Aymaq, has pretensions to Persian culture, quotes an occasional verse from the Book of Kings. But both are staggeringly ignorant. Neither has any idea that blood circulates, that the world is round, that Alexander came before Islamic times, or that non-Muslims do not copulate with their mothers - nor do they care.

Neither of these Arbabs wears Western dress. But their sons may, as a new badge of wealth and power to distinguish themselves from hirelings.

Pashtun or Aymaq, both Arbabs like to display their power by constantly speaking in an irritated tone of voice with their tenants - like fathers with dim-witted children. When giving an order an Arbab's voice is supposed to tremble on the verge of outraged hysteria. The tenant jumps. Government officials are always imitating this way of talking.

Among nomads, independent herders pay their Khan a yearly 500 Afs. tax for the right to graze their animals on tribal grounds. A herder who refuses to pay may be expelled from the tribe and banished from the grazing

grounds. Many herders, however, are simply hirelings, often the Khan's own, tending the flocks of the rich nomad 'houses'.

The Khan is elected by the Greybeards of the richer houses. His responsibilities are the same as a settled Arbab's. Tribal movements are dictated by custom, or, should the necessity of change arise, by the council of Greybeards.

Among the semi-settled Pashtuns of the powerful Hajji-Sultan-Khan tribe, it is the privilege of the aristocrats and middle-class tribesmen to be nomads. Out of four hundred houses making up the tribe, only the Greybeards of the three aristocratic houses may select a Khan out of their own number. At the time of the ~~spring~~ migration, aristocrats and middle-class tribesmen move to Chaghcharan, with hirelings to help tend the flocks. But most hirelings stay behind to tend the fields of the rich houses. Roughly half the tribe are hirelings, or tenants.

Due to the nature of the terrain, there is more small land ownership among the Aymaqs of the Gorges. All the land on the tops of the Gorges is Lalmi, dry-farming and consequently rent-free. At the bottom of the Gorges each family tends to have its own small orchard of mulberry trees. The Aymaq community of Ghao-Kalan, near Jawand and in the steepest part of the Gorge, is virtually egalitarian. All families own nearly the same amount of wealth, and the Arbab, elected by the Greybeards of the entire community, comes close to being a village mayor. For a small tax consented by each family, the Arbab Ghao-Kalan provides lodging for guests and walks down to Jawand to represent his tribe, furnish draft lists etc. to the

Government. (Except for nomads, military service is universal. The Arbab of each community is obliged to draw up the list of those draftable every year and to submit it in the nearest Government center.) No richer than the rest, the Arbab of Ghao-Kalan is the servant of his community and considers it an honour to be recipient of the public trust. He has been re-elected yearly for ten years. (His tone of voice is notably devoid of that authoritarian harshness which one associates with a plateau Arbab speaking to his constituents.) The Arbab of Ghao-Kalan must ask politely.)

Further up the Jawand Gorge, in the community of Hazrat-i Molla, the situation is more complex. The Gorge widens here, and landowner Mirza Allahyar, the richest man in the Jawand Gorge, is master of the widest and most fertile tract of land - so wide and fertile, in fact, that Mirza Allahyar need not move to the cliff-tops like his neighbours and has his hirelings cultivate the valley floor. But Mirza Allahyar is not the Arbab, (an honour which he perhaps declined). The Arbab is one Ahmada, a man poorer than Mirza Allahyar and roughly equal in wealth with the greybeards of all the other families. But Ahmada wished to be Arbab, and since there were no other candidates, he was elected. He performs the same services as the Arbab of Ghao-Kalan, and wields no more power, but affects the mannerisms of the powerful Arbabs of the plateau: he shuts up his women, and uses a white Pakistani canvas tent instead of the traditional Aymaq felt one (The Pakistani tent is more expensive and confers status), and insists on always being called Arbab. What advantages Ahmada derives from his

Arbabate, besides the soothing of his vanity and the satisfaction of being a Government agent, is difficult to determine. Certainly Ahmada wields no power over Mirza Allahyar, who pays him no dues and treats him with contempt almost like a tenant.

On the edge of the community, Mirza Allahyar stands outside the system: an independent, wealthy landowner, owing fealty to none and wielding power over only four farm workers, whom he considers his retainers and whom he treats like younger members of his family. But Mirza Allahyar is respected throughout the Gorge, and the 'Place of Allahyar' is now a geographical landmark.

On the plateaus north of Jawand, in the district of Lalabay, the Arbab is more equal than others. The Aymaqs of Lalabay are independent dry-farmers, but Arbab Alef controls the banks of a stream and wields water-power. With the irrigated land, some of which he rents, he is clearly the richest man in Lalabay, and secured his election as Arbab. It is interesting that Alef's father, Hajji-Rahim, leaves the Arbabate to his son and is content with the status of a rich old gentleman of leisure.

Thus the men who go by the titles of Arbab or Khan wield different kinds and degrees of power. The patterns of feudalism in Western Afghanistan are blurry. In fact, they are almost invisible. Arbabs live in unpretentious houses and wear the common clothes of country Afghans; while the poorest tenant bears himself with dignity and pride. Long and intimate

contact is needed to know the men with money in their pockets, tenants on their fields, and power.

Royal government has worked through the Arbabs. By making Arbabs responsible for levying men for work gangs and the army, it has increased their power over tenants. In rural areas, government is a collaboration between Hakims and Commandants on the one side, and the more powerful of the Arbabs on the other. Hakims and Commandants, after all, are poor men (to start with). Their salaries are ludicrously low. A Commandant has often no gun, and his rag-tag soldiers hardly ever do. But these officials are protected by their status; it is understood that serious intervention on the part of the Government would take place if these officials were publicly scorned, or molested. For their part, the powerful Arbabs have wealth, men and guns. It would be difficult to govern against the opposition of these people. And Arbabs can pay bribes. If Arbabs abuse their power, and exploit or despoil tenants, the government tends to be lenient.

Collaboration between provincial government officials and powerful local landlords led partly to the food disaster of 1972.

II FAMINE

Tentative Chronology of Events in Western Afghanistan, especially Jawand Uluswali (Badghis Prvince), from September 1971 to August 1972.

Notes:

A. A telephone line functions from Jawand bazaar to Qalaa-i Nao, with a tap at the bottom of the Darzak.

B. The writer was travelling in Jawand in late November and December of 1971 for achaeological research. Hence his observations on the economic situation in late fall are hardly thorough. Most of the following has been reconstructed from evidence gathered on a subsequent trip, in July and August of 1972. The writer also travelled through the Jawand Gorge in 1970.

September-December 1971:

A Food for Work project involved "gravelling" of the road from the bottom of the Darzak to Jawand bazaar. Traditionally, the Wali of Badghis makes one trip to Jawand by jeep every year; with great skill and daring, his jeep can be driven to the bottom of the Darzak, then reach Jawand bazaar after negotiating a further pass, the steep and dangerous Chehel-Dokhtar. (In 1969, the Wali's jeep crashed down the Darzak and his driver was killed. The Wali had prudently left the risks to the driver and was walking down behind). The trip takes four hours, or two hours less than a man on foot,

a horseman takes only three and a half hours. So the point of gravelling the road was simply to make the jeep ride quicker from the Darzak to Jawand. The project was selected by the Wali.

Obviously shortening by a mere half-hour a dangerous, almost foolhardy jeep ride made little economic sense. The population was under the impression that lorries would be rolling into Jawand by spring, on a vastly improved road. But engineering a lorry-road down the Darzak, and then over the Chehel-Dokhtar Pass, is a staggering operation - as difficult and expensive as the engineering of the Kabul Gorge road.

The result of the project was a worsening of the situation. The road is usually a narrow track winding around steep, cliff-like mountain slopes. The entire surface of the road was gravelled, with no foot path left on the side (which looks over the abyss). Travel for pedestrians and animals has been made painful over the loose slippery stones; while the engineering error of gravelling steep slopes made the ascent of even a jeep more difficult. Of course no lorries ever came into Jawand.

A Food for Work volunteer from Qalaa-i Nao made a single visit to Jawand on November 25, 1971, to inspect the situation: a horseback tour with the Wali of Badghis, Gol-Mohammadi.

Workers were a combination of unemployed people of Jawand bazaar, with tenants of Arbab Agha-Ju, Pashtun master of the Darzak. I do not know who appointed the Bashi, a Herati in official Western dress.

Work stopped with snowfall, December 24 1971. The workers were never paid. When I enquired in July 1972 about the fate of the Wheat coupons I was told: "The Arbabs have kept them."

The food situation in November and December was beginning to be critical. The effects of two years of drought were being felt. Fodder was short; horses were sold at low prices, some cows and sheep were slaughtered, while hardy camels and donkeys were still numerous. Wheat was scarce and in Jawand bazaar a loaf of bread cost 4 Afs. Oats bread was also consumed. Peasants and nomads were living on wheat and oats reserves. Still, the people along the Darzak and Morghab rivers as far as Jawand were thankful that, in the valley, there had at least been a previous spring crop along the banks, thanks to irrigation. But the dry-farming on the cliff-tops had produced nothing.

In November and early December a lorry of wheat was leaving Qalaa-i Nao each day at noon and arriving at the top of the Darzak at nightfall. The "Godam" or store-house was simply a flat ledge overlooking the abyss, on which wheat was stacked. Five soldiers guarded the store-house. The "Godam-dar" or store-house keeper was fat, turbanned Herati Abd-er-Rauf, with local official backing, refused to sell wheat to any one but Arbabs, claiming that wheat distribution in individual villages was to be effected by the local Arbabs. Officially, an Arbab was supposed to present Abd-er-Rauf with the list of "sould" in his village and buy the appropriate amount of wheat. Abd-er-Rauf thereupon checked his lists and signed receipts.

Throughout November and December Jawand bazaar was frequented by the most important notables: nomad leader Hajji Sultan Khan; Arbab Alef of Lalabay; Arbab Abu-Bakr of Jalay (Jalay is a tributary of the Jawand river; I have not been to Jalay and do not understand the basis of the man's power). I asked these notables what they were doing in Jawand, and was told: "We have certain business with the Government." ("Kar darim qat'-i Hokumat".) Poor notables like Arbab Ahmada of Hazrat-i Molla and the Arbab of Ghao-Kalan, on the other hand, were complaining about difficulties in getting permission to buy stocks of wheat for their constituents. At the same time, there were mutterings in the bazaar that even the price of 52 1/2 Afs. a ser of wheat was outrageous. "Amrika sent us this wheat for free, and now our government is selling it to us!"

At the Darzak, store-house keeper Abd-er-Rauf was the personal guest of Arbab Agha-Ju.

Local Mollas, both Pashtun and Aymaq, were unhappy about the Government but maintained that the King was above it, being "the Vice-Regent and the Shadow of God on Earth." Or: "The King is Just! Adell. But when does the poor man's voice reach his ear?"

On 24 December 1971 snow fell on the plateaus, and also in the gorges with an abundance rarely seen. (Jawand is only 400 metres high.)

The road from Qalaa-i Nao was cut.

January-April 1972:

Continual heavy snow. With the first fall, the wheat was hastily transported (by camels?) from the Darzak to a small village on the plateau, Gazestan - part of Agha-Ju's fief. The village is six hours' walk from the Darzak in summer (two hours on horseback). It was twice as far for men on foot in the snow.

Reserves being very low and no distribution of wheat having been effected by the important Arbabs, the lesser Arbabs and individual peasants and nomads trudged through the snow with donkeys up the Darzak and thence to the store-house at Gazestan, to buy wheat at 52 1/2 Afs. a ser. The officials present (in some cases it was the Commendant, sometimes the Hakim himself and other times only Abd-er-Rauf) refused to sell the wheat any cheaper than 500 Afs. a ser. When buyers protested, they were simply told that there was very little wheat available, and if they didn't want to buy it at 500 Afs a ser in Gazestan they could go look for wheat in Kabul (the roads were all blocked). If buyers insisted on their rights, they were told to leave in vigorous language: Get lost or I'll rape-your-wife!

Bread in Jawand went up to 10 Afs. a loaf.

In mid-January the following Arbabs and landlords were selling wheat at 350 Afs. a ser:

Arbab Agha-Ju of the Darzak (Pashtun).

Arbab Hajji Mohammad Khan - between Darzak and Chehel-Dokhtar (Pashtun).

Arbab Mohammad Maodud - southwest of Darzak (Pashtun).

Arbab Abu-Bakr of Jalay (Aymaq-Tajik).

Arbab Alef of Lalabay (Aymaq-Tajik).

Hajji Rahim, Arbab Alef's father (Aymaq-Tajik).

Amir Mohammad, Wakil of Jawand (Aymaq-Tajik).

Possibly nomad leader Hajji Sultan Khan (Pashtun). Loyal nomads denied that Hajji Sultan Khan speculated on wheat like the other lords, but I do not believe it. (He is too well off today.)

The tendency was for Pashtuns to sell to Pashtuns, and Aymaqs to Aymaqs. When people begged mercy from their Arbabs they were harshly told: "We ourselves had to buy this wheat with our own money! Pay or starve."

The most likely version of the story is this: The Hakim, the Commandant and storehouse keeper Abd-er-Rauf blocked peasants and lesser Arbabs from buying wheat by charging 500 Afs. a ser. Then they actually sold the wheat to the important Arbabs for something like 200 Afs. a ser, while these Arbabs sell it for 350 - thereby sharing the profits. Of course Abd-er-Rauf signed receipts for wheat sold at 52 1/2 Afs. a ser.

The Hakim, the Commandant and Abd-er-Rauf themselves were not seen selling the wheat in the bazaar.

The story of small nomad Khan Ata Mohammad illustrates the desperation to find wheat which gripped Jawand in mid-January. (Like the small Aymaq Arbabs of Ghao-Kalan and Hazrat-i Molla, Ata Mohammad is denied wheat at the Gazestan storehouse. Dauntless, he pushes his donkeys through deep snow and blizzards for five days until he reaches Qalaa-i Nao, where he

presents himself at the Provincial Storehouse. He is told that to buy wheat at 52 1/2 Afs. a ser he must obtain written permission. Ata Mohammad thereupon seeks audience with the Governor of Badghis. But fat Gol-Mohammad, former governor of Badghis, has just been transferred to Maymana; and the new governor, a suave, French-speaking gentleman, simply states that wheat for Jawand residents is not his responsibility and that Ata Mohammad must apply for written permission from the Hakim of Jawand(!). Ata Mohammad then walks to Herat (snows had blocked the road) and buses to Kabul to air his grievances. He winds up in the Ministry of Defence after being rejected everywhere else. The Ministry duly writes him permission to buy his wheat at 52 1/2 Afs., and Ata Mohammad shows his slip to the Kabul silo. The Kabul silo informs Ata Mohammad that as a constituent of Badghis province, he must obtain his wheat from the Qalaa-i Nao storehouse. Busing and walking, Ata-Mohammad returns to Qalaa-i Nao. The Qalaa-i Nao storehouse is sorry, however, because all its wheat has now been distributed, although certainly Ata Mohammad would be entitled to it. Ata Mohammad walks with his donkey back to Herat, is rejected at the Herat silo. He buses to Kandahar and buys his wheat on the open market, then falls sick for two weeks from exhaustion. After recuperating, he buses to Herat, walks to Qalaa-i Nao and thence to Jawand with his wheat, a financially ruined man. He arrives in late March. A quarter of his tribe has starved to death.

In Jawand, people started to die towards the end of January. The flocks were the first to go. Undernourished from two years of drought, and

unable to find food under the snow while no fodder was stored, the sheep succumbed to hunger and cold. The plateaus and hillsides were littered with carcasses which the people refused to eat. Islam forbids the consumption of carrion. But the dogs and the wolves grew fat.

First people ate their luxury food, rice, cooked in water instead of raoghan. Then they ate their seeds. Then they dug under the snow for roots. Who had money to buy wheat at 350 Afs. a ser? A crowd assembled around the Hakim's residence in Jawand on their knees, but the Hakim coolly informed them that the Government had no more wheat available, then shut himself up in his house and refused to budge for the rest of the winter. Let it be recalled that the telephone line from Jawand to Qalaa-i Nao somehow went on functioning all winter.

Women and children died more than men. In some villages the population was so weak and cold that corpses were left to freeze where they dropped, to be buried in spring when the weather grew warmer. But dogs and wolves mangled many corpses.

In Lalabay, which is dry-farming country, about half of the villagers had just enough reserves to hold on to their seeds. Or they bought wheat from their Arbab Alef by selling their carpets and their daughters. In kind, Arbab Alef sold his wheat for as much as 1000 Afs. a ser. Lalabay was once a collection of rich village. As a result at least half the population was able to keep seeds for spring.

They also held onto their seeds in the village of Alanta, with its irrigable land on the shores of lake Ao-Puda. And the Arbabs of the valley between Darzak and Jawand kept their seeds as well, to sow on the irrigated banks of the Morghab.

But on most of the plateaus above Jawand, and especially on the Chaghcharan highlands, utter starvation in freezing weather forced people to eat their seeds.

When spring came possibly 25% of Eastern Badghis, Southern Faryab and Northern Ghor, the territories I am familiar with, had starved to death. The toll was heaviest among children, pregnant women (and young peasant women are always pregnant or nursing), and the old.

April-mid-July 1972:

The thaw turned the snowbound plateaus into mud, and roads continued to be closed. A disease wiped out the dogs and the wolves; possibly something contracted from carrion. Numerous carcasses. In Lalabay, Alanta, and on the banks of the Morghab, a spring crop was sown with surviving seeds.

In May, melting snow from the highlands caused the rivers to swell and the few crops along the banks were utterly destroyed. Simple log bridges were carried away, making communications harder.

By late April, there was an outbreak of cholera, probably due to animal carcasses swept by the flood and infecting the Morghab and its tributaries.

Half the tribe of Haji Sultan Khan was afflicted. It may have been a benign form. Only one individual in five seems to have died. But on the upper Jawand river stand ominous empty villages, and the Jawand water was still so foul this summer that the entire bazaar suffered from colic - much to its surprise, for the swift-flowing river - as this writer can attest - is usually relatively pure.

Cholera was followed by sporadic malaria and typhoid. So with famine and disease, deaths continued throughout spring.

When the spring floods receded, only the crops of high standing Lalabay and Alanta were spared. Plateau or valley the rest of Jawand valley would have no harvest for the summer, despite the irony of heavy spring rains.

The Herati merchants of Jawand bazaar survived the winter rather prosperously by buying wheat from Abd er-Rauf and bartering it for the family heirlooms of peasants (carpets and jewelry). As they said succinctly: "We were not hungry."

(Note: All our bazaar information is sketchy. We were in Jawand clandestinely and were apprehensive of the Government, so we spent what little time we remained in Jawand bazaar discreetly indoors, asking few suspicious questions, and pretending to be archaeologists disinterested in local affairs. Even so, some Arbabs were suspicious. Therefore, how Herati merchants seem to have done so well in Jawand is actually my educated guess. But it is based on similar conditions in Qalaa-i Nao, where new carpets were piled on the floors of the shops this summer.)

Up around Hazrat-i Molla, independent landowner Mirza Allahyar survived the winter on his own reserves.

In early summer, the Wakil of Jawand, Amir Mohammad, bought himself a car. It is a jeep, driven down the Darzak with difficulty, and simply serves its owner on the ten kilometre stretch between Chehel-Dokhtar Pass and Jawand Bazaar. It is useless anywhere else. As one of the main retailers of wheat, Wakil Amir Mohammad has done very well.

Summer 1972:

Roads reopened in May.

Peace Corps Food for Work volunteer Jim Hicks, based in Qalaa-i Nao, drove to the Darzak in June with a bevy of officials. Horses were levied from the Arbabs by the Government of Jawand and the party rode to Jawand Bazaar, where they were feasted by the Hakim. There was a sightseeing tour of Lake Ao-Puda, and the party went home.

Jim Hicks, with volunteer Chris Conway, returned for serious work and a close look at the situation in late July. They left their jeep on the cliff-top and walked to the bottom of the Darzak. The Hakim of Jawand had been informed by telephone of their coming, but sent no horses, no guide, no one to greet them, and no food. (There is no food for sale at the bottom of the Darzak). Jim was also taken violently ill, which was immediately reported to the Hakim by Mohammad Jangjal, telephone man at the bottom of the Darzak, (who is living right now on two loaves of bread a day, with a

little yoghurt.) Chris Conway also spoke on the phone and told us in Jawand that Jim might have typhoid. Still the Hakim seemingly anxious to bar outsiders from gathering information, sent no help. Fortunately the writer was in Jawand to hear the news, and rode to the Darzak in three hours. Thus a horse was available to carry Jim to his jeep on the cliff-top, an otherwise impossible climb for a sick man.

An Afghan friend, Lloyd Baron, and the writer sneaked out of Qalaa-i Nao on horseback in the middle of the night, in peasant dress; and then bluffed the Commandant in Gazestan and the Hakim in Jawand into thinking they were important American officials in Kabul above needing permission to go anywhere, when they rode into Jawand Uluswali. For all unauthorized foreigners in Qalaa-i Nao were closely watched and prohibited from traveling further East.

When riding by Gazestan, we saw the open storehouse tent where the Commandant sat, and made a (wild) guess of fifty tons of wheat.

At the same time, merchants with horses were taking goods down the Darzak. Some of this was wheat from Qalaa-i Nao. Wheat in Jawand this August was being sold at 110 Afs. a ser or 4 Afs. a loaf - more than twice the price in Qalaa-i Nao.

The food situation in Jawand was determined by the absence of a spring crop - except in Alanta and Lalabay - coupled with the destruction of flocks and the loss of milk products.

Among nomads, most who had only two hundred sheep or less lost virtually all of them. Those who had one thousand might have fifty left. Hajji Sultan Khan himself said that he kept only a few hundred sheep out of a herd of five thousand. While many flock owners may have been exaggerating their pre-drought wealth, it was clear that most small owners were wiped out and rich men who owned more than two thousand were able to save only a small percentage. The situation was the same for nomads all over Badghis.

Also, so many camels died, that with the Morghab bridges washed out by spring floods, there was no migration to Chaghcharan this year.

Cholera caused as many deaths as starvation among Hajji Sultan Khan's people, according to survivors. Faces of tribesmen were thin and yellow, with protruding eyes, and the effects of severe malnutrition were felt: stomach cramps, vertigo, and inability to walk more than a few hours. Diet consisted of a little bread where this could be afforded, and grass boiled as soup. The hillsides were covered with grass from an exceptionally humid year, with almost no animals to graze on it and produce milk.

In the Aymaq gorges, the common people who have survived (between half and two thirds) were subsisting almost exclusively on mulberries - with a few apricots and plums. Children crawled about on all fours under the trees stuffing mulberries into their mouths. Adults and children alike suffered from severe diarrhea, and had yellow, puffy complexions.

Conditions were worse on the Chaghcharan highlands. No mulberries, only crabgrass growing tall in almost all the former wheat fields. We saw

six abandoned villages, with their roofs stripped off for firewood by surviving neighbours. In a village of thirty houses which the writer visited two years ago, eight houses were still inhabited, with gaunt adults standing in the doorways and their adolescents reaping crabgrass for evening supper. An old man reaping in a grass field said that fifty families were left out of four hundred in his district, and that all were living on grass. Mirza Allahyar, who rode with us from Hazrat-i Molla, added that the area would be depopulated in the coming winter, and that wild animals would descend into the uninhabited valleys in the following spring.

It was disconcerting to see the isolated houses of landlords with wheat growing and surviving animals sleek from the abundant pasturage, in the midst of ghost villages with abandoned wheat fields.

This sort of starvation was seen near the "Kabuli" nomad bazaar one day's ride north of Chaghcharan. But Russian trucks have come as far as this on a mining exploration, in one hour from the Hari-Rud at Chaghcharan.

Lalabay, with its summer harvest, was described as a Paradise by people on the Chaghcharan highlands, in the Jawand Gorge, and along the banks of the Darzak and the Morghab. Actually, only half of Lalabay has harvested, and is living on grain to the exclusion of milk products, with the deprived half of the population begging and performing menial tasks for their more fortunate fellows. There is severe malnutrition due to loss of milk products.

Social Results:

Hajji-Sultan-Khan's semi-nomads had been a rich tribe, and have held together and are clinging to their rich lands along the banks of the Morghab. Other, landless tribes have dissolved, and individual families are drifting into Tajik areas like the Jawand Gorge and the Lalabay plateau, to beg mulberries, graze their surviving animals on luxuriant pasturage or perform menial tasks. This is a new development, for hitherto no Pashtuns were allowed into these areas. Arbab Ahmada of Hazrat-i Molla, all of whose animals had died, even allowed two nomad families with a pitiful remnant of nine sheep to graze freely on his private pasture grounds. At a superficial glance, hostility between the famished groups is at a low level.

But another new group of Pashtuns in the Jawand Gorge were traders from the 'Kabuli' bazaar. In gaudy apparel and armed to the teeth, 'Kabuli' traders were walking for the first time through the Gorge and all the way to Jawand bazaar, demanding payment of debts. (Thus goods were obviously sold on credit in 1971. But I do not know if this was previously the case). Business was bad in the Kabuli bazaar on the Chaghcharan highlands. The traders were complaining that debts were not being paid, and that peasants were too afraid of robbery to walk to the market.

In fact, before discussing what proportion of peasants fled to Chaghcharan and how many stayed and died, resulting in the above mentioned

abandoned and semi-abandoned villages, it must be pointed out that rural communications were in a state of chaos. There was paranoia in Eastern Badghis, Southern Faryab and Northern Ghor about highway robbery. Peasants feared that to leave their villages to walk to the bazaar or the highway was almost inviting certain death. Rumours flew about armed bands of men supplied with guns by unscrupulous Khans, to rob caravans on their way to and from the bazaars.

What is true is that there are small bands of impoverished, desperate nomads who have kept their guns. At the same time, landlords who have lost their flocks and made money on the sale of wheat are trying to send caravans of men to Qalaa-i Nao, Chaghcharan and Qaysar, to buy sheep and walk them home. The bandits are intercepting some of these caravans.

On August 20, the village of Kucha-yi Lalabay was rocked by the attack on its Arbab's caravan, returning from Qaysar with 2 lakh (200,000) Afs in sheep and manufactured goods. Twelve armed men stripped, bound and beat the Arbab's men, who returned to the Kucha-yi Lalabay naked, pinioned and bloody. Or so the rumour had it which circulated around Eastern Badghis within days. The district of Lalabay, which is dependent on trade with Qaysar for manufactured goods, felt cut off from the outside world.

Still, trade has been reduced, but not abolished, between the Interior and the Western, Central and Northern Roads. Herati merchants in the West, 'Kabul' traders in the south and a few enterprising Uzbeks from Qaysar in the north are maintaining some animal travel.

STRUCTURAL EFFECTS

Land tenure has not substantially changed in Eastern Badghis. The Arbab of Langar, who claims to have waived rents this year, said that Landowners had been fearful of acquiring new land because of the hazards of three preceding disastrous years. But this may change in the coming year.

In Northern Ghor it is true that some male peasants abandoned their lands and their families to flee to Chaghcharan. But the walk to Chaghcharan may involve one or several hard, waterless days for seriously underfed people. And the difficulty of the road is compounded by the fear of robbers and the reluctance to abandon one's land. So it is unfortunately the case that a number of households are simply being vacated by death not emigration. Survivors said that the majority of those who disappeared died of hunger and cold ("Men too?" "Men too:") and that the men who fled to Chaghcharan are a minority.

Reluctance to abandon land is more acute among the Aymaq inhabitants of the Gorges. For this would mean abandoning the fruit trees which insured their survival over the summer, and caused a lull in their deaths. But with the ending of the mulberry season in late August, and the exhaustion of the dried mulberries by October, the population might flee towards to cities.

But this is doubtful. Great Maldar nomads, proud men who once owned a thousand sheep and a score of camels, and with a horse to ride, are walking towards the roads to beg work as common labourers from Peace Corps volunteers - volunteers whom they despised as infidels and city weaklings

openly scorn the King and call him various uncomplimentary epithets. Mollas snort when reminded that they were still calling him the Shadow of God on Earth in December, and said outright that Afghanistan's only solution was a republic 'like the Arabs have'. But settled peasants are listless and openly expect to die:

"What will you do when the fruit season ends, when the snows come?"

"We will all die, like our relatives before us."

"Why don't you leave and go to the city?"

"There is no food for people like us in the cities. We would die there. And the roads are full of bandits."

"And also if a man leaves his field he will never sow and reap again."

"And how can we walk to the cities? We can hardly walk more than an hour before our heads spin and we have to sit down."

"Your Commandant is sitting right now on top of fifty tons of wheat. You have a right to that wheat. How come you don't just take it?"

"Because our King would bomb us."

A lame man is berated because his mother starved to death over the winter and he is left alive.

"You stole the food out of her mouth!"

"I didn't! She died all by herself!"

"And you have a horse! You let your mother starve and you fed yourself, and that horse!"

"But I'm lame, I can't get around without a horse!"

"He admits it! He kills his mother and feeds his horse! You should have starved yourself!"

"But brothers, we're all going to starve this winter!"

A peasant from the Chaghcharan highlands walks through the Jawand Gorge, holding the hands of two thin boys with yellow faces, begging for mulberries.

"They're all I've got left! Nine children when winter started! You know what the bastards were selling wheat for in Chaghcharan!"

"250".

"Look at these kids! They've been eating nothing but mulberries for weeks! They can't even keep it down!"

Tears stream down his cheeks, continuously:

"Is this Islam? Is this Islam? Is this Islam? Is this Islam?"

Nobody is praying, not even the Mollas.

"We don't have the energy."

"Islam? Islam is over, like the rest of Afghanistan."

While the nomads are angry because they are aware of better conditions in the south of the country, the settled peasants are convinced that the rest of Afghanistan is starving with them, except for the King, the merchants, the officials and the landlords.

"By next summer, there won't be any more Afghanistan left."

And this reconciles them to death.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

We guess that more than a third of Eastern Badghis has died, and maybe more than half of Northern Ghor. This may be an exaggeration, but of all the women in the Jawand Gorge and the Chaghcharan highlands whom the writer knew over the summers of 1970 and 1971, not one is left alive today. And many children have died. The hillsides are covered with little tombs. Empty villages stretch from the source of the Jawand river to the outskirts of Chaghcharan.

The outlook is grim. There has been no harvest, except in Alanta and Lalabay; and there are very few animals. Dried mulberries, to repeat, will be exhausted by October. No bread, no milk products, no dried fruit: the remaining population of Eastern Badghis, Northern Ghor and Southern Faryab cannot be expected to survive, except for the merchants and landlords.

Lloyd Baron thinks that with the onslaught of cold weather, there will be a panic exodus towards the roads. I think this will only be true of the nomads, for the reasons outlined above; the peasants will stay and die. I hope I am wrong.

Concluding Remarks:

The Government cannot be excused for ignorance. The Hakim of Jawand sat with a telephone at his desk all winter, spring and summer. When Peace Corps volunteers came to do serious work, the Hakim blocked access to Jawand

in a discreet way and knowingly imperilled the life of Jim Hicks, whom he believed to be stricken with typhoid. (He was not).

To save the people of the Central and Western Highlands a staggering relief operation, with planes, helicopters, lorries, camels and donkeys is necessary, and imperative.

APPENDICES

Qalaa-i Nao; Food for Work:

This winter, wheat was sold at 200 Afs. a ser. But this summer, it was impossible to collect any idea of starvation in Qalaa-i Nao. The children of nomads were begging for melon-rinds at the doors of the tea-houses or searching for them in the gutters, but it was assumed that the heaviest blows had fallen on nomads and that the settled peasantry was enjoying a bumper crop. Wheat was harvested along the Western Road, and was only 45 Afs. a ser in Qalaa-i Nao.

Food for Work consisted mostly in gravelling roads, as well as the streets of Qalaa-i Nao. The surface of the Herat-Maymana road will be improved for the coming winter and spring, except for the engineering error of gravelling steep grades. Road projects were selected by the Governor. Some of these were absurd, like a road from Qades to Obeh, and were not acted upon by the Peace Corps.

Other road projects included linking Qalaa-i Nao with Koshk-i Kohna with a better surface.

In one case, the Arbab of Langar himself was pressing for roadwork from Qades to Langar.

Difficulties constantly occurred in the distribution of wheat coupons. Theoretically, a group of workers were supposed to elect one of their number to be 'Bashi', or Foreman. Wheat coupons were delivered to the Bashis.

If the Bashi proved unsatisfactory, it was made clear to workers that they could depose him and elect another.

Unfortunately, the Bashis were usually appointed by the Arbabs, and surrendered wheat coupons to their masters, instead of collecting wheat and distributing it to the workers.

Scenes in which scores of workers collected outside the Peace Corps compound at dusk and pestered weary volunteers were constantly recurring:

"We worked all day. Give us wheat."

A young Herati Peace Corps counterpart answers:

"Your Bashi has the wheat. Get it from your Bashi".

"He won't give it to us. You gave wheat to the Bashi. Now give wheat to us."

"If your Bashi won't give you your wheat that is your own fault. You elected him. You have the perfect right to dismiss him and elect another."

"But we can't!"

"Well if you feel you can't then suffer the consequences. We here tell you that you can and have every official right to."

"You're not a foreigner, you're an Afghan! You know we can't!"

"Well then if you people want to eat then you will have to change your ways."

And the crowd shuffles off, invariably muttering about foreign engineers who know nothing except how to build roads, and how the peasant is betrayed by greedy Afghans who are smart combined with benevolent foreigners who are stupid.

Food for Work faces the formidable obstacles of a government and landowning class who are determined to thwart the programs or exploit them for their own advantage, cheating or lying to volunteers where they can - and of course, a Food for Work volunteer's task is further complicated by local notables constantly trying to exploit him; like a governor demanding that a road be built to his favorite picnic ground; or a wealthy lorry contractor owning six vehicles, who after being contracted to dump stones in a remote area and being paid in wheat, then proceeds to dump stones on the streets of Qalaa-i Nao - which no one asked him to do - and demands payment.

Of course, Food for Work is faced with a dilemma. Is it Road-Building? In that case, employing gangs of underfed, unskilled peasants usually crazed with thirst (nobody thinks of supplying water skins, and rural Afghanistan with its ludicrous technology has never invented individual water flasks) to throw stones on a mountain track is hardly a way to build really decent roads for the country. Then is it Charity? In that case why not give wheat coupons to the individual worker instead of to his Bashi? Is it spreading Peaceful Social Revolution through New Intellectual Awareness, in the way the Herati counterpart was preaching? In that case it is ironic to supply landlords and officials with more wealth and consequently power with which to exploit tenants.

But then these are the dilemmas of distributing aid through a growing feudal system backed with local government support.

Chaghcharan:

We rode within an hour's truck ride of Chaghcharan but didn't go into the town, to avoid the annoyance of being interfered with by the Government in our travels.

However, we know that wheat was being sold openly by the store-house keeper himself this winter for 250 Afs. a ser. In kind (carpets or animals) the wheat was sold for much more.

Maymana:

In Faryab, unlike Badghis, there have been numerous sales of land on the part of small independent landlords to wealthier landlords profiteering on wheat, resulting in the creation of vast new estates and a larger class of landless peasants. Feudalism has thus made large strides in Faryab. But landlords will start buying up more land in Eastern Badghis as well, by next spring.

Wheat in Maymana this winter was sold at the same price as in Chaghcharan, 250 Afs. a ser. Common people presenting themselves to the store-house were told they must have written permission to buy wheat at 52 1/2 Afs. a ser, written permission which the Governor refused to deliver, while the roads to Kabul were blocked by snow.

Residents said that throughout Faryab "many, many people have died". In April a medical student originally from Maymana returned from Kabul and led a demonstration of several thousand destitute men and women in

front of the Governor's palace, demanding that the storehouse gates be opened. The student also harangued the people to the effect that their own government, including the King, was starving them intentionally.

The student was jailed for five years.

However, the Prime Minister was alarmed and ordered the Governor of Maymana to open the storehouse gates. A thousand sers of wheat were to be sold a day at 52 1/2 Afs. a ser. But while a thousand sers a day were declared to Kabul, the Maymana storehouse-keeper refused to sell more than 200 sers a day (granted at the official price), saying: "We're sorry. That's all for today. Come back tomorrow." The fate of the remaining 800 sers daily can be guessed at. Even this summer bakeries were running out of flour by four in the afternoon, with admonitions to "come back tomorrow". Obvious hoardings of huge amounts for the coming winter.

An unsavoury aspect of last winter's famine was the prostitution of virgin daughters to officials and landlords in return for food.

Starvation is not at present observable along the highway, though even the road was dotted with occasional corpses throughout the winter.

Camels:

In Jawand we saw a herd of fifty camels watering at the bottom of the Darzak. There may be more grazing on the plateau. In case of relief operations, it may be recalled that a camel can carry half a ton, and that there may be two or three hundred camels left around Jawand.

A few of the Herati merchants in Jawand have donkeys, and the Arbabs of the richer sort have kept their horses. But the amount of beasts of burden in the Jawand area is inadequate, and on a future trip, it must be assessed how many will be needed from the outside.

CAST OF SOME CHARACTERS

Abd er-Rauf: Store house keeper of Jawand.

Agha-Ju: i.e. "Lord of the Waters". Powerful Pashtun Arbab of the Darzak and Gazestan.

Arbab Abu-Bakr of Jalay: Powerful Aymaq Arbab of the Jawand area.

Arbab Alef of Lalabay: Another powerful Aymaq Arbab of the Jawand area.

Arbab of Ghao-Kalan: A small, powerless Aymaq Arbab of the Jawand gorge.

Arbab Ahmada of Hazrat-i Molla: Another small, powerless Aymaq Arbab of the Jawand gorge.

Arbab of Langar: Powerful, quasi-baronial Aymaq notable of the Qalaa-i Nao plateau.

Allahyar; nicknamed Mirza, "the Scribe, the Learned": Powerful independent landowner of the Jawand Gorge. Lives near Hazrat-i Molla. An Aymaq.

Hajji Sultan Khan: Leader of the most powerful tribe of Pashtun nomads of the Morghab basin.

Some Places:

Ao-Puda: A large lake to the south west of Jawand. One of the tributary sources of the Morghab.

Alanta: Aymaq village on the shores of Ao-Puda. Irrigated land. Enjoyed a harvest in 1972.

Darzak: The "Cleft". Steep, one thousand metre deep gorge prohibiting lorry traffic into Eastern Badghis Province.

Gazestan: Small Pashtun village on the plateau west of the Darzak. The wheat store house for Jawand Uluswali was transported here in January.

Ghao-Kalan: Small Aymaq community of the Jawand Gorge.

Hazrat-i Molla: Aymaq community of the Jawand Gorge.

Jalay: Tributary stream of the Jawand, cutting its own deep gorge.

Jawand Gorge: Steep gorge running south to north, from the highlands of Chaghcharan to Jawand Bazaar. Aymaqs live here. It is impenetrable to wheeled vehicles and to camels.

Kabul bazaar: Nomad bazaar set up on the Chaghcharan highlands, near the source of the Jawand.

Kucha-yi Lalabay: The "street" of Lalabay. Aymaq village set in a deep defile, on the caravan route from Jawand to Qaysar. The village is at the foot of the three thousand metre high Band-i Turkestan range.

Lalabay: "Big Brother Bay or Bey". Plateau to the north of the Jawand gorge, dotted with numerous dry-farming Aymaq villages. The village of Lalabay are spoken together collectively as 'Lalabay'. Lalabay enjoyed a harvest in 1972.

Langar: "The Anchor" (of religion). Village, bazaar, and fields entirely in the grip of a single Aymaq family. North-east of Qades, on the

Qalaa-i Nao plateau. Accessible by lorry.

Qades: Bazaar fifty kilometres east of Qalaa-i Nao. Seat of an Uluswali of Badghis Province.

Qaysar: Major bazaar of Faryab province. Terminus of the Chaghcharan-Jawand-Aysar caravan trail.

Rabat: Ancient stone village of the Jawand Gorge, capital of semi-mythical Aymaq potentate Shah-Pasand Khan.

Shah-i Mashhad: "The Prince of Martyrdom". Ruins of the 12th century winter palace of the Ghorid Sultans, on the banks of the Morghab. The Pashtun tribe of Hajji Sultan Khan winters beneath its walls.