

1970

My Memoirs

Shah Wali Khan

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/ascdigitizedbooks>

 Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

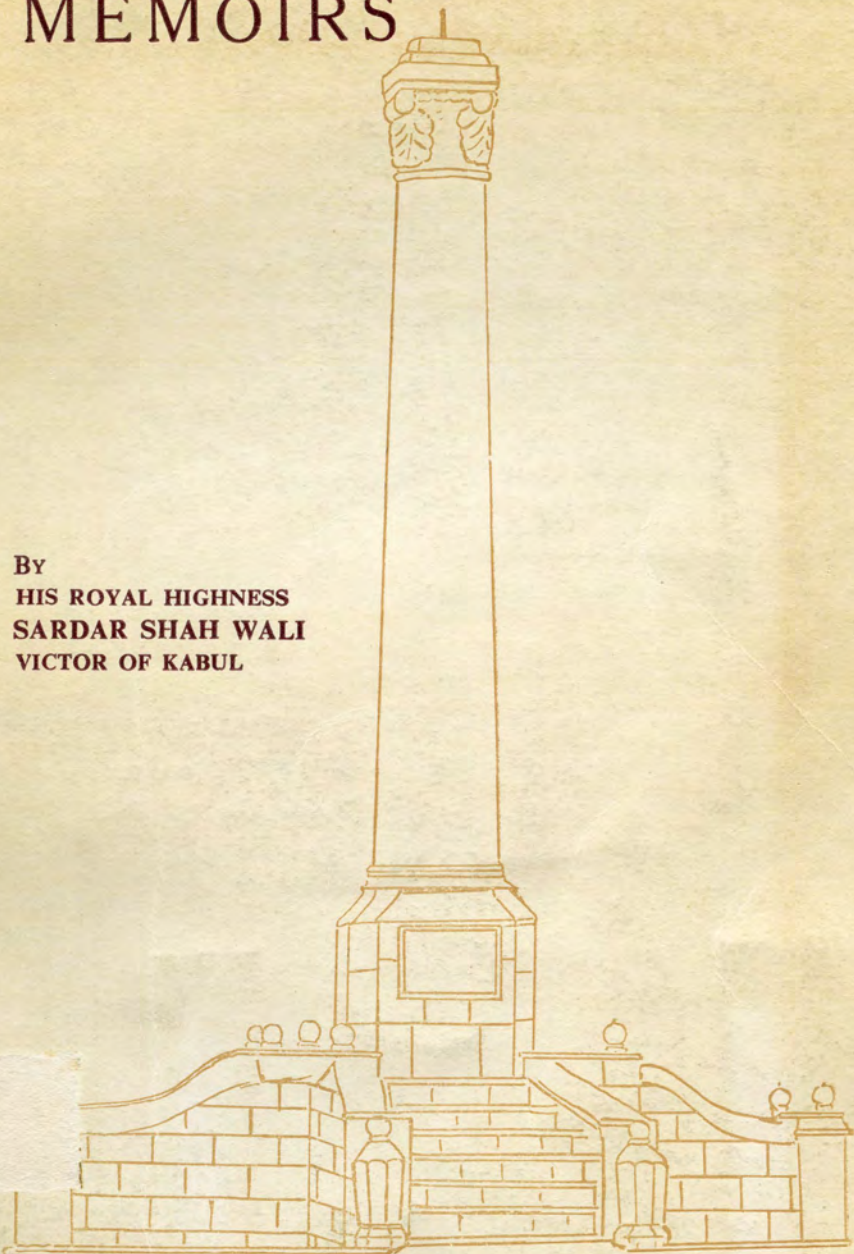
Khan, Shah Wali, "My Memoirs" (1970). *Digitized Books*. 18.
<http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/ascdigitizedbooks/18>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives & Special Collections at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digitized Books by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.



MY MEMOIRS

By
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
SARDAR SHAH WALI
VICTOR OF KABUL



KABUL
1970

COLUMN OF INDEPENDENCE

Afghan
Coll.
DS
371
S55
A313



*His Royal Highness
Marshal Sardar Shah Wali Khan
Victor of Kabul*

430300

MY
MEMOIRS

BY
THE ROYAL HIGHNESS
MARSHAL BARRON
VICTOR OUBAYE

DS
371
S55A313

PRINTED IN PAKISTAN BY THE PUNJAB EDUCATIONAL PRESS,
LAHORE

CONTENTS

PART I

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

	Pages
A Short Biography of His Royal Highness Sardar Shah Wali Khan, Victor of Kabul	i—iii
1. My Aim	1
2. Towards the South	7
3. The Grand Assembly	13
4. Preliminary Steps	17
5. Fall of Thal	23
6. Beginning of Peace Negotiations	27
7. The Armistice and its Effects	29
8. Back to Kabul	33

PART II

DELIVERANCE OF THE COUNTRY

9. Deliverance of the Country	35
10. Beginning of Unrest in the Country	39
11. Homewards	43
12. Arrival of Sardar Shah Mahmud Ghazi	53
13. Sipah Salar's Activities	59
14. Negotiations with the Sulaimankhels	61
15. Events at Gardez	63
16. Gutmangal	65
17. Gardez	67
18. March on Lohgard	69
19. Mohammed Siddiq makes a Surprise Attack	71
20. The Skirmish with the Sulaimankhels	75
21. Fall of Gardez	77
22. Journey to Jaji	83
23. Beneath Shady Pines	85

450

June 4, 1973

Int'l. Publications Service

				Pages
24.	The Final Plan	...	...	91
25.	Khushi	...	...	95
26.	Around the Capital	...	...	99
27.	The Final Attack	...	...	101
28.	A Trick	...	...	105
29.	Meeting the Family	...	...	107
30.	A Pathetic Scene	...	...	109
31.	The Election of a King	...	...	111

ILLUSTRATIONS

1.	His Royal Highness Marshal Sardar Shah Wali, Victor of Kabul	...	...	Frontispiece
				Facing page
2.	Amir Abdur Rahman Khan	...	...	2
3.	Amir Habibullah Khan	...	...	4
4.	Sardar Mohammed Nadir Khan	...	...	24
5.	King Amanullah	...	...	34
6.	H. R. H. Sardar Shah Mahmud Ghazi	...	...	84
7.	After Triumph over Forces of Ignorance and Tyranny	...	...	102
8.	His Late Majesty King Mohammed Nadir Shah-e-Shaheed	...	...	114
9.	A Map of Afghanistan	...	...

**A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS SARDAR SHAH WALI KHAN
VICTOR OF KABUL**

H. R. H. Sardar Shah Wali, the surviving uncle of His Majesty King Mohammed Zahir Shah of Afghanistan, was born in Dehra Dun (India) in 1888. He studied Persian (Dari), Pashto, English and Urdu privately under the guidance of competent tutors. In 1901, the Sardar returned to his motherland with all the members of his family, and was warmly received at Kabul by Amir Abdur Rahman, ruler of Afghanistan. Sardar Shah Wali continued his studies until 1906 with emphasis on military science, and subsequently played a most important part in public affairs and in shaping the destinies of his homeland. Since his political and military knowledge fitted him for a military post, he was appointed the Officer of the Royal Body-guard. In addition to this important post, he worked as *Aid-de-Camp* to His Majesty Amir Habibullah Khan.

In 1907, when Amir Habibullah was invited by Lord Minto, the Viceroy, to visit India, the Sardar accompanied the Amir and participated in the grand Durbar held at Agra in honour of the Afghan ruler. During the Third Anglo-Afghan War or more properly the War of Independence, Sardar Mohammed Nadir Khan and his two brothers, Sardar Shah Wali and Sardar Shah Mahmud, were asked by King Amanullah to proceed to the Central Sector and fight the British. It was during this war that the three brothers greatly distinguished themselves by entering the British territories and occupying important military posts of Thal and Wana, which had far-reaching effect on the whole course of war and the subsequent peace treaty. Sardar Shah Wali Khan who had taken Wana liberated the whole of Waziristan. King Amanullah Khan, who was keenly watching the whole course of events in this sector, was not slow in appreciating the immense services of the three brothers at this critical period of Afghan history. Sardar Shah Wali was honoured with the order of

Sardar-e-Aala and promoted to the rank of general. He was given the post of Assistant Commander-in-Chief of Kabul forces, and at the same time the King gave him the hand of his sister, Saffia Siraj, in marriage.

In 1924, King Amanullah's reforms met with a strong opposition from a group of reactionaries in the Southern Province. The situation being poorly handled soon became extremely serious and explosive to the extent that a contingent of the Royal Forces under Mohammed Wali Khan was besieged at Gardez. The insurgents emboldened by their initial success, marched on Kabul led by Mullah-e-Lang (the Lame Mullah). Once again Sardar Shah Wali came forward to aid the Government, and was able to rescue Afghanistan from the hands of rebels. The Sardar, by inflicting a crushing defeat on the insurgents, relieved the panic-stricken forces at Gardez. This single victory changed the whole course of the civil war. In recognition of his inestimable service to the country, the King awarded the distinguished title of *Taj-e-Afghan* to the Sardar and appointed him the Chief Officer of the Military *Aid-de-Camp*.

In 1926, Sardar Mohammed Nadir Khan, the Afghan Ambassador in Paris, resigned his post due to ill health and retiring to southern France took his residence at Nice. Sardar Shah Wali Khan also resigned his post and went to Nice to look after his ailing brother.

In 1928, when King Amanullah returned from his European tour, once again he met a strong opposition from some reactionary parties in Afghanistan. The situation gradually became so serious that a notorious brigand-chief, Bacha Saqa, took Kabul and ushered in a reign of terror, lasting for nine months (January 14, 1929 to October 15, 1929). Again the three brothers stepped boldly into the arena to rescue their countrymen from the ruthless clutches of the robbers. It was Sardar Shah Wali, who after a hard struggle, was able to march on Kabul at the head of a small militia force. The Bacha's forces were routed and he was forced to seek refuge in flight. On the 15th of October, Sardar Mohammed Nadir Khan reached Kabul and in a national assembly was unanimously elected King of Afghanistan. The

new King honoured Sardar Shah Wali with *Ilmar-e-Aala*, the highest distinction and conferred on him the title of Victor of Kabul and Marshal of Afghan forces. The King was also pleased to appoint him his *Vakil* (Regent) to assist him in the pacification of the country.

In December 1929, after peace was restored, the Sardar was appointed Afghan Ambassador at the Court of St. James where he stayed for two and a half years.

Next he was appointed Afghan Ambassador to France, Switzerland, Belgium and Poland. During his stay in Paris, he strengthened cultural ties between Afghanistan and France. In recognition of his services in this connection, the French Government was pleased to award him the honorary titles of Grand Officer, Commander, and Grand Cross de Legion de Honour.

In 1948, the Sardar was appointed Afghan Ambassador in Karachi, but the climate did not suit him and he was obliged to leave Pakistan after a stay of nine months. He was again appointed Afghan Ambassador in London—a post which he held for three years, until 1953, when he resigned because of ill health.

Presently, His Royal Highness, due to advanced age, holds no official post and spends most of his time studying or meeting friends. His book *My Memoirs* has attained immense importance and is of great historical significance. The original Persian text has been printed five times. It has been translated into Pashto, Russian, Chinese, Urdu and Hindi. Its English version is herewith presented to the public.

Kabul :

October 15, 1970

MOHAMMAD ALI

In the name of God the most merciful

NY 111

In writing this book, I have had in mind to set down a detailed account of the events which led to the independence of the United States, and to place on record all the facts and circumstances which I have witnessed during my life. A comprehensive volume, now in preparation, will, I trust, be presented to the readers in due season.

These incidents are mainly confined to the period of events which I witnessed. I have, however, written down the events which related to the period of my childhood, and the events which were connected with the early years of my life.

PART I

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

The struggle for the liberation of my country from the British yoke, which was the result of the American Revolution, is the subject of this volume. It is a story of heroism and sacrifice, and of the triumph of the human spirit over the forces of oppression.

The people of America have long been proud of the achievements of their forefathers, and of the part which they played in the history of the world. It is a source of great satisfaction to us to know that the principles which they established are still the basis of our government, and that the same spirit of freedom and independence which animated them is still the soul of our people.

The people of America have long been proud of the achievements of their forefathers, and of the part which they played in the history of the world. It is a source of great satisfaction to us to know that the principles which they established are still the basis of our government, and that the same spirit of freedom and independence which animated them is still the soul of our people.

In the name of God the most merciful

. 1 .

MY AIM

In writing these reminiscences my aim is not to set down a detailed narration of events; for, in a small work like this, it is difficult to place on record all the ups and downs, the turmoils and the occurrences which I have witnessed during my life. A comprehensive volume, now in preparation, will, God willing, be presented to the readers in due course.

These memoirs are mainly confined to two momentous events which I witnessed. These events, which underline my career, were related to the sacred ideal of national independence upon which were focussed the aspirations and activities of all Afghans, including myself. These two events were: firstly, the attainment of complete independence for my country and, secondly, the struggle for the extrication of my homeland from the internal uprising, which victory to my mind, buttressed and ensured national freedom.

The patriots and myself believed that the continuation of that fratricidal war would certainly have rent asunder the whole fabric of our national existence, and even those who would emerge successful and survive that protracted and sanguinary struggle would have to bend all their energies and devote their whole-hearted attention to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of our homeland, which would otherwise have suffered a fearful collapse.

The people of Afghanistan have, in all epochs of their glorious history, dedicated their lives and directed their activities towards the attainment of independence, and the patriotic fervour which we and all the members of our family brought to bear on the struggle of independence is too evident to need emphasis. Even

as a child, when I could not distinguish good from bad, I had learnt the whole story of the heroic struggles for independence, including the role played therein by our fathers and mothers. When separated from my home and homeland by hundreds of miles, I used to hear from my elders, more particularly from my mother, the dismal story of alien aggression and domination. The deep emotion depicted on the faces of the narrators—our grandfather, father, mother and uncle—had left on our minds indelible imprints of agonising sorrow.

Long years have gone by, but the longing to return to our home had swayed my whole being as a delicious memory, which I still retain and cherish. All this was in Dehra Dun where we were detained, but we felt all the time that, though far away from our people, we fully shared their sentiments.

I can recall how intense was our joy when, through the Afghan Ambassador, Sirdar Mohammed Ismail Khan, we received at Dehra Dun the gracious *firman*¹ of His Majesty Zia-e-Millat-va-Din Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, permitting us to return to our homeland.

It was spring when we reached Kabul, and every object we saw on the way from the twisting Khyber Pass up to the Capital itself looked fresh, green and attractive. We enjoyed the sight of every rock, and throughout the journey, we identified with innocent curiosity every village and mountain about which we had learnt from our parents and which had played its proud rôle in the defence of the country and in the glorious struggle for independence.

On arrival at Kabul, His Majesty Amir Habibullah Khan, Siraj-e-milat-va-deen² took us into the army and presented us each a sword. I can never forget the joy of the moment and thought that we were born for no other work.

I was in the prime of my life when I was appointed *Rikabashi* at the Court, with an army unit at my command. My country was then not completely independent and the people had not yet

1. Royal edict

2. Abdur Rahman died in 1901 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Habibullah

...had been there for thousands of years. We
...realized that we would have to have a more modern machine in the
...light with a focus that had added on all the possibilities
...of the light.

I had a vision of a man of letters, a man of letters, but with
...of a man of letters, a man of letters, but with
...of a man of letters, a man of letters, but with



...the light
...of the light
...of the light

My brother
...of the light
...of the light

*Amir Abdur Rahman Khan
(1880-1901)*

...of the light
...of the light
...of the light

The world has been
...of the light
...of the light

regained what had been theirs for thousands of years. We realized that we would have to make immense sacrifices in the fight with a Power that had robbed us of our freedom—our birthright.

I am neither a man of letters nor a historian, but with most of my life spent in military service, I assessed the situation thus: Afghanistan stood half-way on the road to independence, and this forced semi-independent posture was an inevitable prelude to a bloody war, unparalleled in our history, for achieving complete independence.

We desired to end that shameful interlude, and the sooner the better. However, there came up events which, we thought, were designed to prolong that interlude. One such event was the revolt of Jandad Khan Ahmadzai in the Southern Province. This was the first engagement in which my elder brother, Sirdar Mohammed Nadir (later King Mohammed Nadir Shah) triumphed. He commanded a disciplined unit which for the first time during the reign of Amir Habibullah Khan had been equipped with modern weapons of warfare.

My brother, His Late Majesty King Mohammed Nadir Shah (God's mercy be upon him), ever since he entered the military service, had desired to revive, and, through training and equipment, strengthen the inborn fighting spirit of the Afghan troops, which had been showing signs of decadence after the reign of Amir Sher Ali Khan. The Jandad incident acquired a special significance as the armed forces stationed in the Southern Province as well as the local administration failed to cope with the situation. My brother was, therefore, directed by Amir Habibullah, to suppress the uprising. With the small force under his command he quelled the revolt and subdued the insurgents. Jandad was captured and met the end he deserved, while his followers laid down their arms, and were subsequently pardoned.

This episode bore fruitful results. The superiority of modern military training and equipment was fully demonstrated, and the mischief-mongers and trouble-makers, convinced of the superior power of the State, returned to peaceful ways of life.

Realizing that such uprisings were the fault, not only of the people at large, but of a few mischief-makers, my brother obtained from the Government a general amnesty for all the people involved in the conflict, and the tribal leaders were persuaded to send their children to Kabul to acquire modern knowledge. It was at his suggestion that the Government opened new schools and training centres. After completing their education, the sons of tribal chiefs and those of other notables were able to join the Afghan army, where most of them served with distinction.

With the Amir's martyrdom (in 1919), the progressive Sirajia's reign came to an end. At this time Sirdar Mohammed Nadir Khan was Sipah Salar (Commander-in-Chief), Sirdar Shah Mahmud Khan was Sar Saraus, and the writer was Rikab Bashi. My father and uncle were the King's special counsellors. My eldest brother, Sirdar Abdul Aziz Khan was in charge of external affairs, Sirdar Mohammed Hashim Khan was Naib-Salar (Deputy Commander-in-Chief) posted at Herat, while Sirdar Mohammed Ali Khan was commandant of the Royal Regiment.

Towards the close of the Sirajia regime, World War One came to an end after world-wide killings and devastation. During the war Germany and her allies had sent friendly messages and diplomatic missions with liberal promises of arms and money in case Afghanistan joined the war on their side, but under the sagacious guidance of His Majesty Amir Habibullah Khan, Afghanistan preferred to remain neutral.

This war brought tremendous changes all over the world, but unfortunately Afghanistan's fate remained unaltered. Great Britain still insisted on keeping Afghanistan as a semi-independent State, and the pride of victory in the European conflict had perhaps reinforced her determination to prevent any move for our independence. At last, in the spring of 1919, His Majesty King Amanullah declared war on the British. The British Envoy had to leave Kabul, and with the general mobilization, the situation became explosive. At that time, my brother Sirdar Mohammed Nadir Khan and other members of our family were no longer in Government service (details will be given in my comprehensive biography now under compilation). We were

called for active service by King Amanullah Khan, who was determined to attain complete independence for his country.

The whole of the Afghan army had to be reorganized and put on a war-footing. Saleh Mohammed Khan, who had lately been promoted to the post of Commander-in-Chief, was sent to the eastern sector at the head of a large force. Sirdar Abdul Kuddus Khan Etamadudola, Prime Minister, went to Kandahar, while my brother, Sirdar Mohammed Nadir Khan, was ordered to proceed at the head of a small force to the Southern sector.

At this critical juncture Afghanistan was in chaos. The assassination of Amir Habibullah Khan had disturbed the peace and tranquillity of the realm. Disorder had spread from the Eastern region right up to Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif and other distant parts of the country. Since civil disturbances in the Eastern region had been caused by disagreement between Kabul and Jalalabad, and changes in the army personnel had also taken place, all matters relating to public order and stability of the country were brought under military control. The complete independence of Afghanistan was proclaimed and that was what the nation had cherished for years. Fortunately, my brother Sirdar Shah Mahmud Khan and I were ordered to go to the Southern region and work under Sipah Salar Sirdar Mohammed Nadir Khan. Our joy was greater than we could possibly express over this long-awaited opportunity for service to our motherland.

Declared and achieved over fifty years ago, this independence of Afghanistan is now celebrated each year. As a soldier who participated in this war, I am now putting on paper my reminiscences in this treatise—a humble present to the valiant Afghan army. My object is not one of self-praise. We have not done anything beyond our duty to the nation, nor was the work we accomplished greater than that of our compatriots.

. 2 .

TOWARDS THE SOUTH

On the third of Thaur, 1298 Solar Hijra (corresponding to April 24, 1919 A. D.), we left for our destination in the south. The Sipah Salar directed his small army to proceed with all possible speed towards Gardez. The army had been divided into three sectors, apart from the Kabul force, which was to stay at its post in Gardez. Our equipment, too, was much below the scale commensurate with the great task entrusted to us. The Sipah Salar decided to reach Gardez with all possible haste and, until the arrival of a regular force from the centre, to keep himself busy by circulating messages of independence among the tribes, in order to mobilize the people for the sacred cause which lay ahead.

We bade farewell to our father, uncle, and other members of our family. My mother was very much upset to see her three sons leaving for the front. She tried to suppress her feelings and keep back her tears, but failed. At last, with tear-filled eyes, she kissed us one by one, and with great effort said: "May God protect you from all mishaps. I hope to see you coming back as victors and never as vanquished." I still remember her burning look, her tearful eyes and her brave message.

We left the Capital at the head of our small force and while wending our way through the city, people from all sides surrounded us, praying for our success and safe return. Young enthusiastic among them came forward to kiss the stirrups of the Sipah Salar's horse. They accompanied us until we had practically left the outskirts of the city.

We reached Charasiab on the first night, Kolangar on the second, and Gardez on the third. People rushed out of the villages and hamlets and joyfully encircled us. The young, with rapt attention, listened to the message of the Sipah Salar, recalling the days when their national leaders used to embark on similar missions, while the elders looked at the Sipah Salar with wistful admiration.

When the Sipah Salar was about to bid them farewell, the crowds recited the *azan* (call to prayer)—a custom reminiscent of holy wars. Even well away from the scene, we could hear the full-throated *takbirs*, *Allah-o-Akbar* (God is Great). At some places, people were puzzled at the sight of such a small force setting forth to confront the British, the mightiest power of its time. The Sipah Salar told them that though they would soon be joined by a larger force, the successful accomplishment of the mission depended entirely on the co-operation and whole-hearted response of the nation. He used to elaborate on the necessity and the glory of national independence. Those simple, lucid but fervent utterances of the Sipah Salar worked miracles and met with an enthusiastic response, which cannot be described by words. Many young men volunteered to join the force, but the Sipah Salar dissuaded them by saying that they should rather prepare themselves for the task lying ahead and await his next call.

Already great and still growing fast was the psychological effect of our march. From Charasiab to Gardez welled up the cry of *jihad* (holy war) for the liberation of the sacred soil from foreign domination.

It was about sunset when we arrived at the Bala Hissar of Gardez. Flags fluttered over the lofty ramparts of the historic fortress and on the cemetery of martyrs. What an inspiring sight! Greeted by the garrison with the usual salute to the accompaniment of bugles and trumpets, the Sipah Salar retired to the Bala Hissar. With his mind turned to the pulse of the people, he set to work that same night. He knew that success depended entirely on the people of the Southern Province. If they heard and understood properly the call of independence,

and laid aside their tribal and domestic differences and mutual jealousies, the achievement of the great national goal would not be very difficult. He also knew that any delay in making the *jihad* a living force, might be exploited by the enemy.

Proclamations were written the same night, exhorting the chieftains and *maliks* of Mangal, Tutikhel, Jadran, Ahmadzai and Jaji tribes, as well other tribes of the southern region, too numerous to count, to lay aside their dissensions and rivalries in deference to the holy war of independence. The tribal chiefs and other notables and influential people were also asked to come to Gardez with their armed fighters.

After these proclamations were despatched, the Sipah Salar set about to procure money and foodstuffs and to ascertain the reaction of the local as well trans-border independent tribes. We were busy until the late hours of night.

The dawn of the third day saw the gathering of the tribes in armed groups. In fact, the tribes were vying with one another in responding to the national cause.

Then the Sipah Salar set about organizing *jirgahs* (tribal gatherings), a traditional practice followed in times of common peril and national emergency. Apart from mobilization of combatants, and storing of arms and foodstuffs, a vital achievement of these *jirgahs* was that the tribes formulated and adopted agreed lines of thought and action. Unfortunately, internal animosities, stemming from village loyalties and not often fomented by external intrigues, had been a chronic problem which normally defied solution. The solution, even if temporary, was contingent on bringing home to the people the gravity of the situation and the common danger. Knowing as he did that the people were willing and eager to undergo sacrifices for the sake of freedom, the Sipah Salar was attempting to channel this characteristic surge of national sentiment to a fruitful end. In this task he succeeded marvellously. At every

jirgah, he stressed the need for national accord. At these *jirgahs* all took a solemn oath that until the end of the *jihad* they would lay aside all their differences and animosities. These deliberations took a whole week. The agreed decision of the tribes of the Southern Province was announced to the trans-border independent tribes as well. In the meantime, reinforcements arrived from Kabul, and Gardez soon became the nerve centre of the Afghan army and tribal levies.

After the successful conclusion of these deliberations, the Sipah Salar began to draw up plans for action. My brother, Sirdar Shah Mahmud Khan, myself and the army officers, who had come from Kabul recently worked hard for several consecutive days and nights until, under the Sipah Salar's guidance, we finalized the plans.

Our daily intelligence reports disclosed that Britain was bringing fresh troops to the Thal area. The news of these fresh arrivals was being circulated in various ways to the southern as well as trans-border independent tribal areas with a view to overawing them. Strict control was imposed on the routes between the southern and independent tribes, especially after the British Government came to know that the *jihad* appeals were producing an undeniable effect on the attitude of the tribes. These strict controls and measures, however, did in no way deter the tribal chiefs from proffering active support to the *jihad* movement, masterminded by the Sipah Salar. Nor had other British intrigues any noticeable effect on the tribal attitude in the southern region. It should surprise no one that, instead of stifling, the enemy had indirectly intensified the traditional love of freedom, even after forty years of semi-independence.

The Sipah Salar decided to assign our fighting forces to three fronts :—

- (1) Khost, a central position, lying opposite Thal, where the British had concentrated their main forces ;
- (2) Jaji, facing Tootgai and Kurram ;

(3) Urgoon, overlooking Waziristan and the British military establishment in that area.

It was decided that the Sipah Salar should have his headquarters at Khost, which would enable him to supervise and control the two other sectors, and advance on Thal, the principal centre of British strength in that area. Sirdar Shah Mahmud was assigned the second front and myself the third. We were required to start at once to our assigned sectors and work in accordance with Sipah Salar's plans and instructions.

This news, especially at such a critical time, was of much concern to all of us. But the Sipah Salar, who knew fully the pulse and character of his freedom-loving countrymen and possessed of the high words of his military regiments and tribal levies, was not in the least dismayed. He invited all of them to assemble near the Bala Hissar next day to learn his plan and object, providing to throw some light on the treason of that national traitor. Orders were issued to the tribal chiefs and wazirs as well as to the military units to assemble on the grounds next to the citadel of Bala Hissar, where the Sipah Salar would address them and where he intended to inspect the military units, rifles, bows and examine their arms and ammunition. Then after looking into their needs, he would allow them to proceed to the different fronts as already had been agreed upon.

Next day at dawn, the military flag was seen fluttering high among the immovable cedar towers. The regular as well as the irregular units had all assembled on the military grounds to hear the historic speech of their national leader. The tribal chiefs and the elderly people had taken up their positions in

. 3 .

THE GRAND ASSEMBLY

At this time when we were busy with preparations and making important decisions, news arrived that one of the influential figures, whose name I do not wish to disclose, had turned traitor, and was bent on creating trouble for us. By circulating all sorts of rumours and false news, he was trying to sow seeds of dissension and discord among our ranks.

This news, especially at such a critical time, was of much concern to all of us. But the Sipah Salar, who knew fully the pulse and character of his freedom-loving countrymen and was aware of the high morale of his military regiments and tribal levies, was not in the least dismayed. He invited all of them to assemble near the Bala Hissar next day to learn his aim and object, promising to throw some light on the treason of that national traitor. Orders were issued to the tribal chiefs and *maliks* as well as to the military units to assemble on the grounds next to the citadel of Bala Hissar, where the Sipah Salar would address them and where he intended to inspect the military units, tribal levies and examine their arms and ammunition. Then after looking into their needs, he would allow them to proceed to the different fronts as already had been agreed upon.

Next day at dawn, the military flag was seen fluttering high among the innumerable tribal banners. The regular as well as the irregular units had all assembled on the military grounds to hear the historic speech of their national leader. The tribal chiefs and the elderly people had taken up their positions in

front of their respective units, followed by drum-beaters and military bands. At this time the Sipah Salar, dressed in a plain military uniform, appeared on the scene and was hailed enthusiastically. Reciprocating their warm greetings and accepting their salutes, he rose to make his speech. This was the first time in the history of the Southern Province that such a large number of people had gathered together to listen to a national hero.

The Sipah Salar opened his speech by reciting a verse from the Holy Koran and by praising God Almighty for His kindness and bounties. After explaining the blessings and necessity of national independence, he drew their attention to their responsibilities in achieving this national end. He informed them of their sacred duty to the country and countrymen, inciting them to rise unitedly in the face of the common danger now threatening their very existence. He narrated the past history of the country, explaining in vivid terms the heroic struggles which their ancestors had always put up in defence of their motherland. He also dwelt upon the innumerable sacrifices the Afghans made during the last century to uphold their national honour and preserve their independence. He drew in a clear sketch some of the sanguine scenes of battle, paying tribute to the memories of those who willingly laid down their precious lives in defence of their hearth and home.

This speech and the heroic words of the Sipah Salar had the desired effect and worked a miracle. A new life was infused and the audience was so moved that on all sides one could hear the *takbirs* of *Allaho Abkar*, which rent the air. Their religious sentiments and freedom-loving feelings had been aroused to the highest pitch. It appeared that they had a smouldering fire in their breasts which needed only a spark to ignite. With one voice and solemn oaths and pledges they promised to follow their leader through thick and thin, and not to rest until the national goal was reached. The tribal chiefs assured their leaders that they would join the expedition with their own men, fully equipped with arms and ammunition

and having with them sufficient foodstuffs. Sardar Shah Mahmud Khan and myself, standing close to the Sipah Salar, were witnessing with keen interest the surging wave of humanity and were very much impressed by the excitement and zeal, which they showed for the independence and honour of their country. The military units, during the course of all these demonstrations, appeared to be in full accord with their tribal brothers. They showed a firm determination and in keeping with the national honour and tradition of a valiant race, expressed their willingness to sacrifice everything in order to uphold their national prestige and honour.

The speech of the Sipah Salar ended among the deafening cheers and shouts of all those who had assembled there. If, previously, there had been any discord or bickering among the tribes, now all was hushed; and, with the speech, their dissensions and misunderstandings and mutual jealousies also came to an end.

It is rather difficult to describe faithfully this touching scene and to explain the fiery response and feelings of those who had assembled there. Everyone seemed desirous to be first in taking an active part in the national cause and to lay down his life in order to safeguard the honour of his motherland. In my opinion this very devotion of the Afghans has always been instrumental in leading them on and helping them to enjoy a free and honourable life. At no time in their long and checkered history did they possess adequate modern materials of war, but it was their lofty ideals, and especially their love of freedom, that kept them immune from all those calamities and disgraces which have been the lot of some of the more advanced nations of the world.

. 4 .

PRELIMINARY STEPS

In accordance with the plan made by the Sipah Salar, the forces assembled at Gardez were to proceed towards three different sectors.

The first was to take its position at Khost, which was to be turned into the military headquarters of all the forces operating in the southern section. This was to be under the direct command of the Sipah Salar himself. The strategical importance of this post was great, as it lay close to Thal, where the enemy was concentrating its forces. Another important factor which necessitated stationing large forces at Khost was its favourable position between the two other sectors, Jaji and Urgoon. From his base at Khost the Sipah Salar was in a position to learn quickly all that was going on at the other two fronts and to despatch prompt reinforcements and necessary instructions if needed. Moreover, Khost lay on the direct line of communication with Gardez, from where it was possible to have easy and quick contact with the Central Government. The link with Kabul via Gardez was considered very essential for the successful operation of war.

The second sector Jaji faced two important strategical enemy posts—Tootgai and Kurram. From there it was easy for the Afghan commander to keep a vigilant watch over the movements of the enemy forces and to protect the pass leading into the Jaji country.

The third front was Urgoon, facing Waziristan. It lay close to Wana and other British cantonments in this sector. According

to the plan the military units that had come from Kabul were to join hands with the tribal levies of Mangals, Jadrans and others, and were to co-operate with the first front under the direct leadership of the Sipah Salar. Necessary instructions were despatched to each sector and the commanders were supplied with necessary maps of the region wherein they would operate. On Thaur 24 (May 14), Sirdar Shah Mahmud Khan and myself, at the head of a small detachment of the Royal Cavalry, left for our respective posts. We had to carry our goods and war materials by pack mules, ponies and horses, as no other means of transportation was available. At this time these sectors were not even linked with the capital either by telephone or telegraph. The only means of communication available was by heliograph or pony express.

I reached Urgoon, my assigned post, after a difficult journey of two days. The three military units stationed there came out to give me a warm reception. There I had to attend immediately to two important problems. First and foremost was to look after the needs of the military units already quartered in that sector ; the second was to establish direct communication with the trans-border Waziri tribes and win them over to our side. I had little difficulty in the implementation of the first part of my scheme. Maps and other necessary materials, which I had brought with me, together with written instructions given by the Sipah Salar, were all placed at their disposal. Then I had full discussion with the military officers now placed under my charge as to the measures to be adopted. This done, each one of them was assigned a specific duty.

I then turned to the second part of my programme, establishing direct communication with the trans-border tribes, and persuading them to come to our help with their contingents. I was pleased to learn that these tribes, who had already promised their whole-hearted help to the Sipah Salar, were now coming in large numbers from all sides to our help, fully equipped with their own weapons and carrying their foodstuffs,

It was a source of great pleasure and gratification to find that these people had forgotten their mutual jealousies and strifes, and had determined to fight shoulder to shoulder with their Afghan brothers against their common foe. They were very much excited and were impatient to get instructions and proceed to the front. Assigning a post to each tribe, they were allowed to march and occupy their post. These arrangements and inspections took no less than a week.

I had now time to attend to other pressing matters, especially to the other trans-border tribes. Letters and messages were sent to their chiefs and *maliks*, calling on them to come and co-operate with us in this holy war. Meanwhile, the British too were not idle, nor were they slow at counter-propaganda. With the vast resources at their command, they were trying their best to nullify our schemes and frustrate our plans. I knew that they had more experience and information regarding the locality and about the people who lived there. Sometimes news would reach us that the enemy was digging in all along the frontier, picquets were being strengthened, and large forces were being concentrated at Thal. I also learned that huge sums of money and propaganda material were being freely distributed among these independent tribes, attempting to make them fight against us. When this effort failed, the British brought pressure on the tribes, forcing them to remain aloof from the impending struggle. The enemy were also making every effort to rekindle old feuds and stir up jealousies and animosities among the tribes. Those among them, whom they could not purchase by gold, were threatened with reprisals and punitive measures for any step they might take against the British.

These reports could in no way dishearten me or my brave companions, rather pluck and determination prevailed, and our allies increased in number when the hour to strike approached. I had put my full confidence in God and depended on His kindness and the firm determination of my own countrymen. This trust, I need hardly say, was not in vain. Barely a week had passed when the chiefs of Mahsood, Waziri, Ahmadzai, Kabul

Khail, and other famous tribes of the region began to arrive at our camp with their contingents. These people, who had been fighting for their freedom all through history, fully knew what an alien rule meant for them. From all sides they began to pour in, promising whole-hearted support and co-operation. Their religious zeal and patriotic sentiments reminded me of an old Persian saying, which I had learned when I was a boy : "Adverse circumstances cannot change the innermost character of a brave and freedom-loving people. No power on earth can suppress the feelings and aspirations of a living nation, for these traits have been ingrained in them from childhood and have now become part and parcel of their very nature."

During the discussions that followed, no one seemed to differ fundamentally ; some slight differences concerning the procedures were decided by casting votes. During the course of these discussions, lasting for two hours, we arrived at some important decisions. One of them was that before launching an all-out assault on the enemy posts, it would be advisable to contact the militia forces stationed at Wana, Wutakhail, Ashpana, and Khybera, informing them of our aim and object, while appealing at the same time to their religious feelings and national sentiments, and calling upon them to rise *en masse* in support of their co-religionists and compatriots. Notices were written and distributed freely among these people, exciting in them the will to take up arms and drive the British, the aliens, out from their sacred soil. One of the leaflets read : "My countrymen ! This is a war of independence. The Afghan Government has declared a religious war. The honour of the nation is at stake. You are our co-religionist and Afghan brothers. The time of trial has arrived. We look to you to come to our assistance and take part in this struggle of national deliverance."

Now the question arose as to how could we distribute these posters and pamphlets among the trans-border militia ? Fortunately, the tribal chiefs of their own accord volunteered themselves and came forward to offer their services, promising to carry out this onerous task. It is indeed to their credit that

Neither unity of action at the Centre, nor at
local level. Khost, Paudhal, Daka working
independent. Similarly Khost, Jaji or Uxgoon each
working on its own

21

they performed this dangerous job most honestly and extremely competently, and were later able to return safely to the assigned posts.

At last the time arrived to strike. Having satisfied ourselves concerning these preliminary measures, we decided to launch an attack on the following morning against the British post at Wana. This caught the enemy by surprise; everywhere their lines of defence were pierced and they were forced to fall back. During this melee, a band of militia, who had declared for us, charged the British fort, and after a hot contest, succeeded in occupying one of the turrets, commanding the field of battle. Now they were in a position to fire down upon the British stationed within the confines of the fort. Six of the British officers were killed on the spot, while the rest took to their heels. At this time the forces under my command were also able to reach the outskirts of the fort to fight side by side with their Pashtoon brothers. Terrible hand-to-hand conflict took place. During the ensuing fight, the militia could be seen cutting right and left, cheering loudly and calling on their comrades to come to their aid. After a fierce contest, lasting for hours, the British garrison gave way, suffering heavy losses in men and material. Wana was taken and the Afghan flag was seen fluttering from the top of one of its turrets. //

With the fall of Wana, the demoralized British garrison, their number now greatly diminished, fled helter-skelter. At this point a group of some two hundred young militia-men, accompanied by their officers and a captured Indian doctor, came to me bringing with them arms and ammunition which they had taken from the enemy. From their appearance and the fire in their eyes one could see that they were proud of being Afghans devoted to the cause of their motherland. Their national feelings and aspirations were worthy of every praise and admiration. I could see no difference between their emotions and those of my followers. This proved explicitly that they were members of one and the same nation, and the enemy, in spite of its vast resources, best efforts and intense propaganda,

had failed to sever them permanently from their parental stock or to sow among them seeds of dissension.

I sent a batch of these young and enthusiastic patriots, at their own request, directly to Kabul. They were not in the least worried or anxious for their wives and children whom they had left behind and whom they knew would be held answerable for their desertion.

The British, seeing the surging waves of nationalism on all sides, decided to fall back as soon as possible to avoid capitulation. They vacated the military posts of Watakhel, Ishpana and Khybera, and set fire to buildings, military installations and ammunition dumps. After a forced march lasting for several hours they took refuge in the fort of Miranshah.

I sent the report of this brilliant victory to the Capital as well as to the Commander-in-Chief of the Afghan forces in Khost. The Sipah Salar, after getting this news, immediately sent Daula Khan to my sector with instructions to hand over the charge and administration of Wana and all the other occupied posts to him. After complying with this order, I proceeded to meet the Sipah Salar in Khost. These military outposts remained in our possession for a period of more than six months, long after the hostilities came to an end and normal relations were restored between British India and Afghanistan.

. 5 .

FALL OF THAL

The Sipah Salar, meanwhile, was feverishly active at his own front. Encouraging news from that sector poured in daily and all were pleased to learn that he, at the head of a considerable force composed of regulars and tribal levies, was heading towards Thal. As already stated, the British had concentrated their main forces at this important strategical point and were making concerted efforts to enter Afghanistan from this side with an all-out assault on Khost, the headquarters of Afghan forces in the southern region. The Sipah Salar had fully realized that his only chance of success lay in speed and immediate action in gaining a swift victory. Further delay, he rightly judged, would be suicidal. But to carry out this bold plan expeditiously in the face of the defensive measures taken by the enemy was not an easy task.

The British after their bitter experience at Wana, were in no mood to be taken by surprise once more. To defend this important military post various strict precautionary measures were taken. The place was strongly fortified; heavy guns and many of the latest weapons guarded the approach; while reinforcements were pouring in daily. What made the British even more cautious was the news that most of the trans-border tribes were openly making demonstration for their Afghan brothers, and were assembling in large numbers with the avowed intention of active participation in the impending struggle with their brethren in arms.

On the ^{26th} memorial morning of May 26, 1919, the assault was delivered with full force, the Sipah Salar himself assuming the

chief command of the whole army. While the route over which he and his men were to advance was supposed to be totally unfit for the passage of large bodies of troops and heavy guns, nothing could deter them from their bold plan. The Afghan forces, after crossing the border, struck straight for the British post at Speenwam, lying midway between Thal and Miranshah. Everywhere they met withering fire from the enemy line. British planes flew overhead, bombing Afghan forces, strafing our guns and ammunition stores and dropping high explosives. But nothing could stop the surging waves of the patriots. On they came, advancing slowly but steadily. The post of Speenwam was taken after a hot and bloody contest, the British fleeing in panic left large quantities of arms and ammunition behind their line of retreat. The Sipah Salar, entering the town triumphantly, hoisted the Afghan flag, and another chief military post fell into our hands.

The victorious Afghans were now only twenty miles from Thal. They knew that delay would be dangerous. Without taking rest or consolidating their position, they pushed on towards Thal with all speed. Shots and shrapnel from enemy positions made huge gaps in the Afghan lines, but these were quickly filled and the onward movement continued as planned. The enemy struck with panic, deserted their posts in the wildest confusion, leaving the battlefield strewn with dead and dying. The way to Thal now lay open and the Sipah Salar, entering it triumphantly on May 27, 1919, unfurled the Afghan flag from the top of one of the houses.

Meanwhile, on the other fronts, the war had continued very satisfactorily. Sirdar Shah Mahmud, commanding the Kurram sector, after inflicting some crushing blows on the enemy, had achieved outstanding victories. He had been able to pierce the British defensive lines at various places, and was able to establish direct communication with Thal and other major advanced post in southern area.

The news of Sirdar Mohammed Nadir Khan's triumphant march into Thal, together with the Afghan achievements on other



*Sardar Mohammed Nadir Khan
Sipah Salar (Commander-in-Chief)
(Later, King Mohammed Nadir Shah)*

sectors, spread like wildfire through the length and breadth of the tribal area. These tribes, encouraged by our victories, were now making preparations on a much larger scale with a view toward joining us in a general advance all along the frontier. The Afridis and other tribes, who had joined the British militia, now rose in a body. Deserting their ranks and taking with them their weapons, they came to the Sipah Salar to make their submission.

In Kandahar, Afghan forces under the leadership of Sirdar Abdul Kudus Khan Etimadudola, were busy making preparations to attack the British post at Chaman. Meanwhile, at Speenboldak the British forces had gained some initial successes. They had besieged a small Afghan force, who, receiving no help from any side, put a heroic resistance and fought to the bitter end without a thought of surrender. After their stock of ammunition ran out, these patriots came out to fight with their bayonets, until all of them were either killed or severely wounded.

When the news of this heroic resistance and unprecedented sacrifice reached Kandahar and the tribal area, a fire of hatred and extreme vengeance flared up in the heart of every Afghan. All, including women, prepared to avenge their brothers. *Jirgas* were held all over the country, while preparations were made to recruit a large army.

In the Eastern Province Saleh Mohammed, the Afghan Commander, had fallen back due to a severe wound in one of his legs, and this unexpected retreat emboldened the British to advance rapidly. Fortunately, favourable changes soon took place on this front. Large numbers of tribesmen had gathered together to check the further advance of the enemy. At this time, when the Afghans were gaining victories and holding the upper hand in nearly all sectors, the Sipah Salar issued a proclamation, promising general amnesty to the Indian soldiers, Muslims as well non-Muslims, who had been forced to support the British in their imperialistic designs. At the same time they were assured of honourable treatment in case they surrendered or fell into our hands. Orders were also issued to the Afghan

soldiers to respect the lives, honour and property of the Indians who had already been taken prisoners or might be captured later on.

Promulgation of this order had a far-reaching effect both at home and abroad. Messages of deep sympathy and appreciation of sincere feelings towards our neighbours were received from Indian nationalists as well as from the chiefs of trans-border tribes.

In the reports despatched to the Capital by the Sipah Salar, the services of individuals in the military units as well as of the tribal levies, and the part played by the trans-border tribes in the liberation of the country were fully mentioned. I, too, sent my reports directly to Kabul in order that the services of those who played prominent parts in this war should be fully appreciated and rewarded. I am glad to say that royal *firman*s were received, which I read aloud in the presence of all, so that the recipients might be publicly honoured and respected.

. 6 .

BEGINNING OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

Our advancing columns continued their progress on all sectors and penetrated deep into the British line. They occupied the military post of Tootgai and the fertile valley of Kurram with its adjacent country-side. The strategical post of Speenwam, an important communication link between Thal and Miranshah, had already been taken by troops led by Sipah Salar in person. The town of Thal and the country around it, with huge quantities of British arms and ammunition, had fallen into our hands on May 27. The British militia, composed mainly of local people, because of their tribal affinities and national sentiments, had deserted their ranks *en masse* and were received by us with open arms. Tribal flags were seen fluttering on all sides. Everyone came forward to join us in this crusade. From the foot of the Khojak Pass to Waziristan, and from the Khyber right up to Chitral in the north the whole country was in ferment and excitement.

The British, finding the situation extremely delicate and detrimental to their interests, decided to end the war and come to terms with the Afghans. Negotiations started and the Viceroy of India, through Sirdar Abdur Rahman, Afghan Envoy in India, sent a message to King Amanullah, asking for steps to be taken immediately to stop hostilities and to send representatives to negotiate peace.

King Amanullah, from these peace-feelers, realized fully that the British set-backs on the border, coupled with tribal uprisings all along the frontier and riots and demonstrations of the Indian nationalists throughout Northern India, who wanted to liberate

their motherland, had made the British position extremely insecure and difficult, forcing them to sue for peace. He also knew that the rapid advance of Afghan forces into the British territories and the loss of some important military posts and cantonments, had created turmoil both in tribal area and throughout India, and had practically crippled the administration, making it impossible for the British to continue the war. But the Afghan King had no aggressive designs; his sole object was to see his country free from foreign domination. On being assured that the British were ready to accept his rightful demand, he showed his willingness to stop hostilities and to settle the differences by peaceful means.

Sirdar Abdur Rahman went back to India to inform the Viceroy that by this war the Afghans harboured no aggressive designs. They only wanted to see their country free, so that it might take its rightful place in the community of nations. It was explicitly pointed out that if the British acceded to this just demand and accepted the complete independence of Afghanistan, both in internal and external affairs, the Afghans were ready to lay down their arms and refrain from shedding further blood; but if on the other hand they still insisted on pursuing their old imperialistic policy in Afghanistan, then the war would be followed to its bitter end, regardless of consequences.

The Viceroy, who was anxious to see the hostilities ceased at the earliest possible opportunity, hailed the suggestion, promising to accept the complete independence of Afghanistan. King Amanullah, on receiving the news, issued orders for the cessation of hostilities, and sent Ali Ahmad Khan, the Governor of Kabul, to Rawalpindi to negotiate peace.

As a result of this conference the British accepted the complete independence of Afghanistan. The contracting parties further agreed that after six months delegations would be sent to Mussorie, an Indian hill-station, to draw up a treaty of friendship and discuss the resumption of normal relations between the two countries.

. 7 .

THE ARMISTICE AND ITS EFFECTS

I was at this time in Waziristan making preparations on a larger scale for a second assault on British fortifications. The Waziris from all over the country voluntarily and with great joy began pouring in and in every way showed their readiness to participate in the war. The soldiers were also busy looking to their immediate needs, before launching a flank attack on the British line. The morale of all ranks was excellent, and all were excited and impatient to receive the orders for attack. Everyone was confident as to the outcome of the impending conflict, and all were looking forward to winning fresh laurels on the battlefield. It was at such a time when everyone was overflowing with national sentiment, news arrived that the important military post of Thal had fallen into our hands. All came to me to express their joy and tender their heart-felt felicitations. Following their traditional custom, they fired into the air and danced with shouts of happiness. At this time news of skirmishes between our forces and those of the enemy was being received from all along the frontier. The rattling of guns and the cannonade of heavy artillery could be heard from long distances. We at our post were impatient to get orders from the Sipah Salar, who was then at Thal, for an all-out assault on the British line. At the same time the news of Shah Mahmud's successes at his front kept our spirits very high, and we wanted to show our mettle too. It was at such a time, when everyone was greatly excited and was ready for action, that I got a letter from the Sipah Salar reading:

"At the express request of the British Government we have agreed to the cessation of hostilities. The Afghan

peace delegation, headed by Ali Ahmad Khan, the Governor of Kabul, is on its way to Rawalpindi. We are confident as to the outcome of these negotiations. We are sure that the British will have to recognize the complete independence of our country. You are, therefore, advised to withdraw your forces from the advanced positions and wait for further instructions."

The Sipah Salar in his letter to the Capital had shown his willingness to cease hostilities and not to make any further advance, but he had emphatically pointed out that until and unless the British had not accepted officially the complete independence of Afghanistan he was not in favour of ordering the forces under his command to retire from their posts so recently occupied.

The Sipah Salar had advised us not to make any fresh incursion into the British territory, but to be on the alert for any emergency. He had also instructed me to visit him at Khost immediately to discuss some important issues. To comply with this order, I asked my subordinates to refrain from further advance. Then taking with me a few of the royal body-guards, I left for Khost. When I was on the point of coming out of the cantonment, soldiers and tribesmen all came to me, requesting that I should make the Sipah Salar agree to resume hostilities, and permit them to march ahead into the enemy's line.

I found the Sipah Salar encamped at Dargai, some twelve miles from Khost. After paying my respects and kissing his hands in keeping with the Afghan custom, I submitted a complete report of the situation of the front under my command. At the same time I expressed the excitement and the feelings of the tribesmen and soldiers, who were impatient for the resumption of hostilities. The Sipah Salar himself was not very optimistic as to the outcome of negotiations that were being carried out at this time with the British at Rawalpindi. He was apprehensive lest this might be a military trick by the British to lull the excitement of the tribes and persuading them to disperse and return to their homes ; and after they were gone, to take advantage of the

situation and refuse to accede to the demand of full independence for Afghanistan. It would be then not so easy to mobilize the tribesmen and organize them to fight over again.

I stayed with the Sipah Salar for three days, and then under his instructions left for Chamkani. News had arrived that all was not well there. It was quite apparent that news of any disturbance, howsoever insignificant, at such a crucial period could not be uninjurious to our cause, and the enemy would certainly avail himself of the slightest opportunity. This was the chief reason behind my being asked to go to Chamkani immediately. On reaching my destination, I had a discussion with the people. God be thanked, I was able to solve their differences amicably.

A few days later, Sirdar Shah Mahmud and I were summoned to Khost. Unfortunately, at this time cholera was raging in the district and the Sipah Salar had shifted his headquarters to Matoon. It was here that we had the honour to meet him. Though the epidemic had by this time spread far and wide, affecting nearly every village in the area, yet the Sipah Salar, ignoring his personal safety, was moving from place to place, encouraging the afflicted and sympathizing with the bereaved. He would not listen to the doctor who advised him emphatically not to take the risk by mixing with the people of the affected area as cholera was extremely contagious and dangerous. Fortunately, the epidemic was of short duration and what might have been one of our chief difficulties in carrying out our war operations to a successful end soon subsided.

At this time news arrived that the Rawalpindi Conference had been successfully concluded and that the British after a hard wrangle had recognized the complete independence of Afghanistan both in internal and external affairs, and that the contracting parties had agreed to send their representatives to Mussorie six months later to finalize a treaty of friendship and perpetual peace between the two countries.

This was indeed very happy news and was received with much relief by all sections of the people. Our long-cherished desires for the independence of our motherland was now taking

practical shape. Our beloved country, after living forty long years under foreign surveillance, was now emerging as an independent State, and was forging ahead to occupy an honourable place among the free nations of the world.

Our joy knew no bounds. Indeed it is beyond my pen to depict faithfully the emotions of the people at this stage. The shackles that had held us fast and in bondage for forty years were now broken into pieces. The brave sons of the soil, following in the foot-steps of their heroic ancestors, who had played their part in the defence of the country and who had proved their mettle on many a field of battle, at Ghazni, Ghor, Balkh, Bamian, Kabul and Gardez, were now exerting themselves to shake off the foreign yoke and be masters of their own destiny. They, who from cradle onwards, had listened to the brave words and deeds of their glorious fathers, together with their sacrifices on the fields of battle, from the Khyber to the Bolan Pass, had now been aroused and were turning a new page in their history.

A few days later, King Amanullah sent Mohammed Ibrahim Khan Barakzai, the Minister of Justice, to Khost with royal *firman*s and letters of appreciation address to the Sipah Salar and those who had taken an active part in the war of independence and had co-operated with the Sipah Salar. Ibrahim Khan read the royal *firman*s aloud in the presence of a large gathering and then distributed the honours among the deserved on behalf of the King, and congratulated them for their brave deeds and inestimable service to the country. He concluded his speech by telling us that as peace had been restored, there was no further need to retain the military posts taken from the enemy, and that in keeping with the terms of the truce, these should be evacuated. He then requested that Sipah Salar, under instructions from the King, to proceed to Kabul with the tribal leaders and his victorious army, where preparations were being made on a grand scale to receive them. In keeping with the royal orders, our forces handed over the occupied posts to the British, and then we all left for Gardez on our way to Kabul.

8.

BACK TO KABUL

After staying for a few days at Gardez and setting everything in order, the Sipah Salar, in compliance with royal instructions, left the city on his way to Kabul, entrusting the civil as well as the military administration of the district to me.

In Kabul the Sipah Salar and his party were given a royal reception. Thousands of people from all parts of the country had gathered together to welcome the man and his companions who had so faithfully and brilliantly served their motherland and had been able to achieve outstanding victories at Thal, Kurram and Waziristan. Congratulations were received from all sides, flowers were showered on them and songs were sung to the accompaniment of the national dance.

King Amanullah was not slow in acknowledging the immense services and innumerable sacrifices of Sirdar Mohammed Nadir Khan and his valiant brothers. He had convened a grand assembly, composed of high ranking military and civil officers, members of the Cabinet, nobles and chiefs of the country, elders and *maliks* of the tribes. In this huge national gathering, the first of its kind in Afghan history, the names of those who had taken a prominent part in the war of independence were read aloud. Then followed a complete report of the events that had taken place on the three sectors of war—Kandahar, Jalalabad and the Southern Province. Finally, distinctions, titles and honours were awarded to the deserving persons. The Sipah Salar for his valuable service, in addition to the exalted post of Commander-in-Chief, which he already had a few years ago, was appointed the

Minister of Defence and awarded the highest distinction honour of Ilmar-i-Aala. The King himself came forward to pin the medal on the Sipah Salar's coat. An order was issued to erect a column on the eastern side of the royal palace, just in front of the Ministry of Defence, in the middle of the road leading to Jalalabad, to commemorate the brilliant victory of Sirdar Mohammed Nadir Khan at Thal together with his innumerable services in liberating the country from foreign domination. Honours were also showered on all those who had taken part in this national cause. Shah Mahmud was made a general and awarded the medal of Sirdar-i-Aali, while the writer, who already held the rank of general, was also given the medal of Sirdar-i-Aali.

After a few months, at the invitation of the British Government, Sirdar Mahmud Tarzi, the well-known Afghan writer, diplomat and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, headed a delegation to India to negotiate a treaty of friendship. Unfortunately, Mahmud Tarzi, in discussions that followed, encountered difficulties, in particular the terms offered by the British were in no way acceptable to him. He, therefore, returned to Kabul without signing any treaty.

Shortly afterwards, a British Mission led by Sir Henry Dobbs arrived in Kabul. Negotiations were resumed and after heated discussions and much bickering, difficulties were surmounted, and a treaty of friendship was signed on November 22, 1922. The writer, as an adviser, also took part in these negotiations. The question of independence and good neighbourly relations thus solved and achieved, the Afghans, by the grace of God Almighty, had now time and opportunity to march ahead beside other free nations of the world.



King Amanullah
(1919-1929)

DELIVERANCE OF THE COUNTRY

A few years later, the Jirah Salar was appointed Chief Administrator of the Eastern Province, where his services were urgently needed. After the death of Amir Habibullah Khan, all was not going well in that district. It needed immediate reforms. The Jirah Salar now set to work in all earnest and in a very short time was able to discharge the duties entrusted to him to the entire satisfaction of all concerned. In addition, he visited the heads of the tribes, both from within the territory and from across the river, to work with him in doing away with tribal jealousies and to bring about a better understanding between the heads for the general benefit of the country and to promote

PART II DELIVERANCE OF THE COUNTRY

Soon after, the Jirah Salar became the Administrative Head of the Kaitum-Badakhshan Province, where corruption was rampant and people were harassed because of arrears of land revenue and other taxes, some legal and some illegal. Everyone from high to low had some complaints, but none knew how to express them. All the Government records and documents were in disorder. It was difficult to know who had to pay and how much. Due to sanctions of corrupt officials, all were suffering heavily and were unable to attend to their heretofore pursuits.

The Jirah Salar, who was already aware of what was going on in that corner of the country, now on his arrival set to work seriously with a view to undo the wrong and relieve the people of their distress and grievances. After careful scrutiny of the accounts and records, he found out how much each had to pay the Government,

DELIVERANCE OF THE COUNTRY

A few years later, the Sipah Salar was appointed Chief Administrator of the Eastern Province, where his services were urgently needed. After the death of Amir Habibullah Khan, all was not going well in that district. It needed immediate reforms. The Sipah Salar now set to work in all earnest and in a very short time was able to discharge the duties entrusted to him to the entire satisfaction of all concerned. In addition, he invited the heads of the tribes, both from within the country and from across the border, to work with him in doing away with tribal jealousies and internal feuds, and joining hands for the general welfare. All accepted the invitation and promised their whole-hearted support and co-operation.

Soon after, the Sipah Salar became the Administrative Head of the Katghan-Badakhshan Province, where corruption was rampant and people were hardpressed because of arrears of land revenue and other taxes, some legal and some illegal. Everyone from high to low had some complaints, but none knew how to redress them. All the Government records and documents were in disorder. It was difficult to know who had to pay and how much. Due to exactions of corrupt officials, all were suffering heavily and were unable to attend to their honest pursuits.

The Sipah Salar, who was already aware of what was going on in that corner of the country, now on his arrival set to work seriously with a view to undo the wrong and relieve the people of their distress and grievances. After careful scrutiny of the accounts and deciding how much each had to pay the Government,

a large portion of the arrears was forgiven, while the balance was to be paid by easy instalments. To convince the taxpayers of the honesty of his purpose and assure them that in no case and at no time they would be required to pay anything in addition to the present assessment, the Sipah Salar tore and burnt the records of arrears in their presence. One can easily understand the relief of the people who had been groaning under the tyrannies of tax-collectors for years. Those, who were forced to leave their homes to avoid the financial burden exacted by these cruel Government officials, now came back to their villages and once more took up their daily task with peace of mind. As result of these measures, within a short time the whole of the Province began to bloom and economic and agricultural conditions were immensely improved.

It was during these days that the Sipah Salar wrote his well-known book *A Guide to Katghan and Badakhshan*. Because of hard and incessant work both by day and night, ignoring his health and having no time for recreation, the Sipah Salar suffered heavily. This made him return to Kabul for a physical check-up and medical advice. Because of declining health, he at last decided to tender his resignation. Shortly afterwards, in 1924, he was appointed Afghan Ambassador in Paris. Soon ill-health coupled with differences with the Government compelled him to retire and recuperate in southern France.

In the meantime, I who had been given charge of the Southern Province having successfully discharged the work entrusted to me, returned to Kabul, where I was appointed the Commandant of the Royal Force. Shortly after news arrived that serious revolt, led by a *mullah* (alias the Lame Mulla) was in progress in the Southern Province. As the gravity of the situation increased, the whole province was involved in chaos and anarchy. Mohammed Wali Khan, the Minister of Defence (later Amanullah's Regent), who had been despatched with all haste to curb the rising and check the advance of the insurgents, who were marching on Kabul, was himself besieged at Gardez with

all forces at his command. On all sides the Royal forces met disaster after disaster, and were beaten back with heavy losses. A famous regiment called "*Jan Fidda*" (those prepared to sacrifice their lives), composed of the best of Afghan soldiery, youth and chivalry, though fully equipped and well organized, was, due to the negligence and incompetency of its commander, Abdul Hamid Khan, cut to pieces and totally annihilated in a fight that took place in the Logar valley. The rebels, flushed with victory, advanced rapidly on their way to Kabul. The situation was extremely grave and the writer was asked to head an army and cope with it. In a severe engagement that took place at Karez Dervish, the insurgents meeting a crushing defeat hurriedly fell back. They were hotly pursued by the forces at my command and completely dispersed. This victory eased the situation immensely and peace was once more restored.

This achievement was fully appreciated by the newspapers of the day, and I do not think there is any need to go into details. The following year I had to leave for India to accompany my ailing father, who was going there for medical treatment. Unfortunately, he passed away while in India, and I brought his remains back to Afghanistan to be interred near the holy shrine of Mehtarlam, in Laghman. To add to my grief, I learned that the Sipah Salar was not faring well and that his eldest son, Mohammed Tahir, who had gone to France to continue his studies, had also passed away. The shock was too much for me to bear and I at once decided to leave for France to join my brother and share his sorrows. On reaching Paris, I was informed that my brother Sirdar Mohammed Hashim (previously Administrative Head of the Eastern Province, and then the Afghan Ambassador in Moscow) was already there. Our eldest brother, Sirdar Mohammed Aziz Khan, after finishing his assignment given by the Department of Education, had also decided to attend his ailing brother. Of the five brothers only Shah Mahmud Khan was now left behind at home. He was first appointed as a general in Badakhshan, then he was made the governor of the Eastern Province, and later on held

the post of deputy minister of Interior. He was also to look after our property and family members then living at the Capital.

King Amanullah, after his extensive tour of European countries, was by this time back in Kabul. It was at this time, when, like a bolt from the blue, word came that all was not well in Afghanistan; a serious uprising was in progress and the general condition of the country was rapidly deteriorating. To describe at length the causes of this upheaval and unrest is beyond the scope of these short memoirs. I will, therefore, confine myself to a few points, which to me as a soldier, appear rather significant. I will also make mention of the co-operation of our people that helped us a good deal in putting out the sparks of rebellion and restoring peace and order in the country.

BEGINNING OF UNREST IN THE COUNTRY

Shortly after Amanullah Khan came home from his European tour, the condition of the country began to deteriorate rapidly, and uprisings, some of very serious nature, took place in the Eastern Province, and later in Kohdaman, north of the Capital. Gradually the situation became worse and finally went out of control. A highwayman, Habibullah by name, nicknamed Bacha-i-Saqa (son of water-carrier), entered the capital in broad-day light at the head of his band of robbers. Occupying the throne, he declared himself king with the proud title of "Khadim-e-Deen" (Servant of Islam). We read again and again this heart-breaking news, published by English and French papers and could hardly believe all that was going on in our beloved country. Naturally we all were much worried about the sad plight of our motherland and countrymen, including the members of our family left behind in Kabul. But to the Sipah Salar, ill as he was and confined to bed, the news was a serious shock and made him even more restless. In a world of sorrow, far away from our homeland as well as from our nearest and dearest, we would sit together day and night to discuss the ways and means of helping our brethren in their distress. The ailment of the Sipah Salar, which was daily increasing, made us even more sad and nervous. It was at this time that we got the unexpected news that King Amanullah had abdicated in favour of his elder brother, Sirdar Inayatullah Khan, and had left for Kandahar in great haste. Sirdar Inayatullah Khan also could not maintain himself on the throne for more than three days and was forced to abdicate in favour of the brigand-chief, who was now in full possession

of Kabul, and with the help and cooperation of his fellow rebels and partisans, had ushered a reign of terror, unparalleled in the history of the country.

The Sipah Salar, who in spite of his delicate health kept a keen watch on what was happening in the country, now decided to act. One night, to our surprise, he invited all of us to his room. He was lying on his bed unable to raise his head. First of all he discussed with us the sad plight of our motherland, now in the grip of Bacha-i-Saqa, and then getting excited he said, "If this condition of our home-land lingers a little longer, it will certainly prove very disastrous to the independence of the country which has been achieved after innumerable sacrifices and much bloodshed. I cannot afford to live in peace and comfort here and listen to the heart-breaking news coming from Afghanistan. The political situation of the country is worsening day by day. I have decided to leave for my motherland without further delay. Perhaps I may be able to do something to alleviate the sad plight of my countrymen."

We could not agree with him, arguing that it was not possible for him to leave his bed and undergo the strain of such a long and tedious journey. But the Sipah Salar was adamant in his demand and would not listen to reason. Insisting on going home without delay, he emphatically said, "I know I won't live long, but to die for a noble cause is better than to die peacefully in bed. I would gladly bear the strain of the journey rather than sit here with hands folded. Besides, hearing this sad news from home has upset me completely. God forbid, if Afghanistan should lose its political identity, I would prefer death to such an ignoble life. To die in the lap of Afghan mountains for a noble cause is far better than leading a comfortable life here in this snug bed."

We realized that the Sipah Salar had made up his mind once and for all to leave for his motherland and he wanted to start on this long and tedious journey without further delay. Finding no more opposition to his decision, the Sipah Salar

set to work. He asked Sirdar Abdul Aziz Khan to stay behind looking after their family affairs and supervising the training of Sirdar Mohammed Zahir Khan and Sirdar Mohammed Daoud, who were then in France busy with their studies. We three, the Sipah Salar, Hashim Khan and myself, were to leave at once for Afghanistan. Sirdar Abdul Aziz insisted at length that he should also be permitted to accompany us and take part in the deliverance of the country, but this was denied him.

Before leaving, we decided to consult a doctor and get his advice as to the best means of taking the Sipah Salar with us to Afghanistan. No doctors would allow us to make such a venture, saying a little carelessness would certainly end in his death. The doctors declared that as he was suffering from an acute form of pleurisy, even a slight movement of the body might prove fatal. But the Sipah Salar would not listen to such advice. He asked his brothers to arrange for a visa without further delay. Sirdar Hashim Khan was instructed to meet the British Consul at Nice and get a transit visa, enabling us to pass through India on our way to Afghanistan. Sirdar Hashim Khan accordingly went to the British Consulate, and after an hour returned informing us of his failure. The British Consul had refused to grant a visa, pleading that Britain was following a policy of strict neutrality and non-interference in the civil war raging at present in Afghanistan. The Consul had promised to refer the case to the British Embassy in Paris and get proper instructions. The Sipah Salar then asked Sirdar Hashim Khan to proceed directly to Paris and get in touch with the British Ambassador. The next day Hashim Khan left for Paris and met the diplomatic representative of the British Government, who was fully informed of the political situation in Afghanistan, together with the abdication of King Amanullah and his brother Inayatullah Khan. The British Ambassador, insisting on the policy of non-interference of his Government, refused to give the visas. Sirdar Hashim Khan got excited and said emphatically, "Who asked you to interfere in our domestic affairs? It is up to the children of the soil to settle their differences and shape their destiny. I don't think the British

Government has a right not to permit us passing through India on our way to Afghanistan. In case you don't accede to this reasonable demand, we have to approach some other neighbouring State to let us pass through their territory. But this behaviour on your part would lead us to believe that you want to see our country perpetually involved in chaos and internecine war." Saying this with great excitement, Hashim Khan arose, taking his passports with him, and was on the point of leaving the Embassy. The British diplomat, seeing him in an angry mood, assured him of his sincerity, and promised to contact the Home Government by telegraph to get necessary instructions, which would be conveyed to us by the British Consul at Nice. Sirdar Hashim Khan, thanking him, said he would wait at Nice for a week for a favourable reply, failing which, he would take other steps to reach home. Hardly four days had passed, when we were informed that the British Foreign Office had agreed to give the necessary permission enabling us to reach home through British India.

. 11 .

HOMEWARDS

After taking these preliminary steps and having satisfied ourselves as to the validity of our passports and visas, we decided to leave for home *via* Bombay. Early in February 1929, we left Nice by train on our way to Marseilles. Next day we took the steamer *Kaiser-i-Hind* bound for Bombay. Unfortunately, Sipah Salar's health even at this time was very poor. He was too weak to leave his bed or even sit properly, and was running a high temperature. We did not know what to do or how to proceed further in such a state of affairs. The news from our homeland was meagre and contradictory and we did not know what was going to happen next. At this crisis we were denied the leadership and guidance of our brother, who, due to delicate health, could direct us no more. For hours, sometimes until midnight, I would sit all alone on the deck of the ship watching the waves, lost in distracting thoughts. The doctor of the ship, who was now looking after the health of the Sipah Salar was, like us, not very optimistic, and this naturally added to our worries and anxieties.

A Gloomy Night :

Once at midnight, when the stars looked bright and seemed to be playing with the huge surging waves below, and the ship was to reach Port Said next day, I accompanied by my elder brother, Sirdar Mohamed Hashim Khan, went to Sipah Salar's room to enquire about his health. On entering his compartment, we found the medical doctor sitting close to his bed, looking very much worried and tired. The Sipah Salar was not faring well and was in a serious condition. Lying in bed he was unable to

move, but we could see his eyes still flashing with energy. The doctor, seeing us in the room, got up from his seat and quietly walked out without saying a word. At this time we heard the shaking voice of the Sipah Salar saying : "I think my end is approaching. I wish you to bury my body, in keeping with Muslim rites, in one of the Islamic cities on the way. After leaving my remains at Port Said or any other part, I advise you not to break your journey but proceed homeward and exert yourself in quelling the uprising and extinguishing the flames of civil war which have engulfed our motherland. I will take my hopes and aspirations with me to the grave." Hearing these brave words from such a frail body, we could not hold back our feelings. With eyes full of tears we said, "In the gigantic task lying ahead we depend entirely on you. Without you we don't know how to cope with this difficult situation." The Sipah Salar listened to us quietly. At this hour of disappointment Sardar Hashim Khan took the Holy Quran from the table and began to pray in all earnest, beseeching God to come to our help. Tears began to flow down his cheeks. The Sipah Salar, listening quietly to what Hashim Khan had said, felt a bit stronger in mind and body and a little after fell into a deep sleep.

The Dawn of Hope :

I could not sleep that night because of anxieties. At dawn I got up and prayed. Then I left for Sipah Salar's room. On entering it, I found that the doctor and Sardar Hashim Khan were already there. My joy knew no bounds to see that the Sipah Salar was looking much better. All of us were surprised to see this sudden change in his health. The doctor assured me that there was no fever and that his heart was functioning normally, and there was absolutely no reason for worry. I prayed to God Almighty for His help and mercy. The Sipah Salar, seeing us in a joyful mood, said, "The prayers of last night, I think, have worked a miracle. I'm feeling much better today and had my breakfast with relish." We at once decided not to break the journey. Fortunately, thereafter, his health continued to show further signs of improvement. A few days before one, who could not move without being helped, now on reaching Aden, was able

to go ashore unaided. Hiring a cab, he went out to see the port city.

Meanwhile, French papers had published articles dealing with the political situation in Afghanistan, each having a different view. Some had pointed out that only the Sipah Salar had the ability to deliver his people from this dangerous position. Others had pointed out that the people would certainly elect this man to kingship once the country was relieved from the cruel clutches of the brigand-chief. Habibullah Tarzi, Afghan minister plenipotentiary in Paris, contradicting these rumours, had said, "The real object of the Sipah Salar is not to acquire the throne for himself, rather he wishes to put out the fire of animosity now raging in the country and to help his countrymen to get rid of this fratricidal war and the whirlpool of destruction."

In Marseilles, also, two of the French reporters had put some questions to the Sipah Salar while he was leaving for home as to his aim and object. Some wanted to know whether he was going to tender his submission to the brigand-chief, or would he help Amanullah to regain his throne. The Sipah Salar's answer was that his real object was service to the country and establishing peace and order. He could not see his motherland involved in a bloody conflict, nor was he prepared to offer the throne to anyone whom the people would not have as their ruler. He declared openly that after the upheaval subsided and peace was restored, the question of kingship would be solved by the general election of the people themselves. His share in such an election would not be more than that of an Afghan citizen, and he himself had no desire or ambition to be elected and would never aspire to have the throne for himself. As to Amanullah's return to the throne, he personally was not against him either now or at any other time, but it was up to the people to decide by casting their votes. In no case was he going to go against the wishes of the people.

When our ship arrived at Bombay, we were given an enthusiastic reception by Ahmad Jan Ettaimadi, Afghan Consul and some of our friends. We stayed in Bombay for two days at

the Afghan Consulate. Here we learned that the Bacha-Saqa had sent Sirdar Abdul Aziz Khan and Sirdar Ahmad Shah Khan to Paris, taking with them a special *firman* addressed to the Sipah Salar, requesting him to return to Afghanistan. We had no opportunity to meet these two gentlemen as they had sailed for Marseilles two days before our ship had reached Bombay.

We left for Peshawar by train. Happily at this time the Sipah Salar was fast recovering from his long illness. At each station on the way hundreds of people had come to receive us. At Lahore there was quite a large gathering. Zafar Ali Khan, Editor of the daily *Zamindar* met us, asking question after question of the type we had been asked while in France. The Sipah Salar gave him the same answers. On reaching Peshawar people from far and near, who were much concerned with the affairs in Afghanistan, had assembled in large numbers. They were very glad to meet us, so were we to see them. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, his brother Dr. Khan Sahib and all the tribal chiefs with Dr. Ghulam Mohammad Khan, Abdul Hakim Khan, Amanullah's Trade Agent in Peshawar, and Haji Imamuddin, Bacha-Saqa's Trade Agent, received us enthusiastically. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Dr. Ghulam Mohammad, before our arrival at Peshawar, had made some arrangements for our stay at the house of one of their friends. Unfortunately, at this time all of a sudden the illness of the Sipah Salar took a bad turn, causing us great anxiety. It was due chiefly to the exertion of the long journey, meeting so many people, discussing so many questions, and especially receiving bad news from Afghanistan. His temperature was high, forcing him once again to stay in bed.

On the first day of our arrival at Peshawar, one of the local police officers called on us, enquiring how Zafar Ali Khan had accompanied us as far as Peshawar, for his entry to that city was banned by the Government of India. The officer very politely approached the Sipah Salar to know whether Zafar Ali Khan had come out of his own accord or was travelling with the group with his permission and approval. The Sipah Salar said : "While at Lahore the Editor of the *Zamindar* expressed a wish to accompany

the party as far as Peshawar, and we accepted his request ignorant of the fact that he was not to travel to the Frontier without the permit of the Indian Government." The officer said that out of regard and respect for the Sipah Salar he was not going to arrest him, but he should be instructed to leave Peshawar without further delay. The Sipah Salar, accepting the proposal, advised the police officer to treat him honourably, which he, out of regard for the Sipah Salar, promised to do. Zafar Ali Khan left the city on that very day.

The Sipah Salar, despite his failing health, would not desist in receiving large numbers of Afghan chiefs every day, discussing with them ways and means of suppressing the rebellion at home. At the same time he sent instructions to the tribal chiefs all over Afghanistan, informing them of his arrival and asking them to co-operate with him in the implementation of his plan of national deliverance. All these transactions took place at a time when, due to delicate health, the Sipah Salar was confined to bed.

Shortly after, Sirdar Abdul Aziz and Sirdar Ahmad Shah, who had been to Nice, returned and met the Sipah Salar at Peshawar delivering the message and letter of Bacha-Saqa, sealed and stamped with his own hands. The first few lines were full of praise and his appreciation for the long glorious services and fine qualities of the Sipah Salar. Then he had assured him of the safety of the members of his family left behind in Kabul. In the end he had requested the Sipah Salar to come to Kabul immediately, promising that on his arrival one of the highest posts would be given to him. The Sipah Salar sent him the following message :

"Habibullah, realizing the delicate situation of the country, should abdicate, leaving the people free to make their own choice and to determine their own future. He should not for his personal gains and interests lead the country towards ruin and destruction. My chief aim in coming to the country at this time is to establish peace and liberate the people from tyranny. Nothing can desist me from carrying out my plan, and I am quite

prepared to co-operate with all those who have the liberation of their countrymen at heart. I have not come to seek a job for myself. I am confident that God Almighty will take care of my kith and kin who are now living in Kabul."

Everyone knew what sort of treatment our relatives in Kabul could expect at the hands of the relentless tyrant the moment he received this letter. We also knew fully that the Sipah Salar's reply would certainly excite the Bacha into a rage and he would not hesitate to wreak vengeance on those helpless innocent people who were now in his grip. The letter was handed over to Haji Imamuddin, Bacha's representative in Peshawar, asking him to deliver it to Habibullah personally and at the earliest possible moment. After a few days we got a reply, reading :

"Amanullah who went astray and opposed Islamic tenets was fully punished by God. Please note that I am not going to abdicate, and if you would not obey my commands and refuse to come to Kabul, your family members, who have been so far treated with honour and properly looked after, will all be slaughtered."

This reply created a very delicate situation as the Sipah Salar knew how vindictive the Bacha was and that he would not desist from what he had threatened to do with our innocent and helpless family members at Kabul. Even this threat could not bring a change in the iron will of the Sipah Salar, who was bent on serving his country even at the cost of his dearest and nearest. He showed his determination to sacrifice his all in order to liberate his country from the cruel clutches of the tyrant. He sat down calmly to write a second letter to the Bacha, which was harsher in tone than the first one. These were his brave words : "The massacre of my dear ones has no value in face of the honour of the motherland. Do as you want to do in pursuit of your nefarious actions, but remember, so far as I am concerned, I will not sit idle until this fire which has engulfed my country and countrymen is completely put out. As for my relatives, I trust them to God—the best Protector."

This reply was also immediately despatched to Habibullah in Kabul. Meanwhile we joyfully learnt that our youngest brother, Sirdar Shah Mahmud, was able to get out of Kabul and had reached Jaji, where he was busy working against the Bacha. Shortly after, Ali Ahmad Khan, the Governor of Kabul, also arrived in Peshawar. During the last days of Amanullah's reign he was sent to the Eastern Province to fight the rebels. After learning of the sad plight of the Central Government and Amanullah's abdication, he declared himself king. But after a short skirmish with the insurgents, his forces were routed and he was made to leave the country accompanied by his two sons, Ghulam Mohammed and Noor Ahmad. He stayed at Dean's Hotel with his sons. On learning that the Sipah Salar had also arrived with his brothers, he came to meet us. We discussed at length the political situation of Afghanistan; the Sipah Salar lying on his bed while Ali Ahmad Khan was sitting on a chair close to him. Ali Ahmad Khan to start with related the causes that led to the general upheaval against Amanullah, blaming the King for all that had happened. Then he said that nearly all the eastern tribes had tendered their allegiance to him in addition to a large number of people in Kabul who were in favour of him. To him only the Khogyanis were his antagonists, favouring Bacha. Their opposition, he contended, had made him quit the country and seek safety in flight. Ali Ahmad Khan then suggested two proposals that might ease the situation. He asked the Sipah Salar to accept one of these that suited him. He proposed that since he was already accepted by most of the people of Afghanistan as their king, the Sipah Salar should follow their example by tendering his allegiance to him. If this, however, was not acceptable to the Sipah Salar, he was quite willing to submit his allegiance to him, promising to go with him to Jalalabad and co-operate with him in fighting the Bacha and his partisans. The Sipah Salar, who had not expected such a baseless proposal from a man of Ali Ahmad Khan's position and standing, refused to accede to his request, saying: "We should not waste precious time in useless discussions. Kabul is in the hands of Habibullah, and so far the people of the Eastern Province have not clarified their position. As to the causes which

you think, led to this rebellion, I am at this stage not in a position to express my opinion, as I was then living in France and had little information in this respect. The question of electing a king is not solely our business, it is the right of all our people. As for myself, I have no desire to be a king. My aim is to serve the country and liberate it from the cruel hands of the Bacha and his followers. Let us join hands in this noble cause and go to Afghanistan together to fight our common enemy. You had better accompany Sirdar Hashim Khan and leave for the Eastern Province, while Shah Wali and I will go to the Southern Province to do our best. Let all of us pool our energies and work together and serve the country at this hour of trial selflessly. After the fire, which is consuming the country, is put out, the people themselves will have the right to determine their future and choose some one from the Sirajia family or any other person, whom they trust and think worthy of this exalted position. I promise I will willingly tender my allegiance to the chosen one without delay."

But Ali Ahmad Khan was adamant in his demand and would not listen to new proposals howsoever reasonable and sound they might be. He got excited and said : "I have frankly expressed my opinion. Now I have nothing to add." So the discussion came to an end without arriving at a definite decision. Ali Ahmad got up and left for his residence, leaving the Sipah Salar absorbed in deep thoughts.

The illness of the Sipah Salar made us stay in Peshawar for fifteen days. During this period he would not take complete rest and was busy sending letters and verbal messages to the chiefs of the Eastern and Southern Provinces, asking them to rise and liberate their country. Necessary instructions were also sent to Sirdar Shah Mahmud who by now had arrived at Khost. During these hectic days we would sit close to the bed of the Sipah Salar discussing the line of action. At last it was decided that Sirdar Hashim Khan would go to the Eastern Province, where he had much influence, while the Sipah Salar and I would proceed to Khost *via* Kohat. At this moment very sad news began to reach us. We were told that the Bacha, after being enraged by the

Sipah Salar's lack of co-operation, had imprisoned all the members of our family in Kabul, including men, women and children. Even this heart-breaking news could not deter the Sipah Salar from his purpose. Such a step on the part of the enemy had already been anticipated.

We decided to quit Peshawar on February 27, 1929. We left on the appointed day by car on our way to the Southern Province. Before our departure from Peshawar, the Sipah Salar thought that it would be better to meet Ali Ahmad Khan once again and persuade him to join hands with us in this national service and accompany Sirdar Hashim Khan to the Eastern Province. We called on Ali Ahmad at Dean's Hotel. The meeting lasted for about two hours. The Sipah Salar did everything possible to convince him of the logic of his point, but Ali Ahmad Khan would not listen to reason and remained adamant in his demand. So bidding him farewell, we headed towards the south, and by evening were able to reach Tootgai. At this time Mr. Richard Maconachie, was the Political Officer of the Kurram Valley and Waziristan. Having bitter experience of the behaviour of the British Embassy in Paris, though having valid passports with British visas with us, we were not feeling easy and did not know what sort of treatment awaited us at the hands of the British officials. Outwardly we were warmly received by the Political Officer, who appointed Sheikh Mahbub Ali as our official host to look into our needs, but actually he was to watch our movements. The same evening we were invited by Mr. Maconachie to his house. We went there accompanied by Sheikh Mahbub Ali. During the conversation that followed the British Political Officer expressed his deep sorrow and concern regarding what was happening in Afghanistan, adding at the same time, that his Government was following a policy of non-interference and strict neutrality to which it intended to adhere to the last. There was in his opinion still likelihood of a general conflagration, which had caused the British Government great concern and anxiety.

The Sipah Salar said calmly: "I appreciate your policy of neutrality and non-interference. It is a wise step. We hope you will stick to it to the end and will in no way interfere with

our domestic affairs and with our efforts in liberating our motherland. Our people, who have achieved their independence at the cost of so much sacrifice and after many a hard and sanguinary battle, are not prepared to give it up easily and accept foreign domination in whatever form it may be."

... We decided to call for an emergency meeting of the Political Office on the afternoon of 17th February 1957. We felt that it would be better to meet Ali Ahmad Khan once again and persuade him to join hands with us in the national struggle and accompany Sabhat Khattar Khan to the Eastern Province. We called on Ali Ahmad at Government House. The meeting lasted for about two hours. The High Commissioner did everything possible to convince him of the importance of the cause, but Ali Ahmad Khan would not listen to reason and remained adamant in his demand. So nothing came of it. We decided to write the letter and by convincing him to leave Fozdar. At this time Mr. Richard Macdonald was the Political Officer of the Kurram Valley and was in Peshawar. Having direct experience of the Government of the British India, though having many valid reasons with British India, we were not feeling easy and did not know what sort of treatment would be at the hands of the British officials. Our duty we were warmly received by the Political Officer, who appointed Sheikh Mahood Ad as our special agent to look into our needs, but actually he was to watch our movements. The same evening we were invited by the High Commissioner to his house. He was most sympathetic to Sheikh Mahood Ad. During the conversation that followed the British Political Officer expressed his deep interest and concern regarding what was taking place in Afghanistan and in the case that the Government was following a policy of non-interference and strict neutrality to which it intended to adhere to the last. This was in the opinion of the British Government great concern and anxiety. The High Commissioner said calmly, "In my opinion, the policy of neutrality and non-interference is a wise step. We hope you will stick to it to the end and will in no way interfere with

. 12 .

ARRIVAL OF SARDAR SHAH MAHMUD GHAZI

At about 10 p. m. two men in disguise, having covered their heads and faces, entered our room quite unexpectedly. One of them was Shah Mahmud Ghazi, our youngest brother, and the second was our friend Allah Nawaz Khan. They, availing themselves of the darkness of night, had crossed the border into the British territory in order to meet us. Sardar Shah Mahmud Khan narrated his adventure; how he came out of Kabul and reached Jaji, and what he was doing now. Our letters and messages from Peshawar had reached him, and when he learned that we had arrived at Tootgi, he decided to meet us there and get necessary instructions. Indeed, the coming of these two very important figures at this critical time was a great help to our cause. Allah Nawaz Khan was a man of exceptional ability and one of those patriots who had made innumerable sacrifices in order to liberate India from the British. At last he was forced to leave India and migrate to Afghanistan, where for the first time he showed unusual activities in the War of Independence. Going in disguise across the border into the British territories, he would distribute proclamations of the Afghan Government among the independent tribes. In addition to this he was constantly in touch with the Panjabi nationalists and kept them informed of our aims and objects, and persuaded them to take active and effective steps against the British Government. For these activities he was sentenced to death, which caused his migration to this land. Sardar Shah Mahmud Khan, who knew all this, had taken great care to avoid the vigilance of the British guard posted at the border and to see that Allah Nawaz Khan was not arrested. It was for this very reason that they had to travel at night and in disguise. After receiving necessary

instructions both of them on that very night left us and went back to their post.

Next morning we, too, came out of Parachinar, accompanied by Haji Nawab Khan, an influential chief of the Lohgard Valley and a very loyal servant of the country, who had joined us at Peshawar. On entering the sacred soil of our motherland, we were overjoyed to see the mountains and plains which we loved so much and which we yearned to see again. Next day two horses and an ox were brought to take our luggage as far as Khost. All along the way the Sipah Salar, Nawab Khan and I were busy discussing the ways and means of coping with the situation. We fully knew that Habibullah, our opponent, was formidable and in full possession of the royal treasury and arsenal, while our insignificant caravan was totally devoid of everything that could help us in the gigantic task lying ahead. We had no money and no weapons, and had to fight a powerful army, fully equipped and well organized. But we were hopeful of our final victory; to us it was a struggle against ignorance and tyranny.

Our humble caravan moved slowly up and down the hills and the plains, heading towards Khost. Despite the fact that it was the month of fasting, people from far and near had come to meet the Sipah Salar, their national hero. Standing all along the road on both sides they went mad with joy to see us. Finding the Sipah Salar extremely weak and emaciated, they expressed their deep concern and sorrow and wished him a speedy recovery and a long life.

We learned from these people that before our arrival at Khost they had decided to occupy the military post of Khost by force of arms. A few days earlier they had actually besieged the fort. Mohammad Sarwar Khan, the local Governor and Noor Mohammad Khan, the Military Commander, were put to great difficulties and were fast running short of provisions and ammunition. It was evident that the besieged were not in a position to fight for a long time and had to surrender. But the moment the people came to know that we had arrived at the border, all was changed, and

out of respect for the Sipah Salar and his party, they stopped fighting, raised the siege and had their differences patched up with the besieged. On reaching the fort, we saw the Governor and the Commander, coming out of the gate at the head of a large gathering to receive us. We were much impressed by their joy and enthusiasm. To us it was an auspicious moment. We passed the night in the fort. The Sipah Salar sent messages all around informing the tribal chiefs and *maliks* of his arrival and inviting them to take part in the *jirgah* that was to be held in Khost next morning. Early next day all the tribal chiefs with their contingents had arrived and took part in the discussions. The successful execution of our plans now depended to a large extent on the outcome and favourable decision of this *jirgah*. It was here at this meeting that the first cornerstone of the grand edifice of national deliverance was successfully laid.

The Sipah Salar explained at length to his audience the deplorable condition of Afghanistan, asking them to rise unitedly in face of common danger with a firm determination to preserve the independence and honour of the country, to restore peace and order, and to extricate the people from tyranny and highhandedness. He spoke with such lucidity and sincerity that the audience could not help being moved by his oration. They unanimously expressed their willingness to follow their leader through thick and thin and sacrifice all that they possessed in order to uphold the honour and prestige of their motherland. This excitement and deliberation were mainly due to the faith and confidence of people in the ability of the Sipah Salar, who only a few years ago had led them on victoriously in the War of Independence. Besides, they were looking for an opportunity to prove their mettle once more in the service of their country. The *jirgah* came to a close after the national tradition when everyone took a solemn oath to abide by its decision and to defend the honour of the country at all cost. The soldiers also followed suit and took part in the ceremony.

Soon after time arrived when we were able to take preliminary steps in the implementation of our programme. By now the month of fasting was also over, and the people were

willing to take action. The Sipah Salar invited Sardar Shah Mahmud Khan and Allah Nawaz Khan to his presence. Shortly after their arrival, meetings were held to discuss the ways and means of coping with the situation. At last after much debate it was decided that we should take steps against Habibullah on different sectors at one and the same time. Shah Mahmud Khan was to proceed to Jaji. After collecting the tribal levies he was to attack Gardez. The Sipah Salar was to go to Jadran, and with the help of people over there he, too, was to take the direction of Gardez. Ali Nawaz Khan was to accompany the Sipah Salar in his expedition. The centre of operation and authority would follow the Sipah Salar himself and all other units were to follow his instructions.

We had to stay at Khost for a few more days in order to collect necessary information and to have further discussions with tribal chiefs. Every day a meeting was held. Ghaussud Din, son of Jandad Khan, the chief of the Ahmedzai tribe, represented his people in this *jirgah*. He along with other heads of the Ahmadzai tribe proposed that before launching an attack, the Sipah Salar should declare himself king, as the nation had taken up arms against Amanullah Khan. The people all over the country, especially those of the Eastern and Northern districts were anxious to know exactly who would be the next king. The people of the Southern Province had also not declared themselves for Amanullah Khan, showing thereby that they too had no sympathy for him and did not like his rule. If the Sipah Salar would not bid for the throne at such an occasion, people would certainly think that he was working in Amanullah's interest and trying to re-instate him on the throne. Naturally the fire of opposition and animosity would increase and spread far and wide. Though Ghaussud Din could prove his statement by reasonable arguments and all the heads of the tribes concurred with him and supported his statements, the Sipah Salar flatly refused their request. In a moving speech he made his point clear and refuted Ghaussud Din's arguments. This is the gist of his speech:—

“My sole aim is to release Afghanistan from danger and destruction. To achieve this object, I have had to

ignore the safety of my family, who are now in the grip of our relentless enemy. I have come here with a shattered health and empty pocket but with a firm resolution to lay down my life for the sake of my motherland. The question of kingship could not be settled by me or by the people of the Southern Province alone. It is a nation-wide problem and everyone has a right to take part in its decision. I have not come here to bid for the throne. I pray you not to mix up your pure and sacred aspirations for the national cause with selfish motives and material gains. Our first and foremost aim at this juncture should be to wash away and blot out the disgraceful spot from the skirt of our motherland. After this sacred object is achieved, the problem of kingship could easily be solved by the people themselves. At present our national life is at stake and I tell you frankly that if this internecine strife were to drag on a little longer, our ancestral home would be ruined, our prestige gone, and Afghanistan would cease to exist as a free country."

The speech had the desired effect. The audience, including Ghaussud Din, agreed with the Sipah Salar and willingly accepted his proposal. Thereupon the *jirgah* came to an end, everyone was pleased with the decision taken. Shah Mahmud Khan, with complete instructions, left for Jaji, while I with my mission proceeded towards Mangal. The Sipah Salar himself took the direction of Jadran.

The Mangals received me warmly. Group after group came out to meet me, promising all possible assistance. After four days, we reached a place called Gatmangal, where we were greatly helped by two of the influential Mangal chiefs—Zalmai Khan and Sanak Khan. Here at Gatmangal all of a sudden I fell ill and a high temperature confined me to bed. Zalmai Khan and Sanak Khan both were very much upset and immediately dispatched two trustworthy men to Gardez, requesting General Mohammed Siddiq Khan and General Abdul Hakim Khan, to send a doctor with necessary

medicine and equipment to look after my health. Mohammed Siddiq was a prominent figure. He was the son of Khwaja Jan Sahibzada and the brother of Sher Jan Khan, Court Minister of Habibullah. Abdul Hakim Khan was the brother of Abdul Aziz Khan, Amanullah's Minister of Defence. Both of them gladly accepted the request and sent their military doctor with available medicines. The doctor reached us safely, while he was robbed of his possessions on the way by some unidentified persons. Zalmai, in spite of his best efforts, failed to arrest and punish the culprits. As roads were not safe, a second request for medicine was not made.

SIPAH SALAR'S ACTIVITIES

From Khost the Sipah Salar headed towards Jadran, where he had two objects in view. The first was to unite the Jadrani people, who were not on good terms with one another for some time; the second was to punish the Darikhel tribes, who were showing a hostile attitude and had blocked the passage leading to Gardez. These people, who had supported Abdullah, nicknamed the Lame Mulla, in his uprising against Amanullah, (in 1924) had to suffer a lot and had innumerable grievances against the King. They now sent a message to the Sipah Salar telling him plainly that it was not possible for them to patch up their differences with Amanullah Khan; the wounds inflicted by him could in no way be healed. A large number of their brothers and relatives were killed in the strife, and the rest were done away with secretly. The Sipah Salar had not declared himself king, otherwise they whole-heartedly would have welcomed the move and served him faithfully. From his action, they contended, it was quite clear that he was working for Amanullah Khan. This attitude of the Sipah Salar, they said, had led them to take necessary measures for their own safety and block the passage passing through the heart of their country.

This message, especially at such a critical time, was a source of much anxiety to the Sipah Salar. To force his way through their lines was not so difficult, but this was not his aim and he did not wish to be involved in skirmishes with those people there. He had come to reconcile them and see them united against a common foe, not to use force and thereby turn

them into his enemies. He was seeking their help and co-operation to carry out his plan to a successful end. This naturally created a dilemma for the Sipah Salar. If he were not to use force and yet was refused a free passage through their territory, how was he to get to Gardez? The only alternative left was to change the route, though a lengthy one it was. Instead of going through their lands, the Sipah Salar decided to proceed to Gardez via Urgoon.

He reached Urgoon on April 6, 1929, where he was respectfully received by the military unit stationed there. The Sipah Salar first of all looked to their needs and supplied them with adequate provisions. He did what he could do to relieve them of their distress. The officers, who had stood firm in their loyalty and had not submitted their allegiance to the Usurper, were duly rewarded and promoted. Next day the Sipah Salar left Urgoon on his way to Gardez.

. 14 .

NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SULAIMANKHELIS

Between Urgoon and Gardez are scattered villages occupied by the Sulaimankhels and the Kharootis, brave, wealthy and well-armed tribes. They were bitterly against Amanullah Khan and his regime. Joining hands with Habibullah, they had resolved to fight Amanullah Khan, who was at this time in Kandahar busy with preparations to regain his throne. Passing through the territories of such warlike people and in face of their opposition was a tedious task, more dangerous and risky than getting through the country occupied by the Dari-Khels. Reports were received that all was not well in that area; roads were infested by highwaymen, there was no peace and the general condition was worsening day by day.

During the middle of April, the heads of the Sulaimankhels, including some of their most prominent figures, such as Karim Khan Sharan, Pahlawan Khan, Karim Khan Saraki and a few others, came to meet the Sipah Salar at his camp. They paid their homage and showed every mark of respect. This was the beginning of a new development in our relations with these people. They openly declared that they had great respect for the person of the Sipah Salar himself and were loyal to him but their relations with King Amanullah had strained beyond improvement and they no longer had faith in him. This had forced them to join hands with Habibullah, his opponent. If the Sipah Salar would come forward to bid for the throne, they would gladly obey his commands and serve him loyally. The Sipah Salar, who had rejected this offer again and again, now once more declared that it was entirely for the people to choose their future ruler. Again

in the presence of the heads of Sulaimankhels he refused to accept the throne. This led those people to believe that the Sipah Salar was at heart working for King Amanullah. Being greatly disappointed to hear him refusing the kingship, they suggested if the Sipah Salar was not a partisan of Amanullah, he should appoint one of his brothers to lead them against Amanullah. After having settled their affairs with him, they said, they would come back and willingly join him in this national movement. Such a step, they argued, on the part of the Sipah Salar, would certainly assure them that he was not supporting the cause of the *ex*-King. To reject this offer meant facing serious consequences. The Sipah Salar would certainly have taken up arms against them, but their close proximity to the Southern Province would have aggravated the situation. Knowing all this, he again rejected their proposal, declaring openly that he did not aspire to be king nor would he take any steps against Amanullah. The heads of the tribe were now fully assured that they could not make the Sipah Salar change his mind. Enraged at this rebuff, they left the meeting abruptly. Shortly after, news came that they had resolved to check the further advance of the Sipah Salar by force of arms. The Sipah Salar realized that the situation was critical and to force his way was against his principles and might not be helpful for the execution of his plan. No other course was left to avoid a clash with these people. At this time an idea struck him, which he presented for the approval of his friends and followers. He suggested before the Sulaimankhels had had time to collect their forces to bar their onward progress, they should take advantage of the time and leave for Gardez at once. The followers of the Sipah Salar, who had joined him at Khost and Jadran, also fully concurred with him. Leaving quickly, they journeyed all night, and about six in the morning they passed safely through the dangerous zone. Without taking rest, they pushed on, reaching without any incident the village of Bala Deh, in the vicinity of Gardez, and the home of Jan Dad Khan. The Sipah Salar took his residence in a village not far from it.

. 15 .

EVENTS AT GARDEZ

The Sipah Salar, before reaching Gardez, had sent Allah Nawaz Khan there to inform Mohammed Siddiq Khan and Abdul Hakim Khan of his arrival and had invited them to Bala Deh for negotiations. I was also ordered to leave Gutmangal and go to Bala Deh. Ghaussud Din Khan seemed to be very friendly and received us warmly. I reached the place at about twelve noon, accompanied by the chiefs of the Mangal tribes and some twenty horsemen, who had followed me from Khost. Reaching Bala Deh, I found that Mohammed Siddiq Khan and Abdul Hakim Khan were already there but as yet no definite decision had been reached. Paying my respects to the Sipah Salar, I had also the opportunity of meeting those two prominent figures and taking part in the discussions.

Towards the close of the day reports came that a few *mullahs* of the Sulaimankhels had arrived with the intention of meeting the Sipah Salar. Leaving Mohammed Siddiq Khan and Abdul Hakim Khan at his residence, the Sipah Salar came out of the fort to receive the *mullahs* in a nearby mosque. To his surprise he found that the *mullahs* had brought with them *fatwas* (documents signed by Muslim clergy) from Habibullah's Court, and were trying to prove from the point of view of *Shara'* (Muslim law) that the Bacha was the rightful ruler of the country and those who would oppose him were rebels. The Sipah Salar tried to refute these arguments, but to no avail, as these *mullas* like parrots would repeat what they had been taught and made to learn by heart. The discussion had not yet come to an end, when Mohammed Siddiq Khan and Abdul Hakim Khan also appeared in the

mosque requesting the Sipah Salar to permit them to return to Gardez. The day had nearly come to an end and the roads were not immune from danger, so the Sipah Salar gladly acquiesced in their request. They had hardly gone a few steps, when Ghaussud Din entered the mosque much perplexed and excited, protesting strongly the decision of allowing those two persons to return to their base. He wanted to see them arrested and put under guard. The Sipah Salar would not agree to such a proposal, arguing that they had committed no sin or crime and were promised safe-conduct, and as such he could not see any plausible pretext for their detention or imprisonment. Ghaussud Din, without making a reply, went out of the mosque. At this time Mohammed Siddiq and Abdul Hakim were on the point of mounting their horses. Ghaussud Din and his men without a warning began to fire on them, forcing them to take defensive measures. A severe fight took place in which a few of the soldiers, who had accompanied us from Gardez, together with five horsemen who had come with me from Khost, were killed. In the end Mohammed Siddiq Khan and Abdul Hakim Khan, being outnumbered, were forced to surrender. Ghaussud Din taking them to his fort, shut them up.

As this incident had taken place without the knowledge and permission of the Sipah Salar, he returned to his base immediately and passed the night in great anxiety and sorrow. Early next morning, soon after prayer, the heads of Mangals and Jadrans came to the Sipah Salar telling him that it was not advisable to stay there any longer, for Ghaussud Din's unwarrantable action of the last day, together with his highhandedness and breach of faith, had compelled them to leave the place. The Sipah Salar, who was already much upset by Ghaussud Din's rash action, especially at the loss of so many lives of his countrymen, accepted this proposal and left for Gutmangal.

GUTMANGAL

Gutmangal thus became our headquarters and we had to stay there for a few days. During this time Mohammad Siddiq Khan and Abdul Hakim Khan were prisoners in the hands of Ghaussud Din, while Sayid Mohammad Khan Andar and General Mohammad Shah Khan Tarakhel were in charge of the military units stationed at Gardez. The Sipah Salar made up his mind to leave Gutmangal and proceed towards Gardez, making it the centre of his operations. But Allah Nawaz Khan did not like this idea. He pointed out that as most of the soldiers stationed there were recruits from Kohistan and Kohdaman, the home of Habibullah, naturally their sympathies were with him. Moreover, Gardez was bounded on one side by the Rud-i-Ahmadzai and on the other three sides by villages occupied by the Sulaimankhels, and as such its defence might create some difficulties. He suggested that it would be better to shift the headquarters to a place free from such geographical and political impediments and embarrassments. The Sipah Salar argued that as Gardez was the capital city of the province, its possession would certainly have some psychological importance. At this point I had to intervene. Finding that the presence of the Sipah Salar at Gardaz was not advisable at that time, and leaving it into the hands of others might be harmful to our cause, I offered my services and showed my willingness to go to Gardez. All gladly accepted the proposal allowing me to proceed in that direction without waste of time. I was instructed to occupy the citadel and take the administration of the town directly into my hands.

Next day, accompanied by Zalmai Khan, Sanak Khan, Mohammed Sarwar Khan, Governor of Khost, and ten horsemen, I left for Gardez. Crossing the Rud-i-Ahmadzai, we reached the foot of the citadel and saw that Sayid Mohammad Khan and Mohammed Shah, immediately after hearing of our arrival, had come out of the fort to pay their respects. The people of Gardez did not lag behind and gave us a warm reception. Khan Mohammad, Sher Mohammad Khan, and Abdul Ghani Khan, the three brothers, had a great share in these ceremonies. They were from the nobility of Gardez and wielded much influence. Their fourth brother, Nek Mohammed Khan, was also a prominent figure in the days of Amir Habibullah Khan, holding the rank of *Shaghasi* (Court Chamberlain). He was a loyal and trusted officer of the King. During the days of King Amanullah he was dismissed and kept under house-arrest. He died shortly afterwards.

On the day when we reached Gardez, the weather was stormy and it was raining heavily. In spite of bad weather, a large number of people, soldiers as well as villagers, had gathered together at the airport, waiting impatiently for our arrival. Sayid Mohammed Khan received us with a military salute and guns boomed in our honour. After the reception was over, I delivered the message of the Sipah Salar, which I had brought with me, informing them at the same time of the steps he had taken to deliver the country from tyranny. All of them were greatly pleased to know that, and prayed for the welfare of Afghanistan and showed their willingness to co-operate fully with the Sipah Salar in the implementation of his plans.

. 17 .

GARDEZ

In Gardez I stayed with Abdul Ghani Khan and his brothers in the village of Sar Sang. Next day I took over the military and civil administration of the town. Two-thirds of the troops stationed at Gardez were recruited from Kohdaman and Kohistan, while the remainder were Wardakis. The former, feeling some unseen danger, decided to desert at night with their leader, General Abdul Ghias. I was pleased to find that they were leaving the town and were returning to their homes in safety.

Meanwhile, the Sipah Salar had left Gutmangal and had proceeded to Sajanak, where he had taken up his residence near the fort of Asseel Khan Mangal. Sirdar Shah Mahamud was at this time feverishly active at Jaji, while I was in close touch with the Sipah Salar, sending him regular reports of my work and receiving necessary instructions from him. Allah Nawaz Khan would come to meet me at Gardez once a week and spent other days with the Sipah Salar. Sayid Khan, Mohammed Shah Khan, Mohammad Sarwar Khan, Abdul Ghani Khan with his brothers, were all very active and helpful. The resourceful and hospitable people of Gardez supplied us regularly with provisions. So we had nothing to worry about our food, and were living quite comfortably.

The story of the arrest of Mohammad Siddiq caused much agitation at the Court of Habibullah. Again he adopted a clever trick. He sent Sardar Ali Shah Khan, our cousin, to Gardez, accompanied by Abdul Latif, an Indian refugee. Ali Shah Khan had been imprisoned in Kabul along with other members of our family. The Bacha had made him promise that after delivering the message he would return to Kabul, failing which he

would be held answerable for all that might happen to his family members living at the Capital. Ali Shah Khan and Abdul Latif, on reaching Gardez, delivered Habibullah's message to me in the presence of all. It was brief and threatening :

“Surrender or be prepared for the consequences and the massacre of your family.”

Ali Shah Khan, with unusual courage and with a loud voice explained to the people the sad plight of those living in Kabul. It was an extremely dangerous step on his part, because, in keeping with his promise he wanted to return to Kabul. Secondly his movements were being closely watched by Abdul Latif, a spy, who had been purposely sent for this purpose by Hibibullah. Ali Shah Khan fully knew that all he would say and do would be reported to that blood-thirsty monarch. But he attached little importance to his personal safety. After delivering the message and expressing his views, he proceeded to Sajanak to meet the Sipah Salar and inform him of the whole affair. The Sipah Salar sent the following brief answer to the tyrant: “As long as Habibullah does not abdicate and the destiny of the country is not decided by the people themselves, there can be no peace in this country. I am not going to relax the efforts I have taken for the deliverance of my countrymen.” He advised Ali Shah Khan not to return to Kabul and instead send a message through Abdul Latif. But Ali Shah Khan, with extreme courage, refused to stay in the Southern Province. He said boldly, “It is better to die rather than break one's word.” The Sipah Salar was full of praise for his brave words and gladly allowed him to return to Kabul. While leaving Sajanak, the Sipah Salar bade him goodbye and encouraged him by these words: “I trust you, the members of our family and the destiny of our beloved country to God the Merciful.” Then the two messengers returned to Kabul and informed Habibullah of all that had come to pass. The Brigand-Chief learned with dismay that he had to deal with a man of iron will who attached no importance to his threats and was not afraid to see his relations being slaughtered. Enraged at this rebuff, he issued orders to arrest Ali Shah Khan once again; his hands, legs and neck were bound with heavy chains and he was shut up in a dark dungeon.

. 18 .

MARCH ON LOHGARD

A few days later, a letter came from the Sipah Salar informing us of his intention to lead an expedition into Lohgard Valley. Hearing this, I was greatly perturbed. Our military preparations were far from complete and nearly the whole of that valley was in the hands of our enemy. I was at a loss to understand what had made the Sipah Salar take such a daring and rash step at this time. Meanwhile, we learned that Ghaussud Din Khan, without informing the Sipah Salar, had released Mohammed Siddiq Khan and Abdul Hakim Khan, allowing them to return to Kabul.

When the Sipah Salar was on the point of leaving for Lohgard, Habibullah had full information as to his intention. Taking precautionary measures, he despatched that very night Peni Beg Khan, a general of Amanullah Khan's regime and now in the service of Habibullah, at the head of formidable force fully equipped with arms, ammunition and provisions. He led a surprise attack, which would have certainly ended in the imprisonment or complete annihilation of the small force under the Sipah Salar, but by the help of God, and the war tactics, bravery and integrity of the Sipah Salar himself the situation was saved and his handful of followers were able to make good their escape in the midst of bullets and shells showering from all sides.

Meanwhile other disheartening news came, informing us that Hazrat Sahib Noorul Mashaikh, the influential religious head, had reached Katawaz. Shortly after, I got a letter from him expressing a desire to meet me. He had left it to my choice whether I would like to go and see him at his residence or that he was to come to Gardez, my military base. Without

waiting for a reply, Hazrat Sahib himself, accompanied by a few horsemen, came to a village not far from Gardez. Mohammed Sarwar Khan, Mohammed Shah Khan and I went to meet him there. On reaching the place I found him sitting in a big room, surrounded by a few *mullahs* and heads of the Sulaimankhels, prominent among these were Phalawan Khan, Karim Khan Sarkai, Karim Khan Sharan and Asmattullah Khan. After the usual greetings, Hazrat Sahib wanted to have a private talk with me. We, therefore, went to an adjacent room. First of all he complained of the rash actions of King Amanullah, which in his opinion were against the tenets of Islam and the traditions of the people. Then he pointed out that the Capital was in the hands of Habibullah. If we were to oppose him, he would certainly wreak his vengeance on our family members left behind in Kabul and would probably massacre all of them. Assuring me of his friendship and professing to be a well-wisher of our family, whom he would like to see safe, he proposed that if the Sipah Salar would give up the idea of fighting Habibullah and leave the country and go to India, he would use his influence with Habibullah to release the members of our family, supplying them with sufficient funds and allowing them to go to India and meet us there. After the Hazrat Sahib had finished his speech and arguments, I informed him that we had no material gains in view. We knew at the start that most of our family members were in Kabul and at the mercy of Habibullah. But we had not come to meet our family, or rescue them, but to preserve the honour and prestige of our motherland and to achieve this end we would not desist from making any sacrifice howsoever great. The Sipah Salar was in no case prepared to change his mind and come to terms with the usurper. Seeing that persistence in his demands was of no avail, Hazrat Sahib declared the meeting at an end. He went back to his residence, while I returned to my own. Three days later, Hazrat Sahib made a second attempt, meeting the Sipah Salar himself at Sajanak. Here, too, his proposal fell through. After his failure, Hazrat Sahib left for Sahak and we had no news of him for a considerable time.

MOHAMMED SIDDIQ MAKES A SURPRISE ATTACK

On the morning of June 2, while I was at my residence, Hazrat Sahib paid me a sudden visit. While we were having tea together, a letter from Mohammed Siddiq arrived, addressing the people of Gardez and informing them that under orders from Habibullah, he had come with a force of seven thousand troops, well organized and equipped with heavy guns. The men under his command had already crossed the Tirah Pass and had encamped at Safed Khak, in the vicinity of the town. If within two hours Shah Wali Khan was not handed over to him, he would be compelled to use force and order his men to attack Gardez. In such a case the people of Gardez would be strictly held responsible for the shedding of blood. In the end of his letter Mohammed Siddiq had given lavish promises to those who would co-operate with him in his designs.

The sudden appearing of Mohammed Siddiq on the scene with a formidable force caused us much anxiety and astonishment. Abdul Ghani Khan and his brave brothers, together with those who had assembled there, were impatiently waiting for my reaction. A complete silence prevailed and everybody was apprehending great danger. Seeing this, I got up from my seat, and addressing the people, said the following few words, "I am not going to quit Gardez at my cost. If you think your lives are in danger and you are too weak to oppose the invading force, you had better arrest me and hand me over to your enemy. For my part I prefer imprisonment at the hands of friends and death at the hands of foe. If you don't approve of this proposal then the only alternative left to us is to fight the enemy to bitter end."

Abdul Ghani Khan, on behalf of the people of Gardez, got up and said, "We are not cowards to surrender ourselves or give up our arms to the enemy without a contest. We assure you so long as we are alive, we will fight for the honour of our country." The chiefs and elders of the Mangals and Jadrans, who had accompanied me so far, concurred with Abdul Ghani Khan, promising whole-hearted help to defend the honour and prestige of their country.

Hearing these fiery speeches, Hazrat Sahib got up from his seat and decided to leave, saying, "It is time to quit Gardez and depart for Sahak." After he was gone, Sayid Mohammed and Mohammed Shah came to me offering their help and showing their willingness to fight to the last. I instructed them not to reply to the threatening message of Mohammed Siddiq by a piece of written paper but by the fire of guns and cannon balls. The two brave military officers, obeying my orders and without losing time, ascended the citadel and took up their positions, while Abdul Ghani Khan was busy collecting tribal *laskars*. Soon our guns were ready and opened fire on the enemy's position. Mohammed Siddiq retaliated by bombarding our line of defence. A severe battle ensued. Our soldiers in Gardez, commanded by Mohammed Shah, and the irregulars led by Abdul Ghani Khan, took to the offensive. I also went to the front to direct operations. Though Mohammed Siddiq had the superiority in numbers and equipment, we, within a few hours, made great breaches in their line and forced them to retreat. Mohammed Siddiq Khan was severely wounded in action. On our side Mohammed Shah Khan, who had displayed great courage and unusual ability, was also wounded. His body, totally covered with blood, was taken to the hospital. This news made me very sad and caused us much anxiety. I went to the hospital at once to enquire about his health. Though he was bleeding heavily but finding me by his side, opened his eyes and said calmly, "Please don't waste your precious time here. God be thanked, if I die, I shall die in the service of my country." Later on I was glad to learn that his wounds were not deep and that he was fast recovering.

Meanwhile, Ghaussud Din and his men were watching the scene of action from the hill of Rud-i-Ahmadzai, overlooking the battlefield. At last, when our victory was assured, he came with his men and fell upon the retreating army, firing incessantly. The villagers, living on the other side of the Tirah Pass also joining hands with us, attacked the enemy. Thus surrounded on all sides, with their line of retreat completely cut off and his forces totally routed, Mohammed Siddiq decided to take shelter in a nearby fort. He, being wounded, was taken on a litter to the fort of Asmattullah Khan in the Sahak country. Five hundred of his men lay prostrate on the battlefield, while the rest, throwing away their arms, were fleeing pell-mell towards the Lohgard Valley. Ghaussud Din, seeing that the battle was over in our favour, came to meet us. Our casualties were forty dead and sixty wounded. After burying the dead, we attended to the wounded. I was glad to see that Mohammed Shah was recovering satisfactorily and by the grace of God, was out of danger.

The news of this signal victory spread like wild-fire throughout the length and breadth of the country, making everyone hopeful of the final outcome of the contest in our favour. The men, who had fallen prisoners into our hands, were sent to the Sipah Salar at his headquarters. He treated them kindly and kept them with himself for a few days. Then giving them valuable advice and admonishing them for what they had been doing, he dismissed them, allowing them to return to their homes.

THE SKIRMISH WITH THE SULAIMANKHEL

The news of Mohammed Siddiq's discomfiture spread far and wide, shocking Habibullah very much. I despatched a letter to Asmattullah Khan asking him to send Mohammed Siddiq to me in Gardez. The Khan wrote in reply, "As Mohammed Siddiq has sought asylum in my house, it is not in keeping with the honour and tradition of the Afghans to hand over refugees to their enemy. Besides, he is severely wounded, confined to bed and unable to do you any harm. I promise to send him away as soon as he gets better."

Meanwhile, Ghaussud Din, without consulting me, sent a malicious letter to Asmattullah Khan, commanding him to hand over Mohammed Siddiq to him without delay or be prepared to meet him in the battlefield, threatening that he was marching at the head of a large Ahmadzai *lashkar*, which would take the fort he occupied and annihilate him as well as the Sulaimankhels, his supporters. He had used such a harsh and indecent language that I do not wish it appropriate to repeat it here.

Naturally Asmattullah Khan was much perturbed to get such a letter, and in order to excite the Sulaimankhels and get their help, he sent the original letter to the chiefs of that tribe. As was foreseen, the Sulaimankhels were greatly agitated and enraged to read the arrogant letter. A message was sent to Ghaussud Din that they had always desired to live in peace with him and his tribe, but now as he was boasting of his bravery and power, the question would be solved by force of arms. Without waiting for a reply, they mustered a large force and headed straight towards

Gardez. As it was too late to intervene, I took up defensive measures. On May 24, 1929, Ghaussud Din with his contingent and Abdul Ghani Khan, with his own military unit, led an attack on Sahak. After a bloody contest lasting for two days, enemy forces had to fall back a little. Our losses, too, were heavy. Momin Khan, Ghaussud Din's brother, a young man of fine qualities, was killed in action. On the third day of battle, despite the fact that the enemy had received considerable reinforcement and the Sulaimankhels from Katawaz and Sharan had also come to Sahak fully equipped, the people of Gardez had again the upper hand, Asmattullah Khan was a captive in our hands and the battle ended in a complete victory for us. When Asmattullah was brought to my presence, he expressed his deep sorrow for all that had happened and explained how Ghaussud Din's letter was responsible for all that bloodshed. In the end he said, "Had we been assured on the first day that the Sipah Salar was not working for Amanullah, this sad event would not have happened, and we would have certainly turned Mohammed Siddiq out of this place." As Asmattullah Khan was a reasonable man, our discussions proved fruitful. He sent a letter to the Sulaimankhels asking them to withdraw their forces and desist from further bloodshed. On the margin of the Holy Quran, which he intended to send to the Sulaimankhels, along with his letter, he inscribed these few words :

"I have written these lines of my own will and without any external pressure."

The letter and the Holy Quran were then given to a man who during the recent action had fallen a prisoner into our hands and was directed to take them straight to the Sulaimankhels' camp.

. 21 .

FALL OF GARDEZ

Until the evening of the third day, the battle continued in our favour, but on the fourth, it took a sudden turn. One of the chief causes leading to this change was the upsurge of differences between the people of Gardez and those of Jadran, who fell apart on a trifling affair. The second was that we ran short of ammunition. These two factors contributed to our discomfiture to a large extent. Nothing could possibly be done to improve the situation. Early next morning, news came from the front that the Ahmadzais and Gardezis, leaving their posts at the battlefield, were now busy packing their luggage with a view to marching towards Jaji along with their wives and children. Malik Mehrab Khan, Tawakal Khan, and a large number of the Ahmadzais and Gardezis were killed in the battle. Similarly, the people of Jadran, Totakhel and Mangal had suffered heavily. The Wardaki alone had lost sixty soldiers. I tried my best to reorganize the army and the *lashkars*, but to no avail. Everything was in a mess. All were leaving Gardez and taking to flight. At noon the city was completely evacuated, and the Sulaimankhels were advancing rapidly on the town. Abdul Ghani Khan, finding the enemy close to the fort, decided to leave Gardez. With great difficulty, he collected the members of his family, and along with his brothers left for Jaji via Rud-e-Ahmadzai.

I was still in the fort of Sarsang accompanied by Ghulam Mohiddin Khan Waziri, son of Danda Khan, and Nurrud Din Khan Wardaki. Despite the disquieting news that Gardez was completely evacuated by our forces and the enemy had reached the outskirts of the citadel, I did not quit my post. The rattling

of enemy's guns could distinctly be heard. My companions were firm in their resolution and would not leave their posts. With our inadequate ammunition, we made a bold stand and had resolved to meet all eventualities with courage and resignation. At this critical time, Mohammad Gul Khan, son of Pir Dost Khan of Totakhel tribe, with a pistol in his hand, entered my room suddenly. Greatly excited and very much perplexed, he came to me and said, "Gardez has fallen to our enemy, the citadel, too, is in their possession, and now they are coming down from the side of the hospital and are approaching the fort with the intention of arresting you." I said in reply, "Let them come, everyone has to die. I am prepared to be one of the slain."

He replied, "It's easy to die, but they want to imprison you and take you in disgrace to Kabul. Moreover your imprisonment at this stage will undoubtedly affect adversely the plans of the Sipah Salar himself. There is no use in prolonging your stay here. Make good your escape and try to reach the Sipah Salar." His arguments were sound and impressed me. I made up my mind to leave the fort. As I had made no preparations ahead for such an occasion, and all our horses and means of transport had fallen to the enemy, I had to walk the distance on foot. Asmattullah Khan, who was still with me in the fort, finding me in this miserable plight, could not restrain his tears. Approaching me he said, "You have been so kind to me and have spared my life. Even now when my people are fighting you, you do me no harm. I will never forget your kindness. Now I don't want to see you in trouble. I advise you to leave this place without further delay, and save your life." Thanking him for his good wishes, I left the fort, having nothing with me but a plain national costume and a pair of sandals, which I had put on. Mohammad Gul Khan, with a pistol in his hand, led the way.

The people of Gardez, with their wives, children and live stock, were leaving the town in great confusion. It was a most pathetic sight. I was following this wretched caravan on foot,

The Sulaimankhels from behind and the Darikhels from the top of their mountains kept a withering fire on these homeless people. Sometimes they would not hesitate to come forward and lay their hands on the property of these poor people. Women, fearing imprisonment or molestation at the hands of the enemy, were throwing away their babies to be able to run quickly. I was so upset to observe their miserable condition that I totally forgot myself and my safety measures. Walking carelessly through thorny bushes, my legs and feet were swollen and covered with blisters and bruises.

The Wardakis, with their ammunition totally exhausted, were quite defenceless. They were trying to carry their wounded friends and relatives to safety. But they, too, were not immune from the pursuing enemy. Walking behind the caravan, we reached the Rud-i-Ahmadzai. Now destitute of everything, especially cartridges, I could do nothing to help these unlucky people. All the way I was absorbed in deep thoughts, blaming the people for their mutual animosities, which had been the chief cause of this calamity. I was buried in these thoughts, when all of a sudden I found some horsemen following me from behind. Approaching nearer, I found that one of them was Hazrat Sahib, who was accompanied by Adam Khan Kharoti, carrying Ibrahim Jan, Hazrat's son with him on the horseback. Greeting me, they passed by me with great speed. A few minutes later another horseman came trotting along. Mohammad Gul Khan, who was dressing my wounds at this time, drawing his pistol, aimed it at him and bade him to stop. We soon learned that it was a brother of Adam Khan Kharoti, who was following Hazrat Sahib. Without consulting me, Mohammad Gul Khan, with the help of Ghulam Mohiuddin and Nuruddin, caught hold of the horseman's bridle and forced him to dismount, telling that it did not behove him to ride while Sardar Shah Wali Khan was walking on foot. The situation being grave, I accepted the decision of my followers. Riding the horse, I wanted to reach the Sipah Salar in the shortest possible time. But the horse could not run quickly or smoothly. It was staggering as if loaded with something heavy. On searching the bags, I found them

loaded heavily with silver coins. The owner, coming from behind, requested me again and again that the horse be given to him. Taking pity on the poor soul, I restored him the horse with the money. Pleased to get his horse and cash, he left us in great haste, while I had to resume my journey once more on foot in the company of my faithful friends.

An hour later, a fourth horseman came galloping by. Seeing me walking on foot, he dismounted. Holding the reins of his horse, he came forward to meet me. From the gleam of his eyes, I learned that it was a friend. My guess was right. The newcomer, paying his respects, said to me, "I am a Hazara. Perhaps you remember I was your servant long ago, when you were holding the post of *Rikab-Bashi*. This horse is my private property. It is a shame for me to ride a horse while you are walking on foot. I give it to you, the horse with saddle is now your property." His brave words and his friendly gesture impressed me very much. I refused to accept the offer but to no avail. Holding the reins of his horse, he asked me to ride. Complying with his request, Morad Ali, the Hazara, kissed my hands and went on his way at great speed. We had hardly gone a few steps, when we found that General Mohammad Shah, who had now recovered from his wounds, was riding a pony; and encircled by a band of soldiers was coming in our direction. I asked the Wardaki soldiers to take him to Sajanak as quickly as possible. Mohammad Gul Khan, with a pistol in his hand, was leading the way, while Gulam Mohiduddin and Nuruddin were walking beside me.

Shortly afterwards we caught a glimpse of the high walls of Jandad Khan's fort, where Ghaussud Din had assembled a large gathering and was making preparation to shift his family to a safer place. One of his followers hurriedly came to me saying that his chief would like to meet me. Mohammad Gul Khan did not like the idea and requested me to continue the journey onward without a break until we had reached the Sipah Salar. Agreeing with him, I refused to meet Ghausud Din, saying that the time at our disposal was short and we must move ahead with all speed. After covering a long distance, we reached the Totakhej's villages and the fort of Gul Mohammad Khan. The

road onward was immune from danger, so he requested to be allowed to go home and take his family to Jaji. After half an hour we met Mohammad Hassan Khan Haji, who was coming from Sajanak. We asked him whether he had any news of the Sipah Salar. He said that he was invited at Janbaz Khan Charkhi's fort for lunch. I found that it was not a proper place to call a halt. Tearing a leaf from my notebook, I wrote these lines on it with a pencil, "Gardez has fallen to the Sulaimankhels. The situation is most critical. Gardezis, Admadzais and Totakhels were all forced to leave their homes and migrate to Jaji. Please come to Sajanak without delay. I will be anxiously waiting for your arrival."

I instructed Malik Hassan Khan to take the letter to the Sipah Salar with all possible haste. Continuing my journey onward, I reached Sanjanak before sunset. Entering the room of the Sipah Salar, in the second storey of the building, I was able to have a complete survey of the whole expanse all around. In the redding rays of the setting sun, I could discern a band of horsemen galloping towards us. To my joy it was the Sipah Salar and his followers heading towards Sajanak.

. 22 .

JOURNEY TO JAJI

While sitting with the Sipah Salar in his room, I gave a pathetic account of what had passed at Gardez and informed him fully of the danger that was threatening Sajanak. Incidentally I drew his attention towards the column of dust raised by the fleeing refugees, who were coming from Gardez *via* Rud-i-Ahmadzai and Totakhel, and heading towards Jaji. The night grew darker and darker and with it our hopes became dimmer and dimmer. Delay was suicidal. I proposed that we all should leave for Jaji immediately; our further stay at Sajanak was neither useful to us nor to those homeless people who were closely following us. Allah Nawaz Khan, Haji Nawab Khan and most of the others who had assembled there agreed with me, and requested the Sipah Salar to leave for Jaji without waste of time, the sooner the better. I pointed out that in Jaji we would be able to join the forces assembled by Shah Mahmud Khan. Then with the consultation of all the tribes, a joint programme could be worked out, which, I hoped, would lead to our success. We, therefore, took the road leading to Jaji. Being short of horses, we who owned horses decided to help those who could not procure any means of conveyance for themselves. Each was to give a lift to one of these people. I decided to pick up Haji Nawab Khan, who was both weak and far advanced in age. He would ride by turns with me and with Allah Nawaz Khan.

The road leading to Jaji was rough, narrow, and dangerous and passed through dense forests. A pitch dark night prevailed everywhere which added to our difficulties. The rattling of rifles could be heard intermittently from long distances. Onward lay a steep

and dangerous pass. Reaching there we found it completely calm and quiet; only the clattering of hoofs of horses and ponies could be heard. We reached the Hazardasht Pass at midnight. At the top of the pass torches of pine wood were seen moving from place to place. By the light of these torches we could see some people coming down the hill, trying to block our passage. We were expecting some trouble at their hands. Fortunately, contrary to our fears, they were very friendly to us. Recognizing the Sipah Salar, they came forward to pay their respects.

The chief of the hamlet getting this news came forward to kiss the stirrup of Sipah Salar's horse. He advised him not to take the risk of going ahead on such a dark night through such a dense forest. He invited the Sipah Salar to his fort, requesting him to pass the night there with his followers, and to leave the fort at the break of day. The Sipah Salar gladly accepted the invitation and his proposal. We all left for the fort. The passage lay through the heart of a thick forest, the protruding branches of the trees compelled us to dismount and walk the distance on foot, leading the horses by their reins. It was with much difficulty that we were able to reach the hamlet of that old man. The *malik* gave us a warm reception. Lighting a huge fire, he sat with us all through the night. Early next day, after morning prayer, we thanked our host, and then resumed our journey. Walking through dense forests, crawling, tumbling and falling, we were at last able to reach Jaji, our destination at 2 p.m. At Alikhel, Shah Mahmud Khan, accompanied by a large gathering of local chiefs and *maliks*, gave us a warm reception. We soon learned that during the last few days he was busy collecting a large force with the intention of leading an attack on Gardez. On our approach, he had to postpone his plan for a while. The Sipah Salar, on reaching Ali Khel, went out to inspect Shah Mahmud's force, which was mainly recruited from among the young, brave and enthusiastic Jajis. It was decided to hold a tribal Jirga at Jaji as soon as possible to determine the future line of action.



*H.R.H. Sardar Shah Mahmud Ghazi
He played an important role in the War of
Independence (1919) and in the Liberation
of the country (in 1929)*

. 23 .

BENEATH SHADY PINES

The situation was extremely critical. Gardez was lost and the Sulaimankhels *en masse* had joined hands with Habibullah, our enemy. The Ahmadzais and Totakhels were now homeless, leading a miserable life. Sajanak too, had fallen to the enemy. The Jajis, who had collected a large force with the intention of coming to our help at Gardez, were in the beginning very pleased to learn about our success. They had learned with great joy that we had been able to rout the Kabul army led by Mohammad Siddiq, and that its leader was wounded and forced to seek safety in flight. Now, however, they were greatly dismayed to see our sad plight and to know that we had lost Gardez. They did not know what the future had in store for them. Those, who had come from distant France to help them in their distress and who had proved their ability on many a battlefield, never knowing what defeat was, were now beaten and were in full retreat taking refuge in Jaji.

Under the shade of huge *panjachinar* trees, where the Jajis used to hold *jirgahs* from time immemorial to make important decisions, now big carpets were spread to receive the fugitive leader and his companions. The Sipah Salar came and took his seat, encircled on all sides by tribesmen who had come from far and near to hear him speak and throw light on the critical political situation of the country. All eyes were turned on him. The Sipah Salar first of all gave a graphic description of the current events. He explained how in the beginning we had the upper hand and were able to take Gardez and rout the forces led by Mohammad Siddiq. Then he referred to the arrogant letter of Ghaussuddin Khan addressed to the Sulaimankhels, who were excited and made an attack on Gardez. He

related the story how in the first three days we had hard pressed the enemy. Finally, he spoke of the rift and dissensions among our tribes and the shortage of ammunition, that led to our discomfiture and the fall of Gardez into the enemy's hand.

It soon became apparent that the audience was not so much interested in what had passed, rather they looked to the future and wanted to know what the Sipah Salar planned to do next.

They were keen to hear directly from their national hero, he ; who had led them to success in the War of Independence a decade ago, and he who had now come from France with shattered health and empty pocket as to what he had up his sleeve. They had been hearing the stories of his heroic deeds since childhood. But now they were at a loss to know how he was to cope with the situation. Gardez was totally lost and the enemy was knocking at the door of Sajanak and Jaji. King Amanullah had been forced to leave the country; the major portion of the country had fallen to the lot of Habibullah. How was the Sipah Salar to release his wife and children, who were living a miserable life in some Kabul jail? Would he be able to lead his army, now mostly recruited from business-minded Jajis, to final victory? These were some of the questions that puzzled everybody.

After narrating the events in detail, concealing nothing from his audience, the Sipah Salar touched the main point with extreme frankness and sincerity, and this was the topic which the people were anxious to hear. He said :

“Now that the situation has become so critical, let me tell you frankly that there are three courses left for your consideration. First and foremost is the question of your welfare which is your private affair. Since we have come here your business has suffered a good deal. Leaving your work, you have bravely joined us in order to liberate your motherland. Twice under the leadership of my brother, Shah Mahmud, you have fought the enemy at Khushi, and have sustained heavy losses. We are not in a position to compensate

you for what you have suffered and lost. You are fully aware that Habibullah has distributed notices by aeroplanes, promising the huge sum of 600,000 afghanis to those who would hand us, the three brothers, over to him. The easiest way to tackle this problem is to kill us, and then severing our heads, send them to Kabul. By this procedure you will get the promised reward of 600,000 afghanis, and will be able to save your lives, honour and property from the wrath of the tyrant. We too will have achieved our aim, which is no more than sacrificing our lives at the altar of our motherland.

The second alternative is, depending upon God and His mercy, to take a bold step and with a firm determination to fight tyranny. Success does not depend entirely on physical forces. It is a gift of God. The All-powerful Creator supports those who are on the right path. We know our cause is right. We want to fight to preserve the independence and honour of our country and to keep it safe from destruction and disgrace. This is a sacred cause and we are sure of final victory.

The third course left to you, which I don't think you will adopt, is to spare our lives and turn us out of your territory. But let me make my point clear to you once for all that we three brothers have resolved to lay our lives here in the presence of your youth and facing our national flag. We are not going to quit our sacred soil at any cost. No circumstances can make us change our mind or cause us to desist from our determination. We cannot afford to see our country in the grip of a bloody civil war and leaving it burning in flames go out to enjoy a comfortable life somewhere else."

The audience at this stage could not restrain their feelings. Their cheers and shouts deafened the ears. I cannot forget this moving scene and the excitement of the audience. The elders of the Jajis went out of the assembly and had a council among themselves. After half an hour they came back, and with word

full of sincerity, honesty and bravery, showed their readiness to co-operate with the Sipah Salar, promising every kind of help and sacrifice. All of them took a solemn oath, declaring that as long as they lived they would continue to fight until the national goal was reached. The youth of Jajis, who had come with their flags, were keenly watching the procedure. Agreeing with their elders, they shouted at the top of their voice that they would never return home and were prepared to march straight on Gardez. The Sipah Salar thanked them for their noble sentiments and advised them to have patience and wait until a new plan was drafted and the homeless people of Gardez, Ahmadzai and Totakhel had time to reach Jaji. For the time being they should look after the needs of the unfortunate people.

We stayed in Jaji for a few days. The refugees from Gardez kept streaming in and were distributed among several villages. Some were even sent to Chamkani and other distant places that were still outside the influence of Habibullah. It was at this time that the Sipah Salar decided to publish a paper in order to inform the people of his plans and as to what was going on in the Southern Province. The paper was called *Islah* (Reformation) and was printed by a small mineograph machine. Nassarullah Khan, son of Haji Nawab Khan, was in charge of it, while Nauroz Khan was to provide the propaganda material. The first issue of the paper was circulated in the month of August, 1929. It was distributed all over the country by various means. We soon learned that the paper was becoming extremely popular with all sections of people. It was strictly banned within the sphere of Habibullah's influence and the defaulters were warned of severe punishment. In spite of the strict vigilance of the enemy, the paper found its way to all parts of the country and had a wide circulation in all classes of people, passing from hand to hand.

The country at this stage was in the grip of a severe crisis. His Majesty King Amanullah, who had come out of Kandahar with a considerable force intending to drive Habibullah out of the capital, was defeated by the combined forces of the Bacha and

Sulaimankhels even before he could reach Ghazni. He was forced to fall back hurriedly and retrace his steps towards Kandahar. Finally in May, 1929, collecting the members of his family, he left Kandahar for Bombay *via* Kala-i-Jadid. Similarly, Sirdar Inayattullah Khan, his eldest brother, who had joined him at Kandahar, was forced to follow suit and go out of the country. Ali Ahmad Khan, one-time Governor of Kabul, who after the departure of King Amanullah had declared himself king at Kandahar, was imprisoned by Habibullah's partisans and sent to Kabul in disgrace. The Brigand-Chief, at this time, was at the zenith of his power. Besides Kabul, Ghazni, Jalalabad, Gardez and Kandahar, he was in full possession of Kataghan, Mazar and Maimana as well.

Ghulam Nabi Khan Charkhi, who had come to Mazar through Russia and had fought a few sanguinary battles, on learning that Amanullah Khan had left Afghanistan, gave up the contest and returned to Russia. Shujauddula, Afghan Minister-Plenipotentiary in London, and later the Administrative Head of Herat, was also forced to seek safety in flight and return to Europe through Iran. The Eastern Province, because of tribal jealousies and discord, had succumbed to the enemy. In short the whole country was in a miserable plight. Every day heart-breaking news came in to depress the spirit of the masses. We learnt that fresh troops, headed by Pur Dil Khan, Habibullah's Commander-in-Chief, had arrived at Gardez and that all the roads leading to Lohgard were in the hands of the enemy. General Mohammad Omar Khan, *alias* Soor General, had encamped at Karez Dervish and Bedak, blocking the passage with heavy guns and other military devices. From the reports coming in we knew that Habibullah had plans to launch an all-out attack on Jaji simultaneously from the Waghojan Pass, Karez Dervish, Khushi and Shuttargarden. Pur Dil Khan had also his own plans to advance on Jaji *via* Rud-i-Ahmadzai. Despite this discouraging news, Shah Mahmud Khan, at the head of a small *lashkar*, mostly composed of Jajis, led an attack on Khushi (July 19, 1929). After inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy, he returned safely to his base, bringing with him a

large number of prisoners. This was the last attempt on his part to take Khushi. Previously in the month of May, as a result of a brave dash, he had occupied Khushi. But later at the fall of Dir, he was forced to withdraw his forces and go to Sajanak to join the Sipah Salar. Similarly, in the month of August he had led an attack on Mirzaka, and a few days later, he had a contested battle with the forces that had come out of Gardez against him. After routing the enemy, he was in a position to advance as far as Baladeh. On August 20 he returned to Mirzaka, and next day fought a severe battle. Driving the enemy back, he was able to capture a large number of prisoners. The last contested battle was fought at the foot of the Sayid Kurran Mountain. After a display of unusual bravery and inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy, he returned to his base in Jaji.

. 24 .

THE FINAL PLAN

Eight months had passed since we left France and our stay in Jaji lingered on indefinitely. Except for this small area, the whole of Afghanistan was forcibly occupied by the enemy. The cold weather was fast approaching. The Jajis were suffering a good deal because they could not attend to their normal daily affairs. The arrival of refugees from Gardez affected their economy adversely. The enemy planes flew as far as Jaji both for reconnaissance and distribution of proclamations. We had no regular army and no commissariat. We were short of arms and ammunition and had no means of protection against winter; and above all we were lacking the means of buying our day-to-day necessities. The members of our family were in prison, and during these eight long months, we had received only two letters from them. The first of these informed us that they were still alive. The second was written by the wife of the Sipah Salar, in which she, after depicting their miserable life, had said, "I beg you not to be worried about our sad plight. Trust us and our affairs to God. Mind your duty with courage and integrity of purpose, and try to advance on Kabul as soon as possible. Don't mind if we are slain because of that."

Days passed and all were impatiently waiting to know the final decision of the Sipah Salar to meet the situation. At last the day did arrive. The Sipah Salar invited Sirdar Shah Mahmud Khan, Allah Nawaz Khan and the writer to his presence, and explained his final plan, which he had prepared during those hectic days. He had suggested that before the fall of snow and the consequent blocking of roads and passes leading to the Capital, an all-out assault be launched

straight on Kabul. Our success depended on speed. We were short of everything. We had no protection against winter and cold weather. The people of the Southern Province for a long time had not been able to attend to their ordinary affairs and this added greatly to their difficulties.

In accordance with this new plan, I was to go to Dobandi, accompanied by a tribal *lashkar* consisting mostly of the Ahmadzais, Jadranis and Jajis. Thereafter putting things in order, I was ordered to get fresh instructions from the Sipah Salar. Dobandi lies half way between Jaji and Khushi.

Allah Nawaz Khan and Haji Nawab Khan were instructed to leave for Waziristan and persuade the Waziris to send their *lashkars* to the Sipah Salar. Sardar Shah Mahmud Ghazi was to lead an attack on Gardez against the forces commanded by Pur Dil Khan. In case he could not take the town, he was instructed at any rate to keep them fully occupied, allowing no rest.

Allah Nawaz Khan and Haji Nawab Khan soon after left for Waziristan. Shah Mahmud Khan also departed on his mission, while I, after making necessary preparations, left Jaji on Sunbala 30 (September 22) on my way to Qasimkhel. I had six hundred men under my command, four hundred of them being Jajis, while the rest was composed of various tribes who had accompanied me from Gardez. I still had innumerable difficulties to overcome. In very cold weather I was destitute of every thing—tents, beds, and even ammunition. The weapons which we possessed were those brought by the people themselves.

We halted first at Dobandi for a few days. I was allotted a small room in a village hut, having only one door and very little ventilation.

One could easily guess from this as to how others had to live. I was busy night and day with the work assigned to me and was also impatiently waiting for orders allowing me to advance on Kabul. At last after a good deal of waiting a letter did arrive from the Sipah Salar informing me that next day Allah Nawaz Khan and Haji Nawab Khan would reach Dobandi at

the head of a large force of Waziris. Immediately after their arrival, I was instructed to leave for Khushi, and from there an advance was to be made direct on Kabul.

Allah Nawaz Khan had not yet come when I got a second letter from the Sipah Salar conveying very disheartening news. The British Government had protested strongly against our approach to the trans-border Waziris with the intention of getting help, threatening that if these people did not return to their homes in Waziristan immediately, the British planes would not hesitate to bombard their houses and families. This unexpected notice and at such a critical time, when we were on the point of launching an attack on Kabul, naturally caused much anxiety to the Sipah Salar. I was, therefore, ordered to advance on the Capital without delay.

The Waziris reached my camp at Dobandi in the evening. A second group came on Mizan 5 (September 28). The total number of these new arrivals was only three thousand, out of which nearly one-third had no weapons with them. I was glad to see that each one of them was sincerely desirous to co-operate with us in the liberation of Afghanistan. They attached no importance to the British threats. My joy knew no bounds at getting this fresh *lashkar*. Going forward, I kissed their faces after Afghan fashion. After consulting Allah Nawaz Khan, it was decided to proceed towards Khushi early next morning, and from there to launch an all-out attack on Kabul.

At 10 p. m., I received a third letter from the Sipah Salar conveying again sad news. We were informed that in spite of best efforts on the part of Sardar Mohammad Hashim Khan, the Eastern Province had completely fallen to our enemy. The chief cause of this setback had been the news of the fall of Kandahar and the rift among the eastern tribes themselves. Sardar Hashim Khan, falling back, wanted to reach the Southern Province by crossing the White Mountain. But losing his way on a dark night, he found himself in Tootgai, where the British authorities had detained him and would not permit him to recross the border into the Afghan territory. In his last letter, the Sipah Salar had insisted that the advance on Kabul should in no case be delayed.

He had advised us to attack Habibullah's posts at Tangi Waghojan, where his main forces were concentrated and were strongly entrenched. We had neither rest nor sleep that night. At dawn we began our advance. By 12 noon we were able to cross the Shuttarga rden Pass. On our way we met Sardar Mohammed Amin Khan, son of Amir Habibullah Khan, who was going to India, accompanied by a few followers. Mohammed Amin Khan, after the collapse of Amanullah Khan's regime, had gone to Hazarajat to seek help from the Hazaras against Bacha Sqa. But finally, being beaten, he had to seek safety in flight. I advised him to meet the Sipah Salar on his way to Jaji. This he did, but I came to know later that he had declined the offer to stay with us and co-operate in the national movement.

. 25 .

KHUSHI

We reached Khushi on the evening of sixth Mizan (September 29), and decided to stay there for a night or so. On Mizan the 8th, with complete instructions and a map, I sent an advance column to surprise the enemy's garrison at Tangiwohajan at night. Next day I was expecting some news of this expedition. It was late at night when the column returned successfully from the mission assigned to it, bringing with it some three hundred prisoners. I was glad to learn, that in keeping with my instructions, the assault was launched at the scheduled time and that Habibullah's troops, after putting up a feeble resistance, were forced to leave their trenches and seek safety in flight. As mentioned above, our forces in this expedition showed unusual courage and discipline, but at the end they made a serious mistake. Instead of appointing a group of tribesmen to guard the pass and keep the trenches, as I had instructed, they had abandoned the post altogether and had returned to their base in Khushi. However, I expressed my thanks and appreciation for their valour and successful venture, and at the same time made them fully aware of the blunder they had made.

I decided to send the three hundred prisoners to the Sipah Salar in Jaji. Next day, after they were gone, we came to Zarghoonshhar, reaching it late at night. It was here that Muhammad Gul Khan Mohmand came to join us. He had been working with Sardar Muhammad Hashim Khan in the Eastern Province, and in the beginning had achieved signal successes, advancing as far as Chakari. But then the tide turned against him and after the fall of the Eastern Province

to our enemy, he went to Jaji, where he was instructed by the Sipah Salar to come to me and co-operate with me.

As I had rightly guessed, the enemy taking advantage of our negligence, once again occupied Tangiwaghojan and this time they greatly fortified their position. This post from the military point of view was very important, as it guarded the routes leading to Kabul from the south. We were busy until midnight drawing a new plan. Finally it was decided that before dawn all our forces should converge on the plain lying between Tangiwaghojan and Zarghoonshhar and wait there for my instructions. Next day I was pleased to see that all units had arrived in time at the place assigned. The Waziris were on the right, while the centre was occupied by the Jajis, Mangals and Jadranis. I assigned each unit its duty, ordering them that with the break of day, availing themselves of the first light of the sun, they were to launch an attack on Tangiwaghojan from three directions. This plan was strictly carried out and severe battle took place for the possession of the above pass. The enemy fought with courage and determination for full two hours. Finally after sustaining heavy losses, they had to fall back. One group took to the road leading to Mohammedagha, while the second departed in great haste towards Karez Dervish, hotly pursued by Allah Nawaz Khan, who was leading a strong force of the Waziris and Mangals. I sent a message to Allah Nawaz Khan, as well as to Malik Kako, son of Pak, and Malik Mohammed Jan, the chief of the nomads, to desist from further pursuit of the fleeing enemy, so that we should unite our forces and march together on Kabul. Allah Nawaz Khan wrote back telling me that he would follow the retreating enemy right up to Mohammedagha. The enemy forces there, too, could not make a stand and took to flight. Their leader, Brigadier Abdul Gias Khan and a colonel fell into our hands and by my order both of them were shot dead on the spot.

Our forces, giving the enemy no rest or time to reorganize, reached Charasiab on Mizan 13 (October 6, 1929). It was not possible to call a halt or return to the base. The Bacha's forces were in full flight. Meanwhile, our second army, pursuing

the retreating enemy, was able to reach Zarghoonshahr. Next day, October 7, I left for Charasiab. All along the way the villagers came out to welcome us. Shouts of joy and exultation were heard from all sides, while women taking part in these rejoicings were offering food and fruits to our *lashkars* and praying earnestly for our final victory. Ghulam Haider Khan, the head treasurer who had a garden along the road, invited us to tea. I appointed Mohammed Gul Khan Mohmand to march at the head of a tribal *lashkar*, composed of nomad Ahmadzais, Ahmadzairud and Totakhel, straight on Kabul *via* the fort of Hashmat Khan, while I myself accompanied by the *lashkars* of Jajis, Mangals and Jadrans, left for Hindaki, in the Chardeh Valley.

. 26 .

AROUND THE CAPITAL

We reached Hindaki without much opposition. Now only the Sherdarwaza Mountain intervened between our forces and those of the defenders of Kabul. This mountain and the one next to it, called Takht-i-Babarshah (the Throne of King Babar), were strongly fortified and guarded by long-range guns. As soon as we reached Hindaki, these guns were active and kept up a withering fire on our positions. Cannon boomed and shells burst all around our lines. This forced us to take shelter behind trenches. The two guns which we had brought with us from Khost also went into action from near the Chihiltoon Palace. At this time Allah Nawaz Khan joined us with all the forces at his command. The night was spent on the slope of the mountain. Though the enemy was fully equipped with modern weapons, had large quantities of ammunition, and was in possession of the strategic points, we determined to take the offensive next day. The night was spent in preparations. Early next morning the attack was launched in the face of incessant firing from the enemy lines. Our forces began to advance slowly but steadily towards the Takht-i-Babarshah and Sherdarwaza Mountains. After a contested duel lasting a few hours, enemy's guns were silenced. The capture of the Sherdarwaza Mountain made the defenders fall back and vacate the Asmai Hill as well.

On Mizan 15 (October 8), Zalmai Khan Mangal, Zamarak Khan Jadrani, Malik Jan Jaji, together with all the other tribal chiefs, came to me at the Zamboorak Hill, commanding the city and its vicinity. The battle was raging fiercely on all sides,

and the enemy's long range and heavy guns from the Maranjan Hills and Balahissar bombarded our positions incessantly.

At this critical juncture, when the battle swayed to and fro, Mohammed Gul Khan Mohmand, at the head of a large force, entered the battlefield by way of Qala-e-Hashmat Khan. A branch of this force headed towards Siyah Sang and the Yaklinga Pass, meeting a very stiff opposition all the way. The battle lasted from dawn to sunset. Night approached ; the city and the suburbs put on a dark mantle, but the rattling of rifles and guns rent the air and gave the poor citizens of Kabul no rest. At this time when the fate of battle hung in balance, I received very bad news. Mohammed Omar Khan (Soor General), a famous officer of King Amanullah's army and now commanding enemy forces in the Lohgard Valley, leaving his post and men behind, came to me all alone with the information that Habibullah's forces from Lohgard and the Southern Province were all marching at a great speed for the relief of Kabul. Besides, Pur Dil Khan, the Commander-in-Chief, was also on his way to the capital at the head of his strong force. This news coupled with the information that our stores of ammunition were nearly exhausted caused us indescribable anxiety.

At the same time to add to my worries I learned that urgent messages had been sent by Habibullah to his forces stationed in Mazar, the Eastern Province, and Kandahar to leave their posts at once and come for the relief of Kabul. The situation was extremely desperate. The only course left to us was to take advantage of the darkness of night and launch an all-out attack. I consulted the tribal chiefs on this point. It met unanimous approval. Allah Nawaz Khan and Gul Mohammed Khan were duly informed of our plan. It was decided to announce the offensive by the beating of drums from the Zamboorak Hills.

. 27 .

THE FINAL ATTACK

Preparations were made immediately. On Mizan 16 (October 9), at about 10 p. m., I ordered the Waziris to beat their drums from the Zamboorak Hills. All the other drums stationed at the Sherdarwaza and Asmai Hills followed suit, making a terrific noise. Our forces, surging like waves, began to descend the hills. The city was wrapped in darkness. All through the night I kept awake, following the new developments. Three points were in my mind. First and foremost was the pitiable condition of the people of Kabul, who for nine long months had been suffering all sorts of tortures and extortions at the hands of the relentless tyrant and his men, and were now impatiently waiting for their release. I was very keen to see peace restored and these poor people able to breathe freely once again. The second point worth consideration at this critical stage was to make the people of Kohistan and Kohdaman understand that they had been led astray by Habibullah and should now desist from supporting him and abstain from further resistance and shedding of innocent blood, for they, too, were the children of the soil. My third concern was about the safety of our families, who were shut up in Ali Ahmad Khan's *serai* and were undergoing all sorts of tortures.

Day dawned, and I approached the city. I wanted to reach the people and keep them and their property safe from assault and plunder. I had not yet arrived at my destination, when I saw Qurban, the servant of the late Sardar Mohammed Sulaiman, approaching me. He conveyed the heart-rending news that during the night all the members of our

family had been taken out from Ali Ahmad Khan's *serai* and were imprisoned in the Arg (Citadel). By way of Kharabat and Shorebazaar, I left for Mehmankhana, now the seat of Kabul Governor, which the enemy by that time had vacated completely. Everywhere the people of Kabul received us enthusiastically. Hopeful of their bright future, they welcomed us with much warmth. But I was greatly moved and shocked to see them tired and exhausted.

While passing through the Shorebazaar, I met Sardar Sher Ahmad Khan, Sardar Faiz Mohammed Khan and a large number of other friends, who had come out to receive us. Everywhere the people encircled my horse and greeted me warmly. Our difficulties were not yet over. The Royal Arg was besieged but not yet taken. Habibullah and his men from within the Citadel had put up a strong resistance. I took my headquarters in Vilayet (old Mehmankhana), as it was lying in the centre of the city and close to the Arg. It was here that Sardar Mohammed Omar Khan, son of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan and other prominent figures of the city, who had been fortunate enough to escape with their lives from this general catastrophe, came to meet me. Ahmad Wali and Abdul Wali, my two sons, who had been kept secretly by one of my loyal servants all through these hectic days, also visited me. I took immediate steps to restore order. An armed force was sent to look after the city, while guards were stationed at various points to protect the life and property of the representatives of foreign countries. A few guards were also posted at the houses of some prominent figures. Mohammed Wali Khan, Regent of King Amanullah Khan, did not make his appearance pretending that he was suffering from some foot injury, but requested me to send a few guards to his house as most of the people regarded him as being pro-Habibullah. The request was immediately complied with. As people from all sides were streaming into the city, including the notorious Hootkhels, and there was no police force at this time, I left the Vilayet to a band of guards and shifted my headquarters to the house of Ghulam Nabi, near the Shrine of Shah-e-Doshamshera. With God's grace, in a very short time, I was able to



After triumph over forces of ignorance and tyranny, the chiefs, elders and notables of Kabul together with foreign diplomats pay their respects and tender their felicitations to Sardar Shah Wali Khan, the Victor (1st row, 4th from left). Next to him (5th from left) stands Sardar Mohammed Hashim Khan, the first Afghan Prime Minister, whose Government was in power from 1929 to 1946.

establish peace and order throughout the city. Next day, Sardar Shah Mahmud Ghazi also arrived with his *lashkar* of Jajis. The Arg was still in the hands of our enemy. On the second day of siege, Habibullah, opening the western gate of the Citadel, tried to escape. Akram of Kohistan, who was fighting on our side, was shot dead by Habibullah himself.

On the third day news came that Purdil Khan had reached the suburbs of Kabul and wanted to attack the city by way of Bagh-i-Bala, Sirdar Shah Mahmud Khan and I hurriedly collected a considerable force from among the people of the Southern Province now stationed in different parts of the city, and headed towards Shahrara. A battle took place between Bagh-i-Bala and Shahrara. In spite of bold resistance on the part of Purdil and his men, they were routed and Purdil was among the slain. His body was taken to the city and for a few hours was seen dangling in the air at Chawk, centre of the city.

Shortly after, another news arrived that Sayid Hussain, with all the forces at his command, had come out of Mazar and was marching on Kabul with all speed. Another force from Jalalabad was on its way to the Capital. Dangers were threatening us on all sides and the situation was about to get out of control. All depended on speed, but we could not bombard the Arg without the knowledge and permission of the Sipah Salar himself, because all the members of our family were imprisoned there. We sent an express letter to the Sipah Salar about this dedicate situation and waited his instructions impatiently. At this time we were passing through a most critical ordeal. Fresh enemy forces were approaching Kabul from all sides and our store of ammunition was nearly exhausted. The citizens were feeling extremely uneasy and were afraid of the danger lying ahead. Two days passed in anxiety and no letter came from the Sipah Salar. On the night of the third a reply did arrive. Opening it I read it hurriedly. The Sipah Salar in his letter had preferred to sacrifice his kith and kin for the sake of his country and countrymen. It ran thus, "At this hour of trial when the choice lies between the safety of my relatives and the deliverance

of the nation, I do not hesitate to sacrifice the former. I, therefore, order you to begin the bombardment of the Arg without the slightest consideration for our dear ones." Immediately after going through the letter, steps were taken to bombard the Citadel. Two guns were posted at the Sherdarwaza and Asmai Hills, while three other heavy guns were brought into action from the Chardeh Valley and the Kotwali dome where now stands the building of the Afghan National Bank. Shah Mahmud Khan and I went to Charbagh, next to the present Central Post Office. The citizens were keenly watching this historic scene. Enemy cannon and machineguns from the Arg were active, keeping incessant volley of bullets and shrapnel raining on us. Mohammed Yaqub Khan, the famous Afghan gunner, who had had his training in Paris, was now ordered to make use of his heavy French gun and bombard the southern gate of the Arg. Nobody knew whether the cannon ball would hit the chest of a foe or that of a friend. I fired the second round myself. Simultaneously the other guns posted at Asmai, Sherdarwaza and Kotwali also roared. All of a sudden a terrible sound was heard from the Arg. The store of explosive material had been hit by one of our balls and the Royal Arg was in a blaze resembling that of a huge furnace. Columns of smoke and fire shot up into the sky. The enemy guns kept silent and we also stopped firing. Night came and still the situation was not clear. No one knew what had become of our families. All the night, flames encircled the Arg—what a terrible and unforgettable spectacle !

. 28 .

A TRICK

At 9 p.m., a mission including Sardar Ali Shah Khan, a Sheikh and two *mullas*, arrived from the Arg. The Sheikh and the *mullas* each had a white flag. The message of Habibullah was short but threatening. It ran thus : "Very soon all the buildings inside the Citadel will burn to ashes. Your family members will also perish in the flames. There is only one course left to save their lives. Allow me to proceed to India safely. I will surrender myself to you. If this is acceptable to you, your families will certainly escape death, otherwise after two hours nothing but a heap of ashes will remain of them."

The Sheikh, who was the spiritual leader of Habibullah himself, together with the two *mullas* who had accompanied him, affirmed this statement made by Sardar Ali Shah Khan. I consulted Sardar Shah Mahmud Khan and the tribal leaders on this point. The discussions lasted for two hours. In order to stop further bloodshed and destruction, we accepted the request of Habibullah. Sending the Sheikh and the *mullas* back to the Arg with our decision, we detained Ali Shah Khan with us. At 12 p.m., one of the *mullas* coming back told us that they had been deceived by Habibullah, who wanted to avail himself of the opportunity. After they were sent to our camp and we held the discussions, he, taking advantage of the situation, had opened the northern gate and had escaped to Kohdaman with a handful of his followers.

. 29 .

MEETING THE FAMILY

We all were much dismayed to learn that Habibullah and his ringleaders had escaped by playing such a nasty trick. Anyhow, we sent Abdul Ghani Khan Mohammedzai and General Mohammed Shah Khan to get to the Arg, verify the news and get further information. Out of anxiety, I could not wait longer and decided to go after them on foot in the darkness. On finding the eastern and southern gates closed, I walked to the northern gate. Hardly had I reached the present residence of Sardar Shah Mahmud Khan, when I saw something black moving along the street. My companions held their breath, with their fingers on the trigger of their rifles ready for any emergency. At this time we heard the voice of Abdul Ghani Khan crying loudly : "These are the family members of the Sipah Salar." Hearing this I went forward with all haste. God be thanked, I found all of them safe. This at once reminded me of a Persian line, which I had committed to memory when I was only a child. It runs thus :

"If the protector is He whom I know

He keeps glass safe even in the bosom of a hard stone."

Tears of joy flowed down my cheeks. Looking into their faces, I found them extremely weak and fatigued. Clothing torn to pieces, faces lean and pale, bodies emaciated, they were all in a deplorable condition. Seeing them alive and safe, I knelt on my knees to thank the Almighty for His kindness and mercy.

. 30 .

A PATHETIC SCENE

The light of day revealed the extent of destruction of the Royal Citadel. Columns of smoke were still rising up from the debris below. People from far and near were busy plundering what had been left behind. Bags of money, fine carpets, rare museum articles, manuscripts of inestimable value, and important Government documents passed from hand to hand at incredibly low prices. I was mostly concerned with goods pertaining to the museum, and tried my best to protect these from the hands of the plunderers. Incidentally, I saw a Hootkhel, who, taking a heavy bag, was about to leave the Arg. I wanted to dissuade him from carrying it out of the palace. But he would not listen to me. Enraged at his intransigence, I used force. Taking the leg of a broken cot from among the debris and using it as a club, I struck him on his shoulder. Not recognizing who I was, he drew his knife and threw it at me with great force. It penetrated my coat, but fortunately did not pierce my body. Those, who had encircled me, decided to dispatch him then and there. But I stood in their way and spared his life.

The whole day we were busy putting out the fire. With the exception of the little *harem* the palace and the garden, everything within the Arg and the Dilkusha Palace was either consumed by fire or sacked by plunderers. Of the royal treasury all that had remained from the hands of Habibullah and the sackers totalled no more than 250,000 afghanis. With great difficulty and even at the risk of my life I was able to recover some rare manuscripts, which were later restored to the Kabul Museum. In one of the basements I came across the inscription of the Independence Column. This valuable historical tablet,

had been, by the order of Habibullah, removed from its original place and deposited there. I ordered my men to take it back and fix it on the column. In the evening feeling extremely tired and exhausted, I came out of the Arg and left for my headquarters. A band of musicians was seen marching from the eastern gate of the Citadel towards the police station. At this juncture a few shots were heard. One of the bullets struck Dilnawaz in the back. The poor fellow died on the spot instantaneously. A second bullet struck Sardar Ali Shah Khan in the leg. The body of Dilnawaz was sent to the military headquarters and Ali Shah Khan was taken to the house of General Mohammed Hashim Khan.

I asked Sardar Faiz Mohammed Khan to look after the foreign affairs of the country and Ali Mohammed Khan to reorganize the Ministry of Education, until the questions of election of king and the forming of a new cabinet were settled. The rest of the official work, I shared with my brother, Sardar Shah Mahmud Khan Ghazi.

THE ELECTION OF A KING

Order was restored to some extent, and people were impatiently waiting for their beloved liberator to come and determine their future, now that the destiny of the country lay in his hands. On Mizan 21 (October 14, 1929), the Sipah Salar left Jaji on his way to Kabul, reaching the Chihilstoon Palace next day. People arrived in large numbers to receive the men who had released the country from tyranny and misery. I, too, left for the Chihilstoon and submitted the report of my work to the Sipah Salar, who, appreciating my humble services, kissed my forehead and face.

I am sorry to relate a very sad event which had occurred in our family at this time. Tahira, the eldest daughter of the Sipah Salar, who was only eighteen years old, had died in the prison, and Ayeshah, the eight years old daughter of Sardar Muhammad Aziz Khan, because of the bombardment of the Arg, had a stroke of paralysis, disabling her hands and legs. I knew that the Sipah Salar, who loved his daughter dearly, would be greatly distressed to get this news. So I decided not to disclose the news to him. But soon I learned that he had got the news even when he was in Jaji. He himself related to me the sad story of her demise, but showed unusual patience and fortitude, which was characteristic of him in face of calamity. He simply said, "We have come here to liberate the country and not to release the members of our family. To me the loss of Tahira is not more distressing than the death of innumerable young compatriots who lost their lives during these nine months of stress and strain. God be thanked for His kindness in relieving the country from misery. It is better to forget this loss for ever." Turning to me he said, "I intend to enter the capital tomorrow."

Next day from the Chihilstoon Palace right up to the Salamkhana people stood on either side of the road to greet the Sipah Salar. I passed through the crowds of people, met him at Muhammad Ghaus Khan's bridge and presented to him the prisoners that had fallen into our hands at Tangiwaghojan. At the same time tribal *lashkars* were passing in groups, with bands playing and drums beating. Large number of people had come from all parts of the country, each trying to go ahead and catch a glimpse of their national leader. The Sipah Salar, riding a horse, was moving slowly through the crowds, who received him with loud cheers and hurrahs. He had a kind word or a smile for everyone.

He proceeded straight to Salamkhana, where the elders of the tribal chiefs, members of the *ex-king's* family, scholars, writers, representatives of people from all over the country and the foreign diplomats had gathered together. The Sipah Salar entered the Hall to the shouts and cheers of a vast audience and took his seat. Then after the noise was hushed, he got up to make a speech. Here is the gist of it:

"God be praised for His mercy and kindness. Afghanistan has been involved for nine long months in a serious crisis and a bloody conflict. During this period thousands of houses have been destroyed, tens of thousands of young men have lost their lives, education has suffered heavily, and our social system has met a severe set-back. Life has not been safe; there has been no peace and no order. A brigand-chief and his partisans have been in power. Now you know these people and the destruction they have caused fully well. At such a critical time I came to the Southern Province accompanied by my two brothers. Our aim was to serve the country. We always cherished this desire and will not give it up until our death. Almighty God helped us and with the co-operation of our fellow countrymen we achieved our goal. Now Habibullah's rule in Kabul is completely over. He has fled along with his gang. I hope that Afghanistan has a better

chance to embark on a new career. This new life depends entirely on your wisdom and deliberation. Now it is up to you to shape your destiny and make it possible for the country to forge ahead towards a bright future. My aim never was nor is today anything but to serve the cause of the country and uphold its honour and prestige. It is now for you to define what sort of regime you would like to have. I advise you to have trust in God and have faith in Him. Regarding whatever you want to do, I promise that I and all the members of my family, wherever they may be, will not desist from their sacred aim—which is nothing but service to our country.”

He had hardly finished his speech when the audience, losing patience, shouted at the top of their voice : “We have known you since the beginning of your career. You came here in poor health to sacrifice your life for our sake. You did not care for the safety of your family. You have always served the country loyally and faithfully. You have won our independence and now you have delivered us from tyranny. No one is worthier than you to be our king and leader. We are prepared to pay homage to you.”

The Sipah Salar with the gesture of his hands hushed the audience, and then continuing his speech, said, “I have not done any service worth mentioning. Whatever I have done is nothing more than a duty incumbent on each and every Afghan to his country. It’s a national obligation for all of us. I consider my frail body and delicate health quite incapable to bear the onerous task of kingship. You can elect King Amanullah or a member of his family for this purpose. I give my word that I will abide by your decision from the core of my heart.”

Again the Hall resounded with shouts and cheers, saying : “None is worthier to be our ruler than yourself.” First of all Sardar Mohammed Omar Khan, followed by Sardar Aminullah Khan, sons of the late Amir Abdur Rahman Khan came forward and kissing the hands of the Sipah Salar, tendered their allegiance.

Then all the people rushed to follow suit, but the Sipah Salar would not agree nor would he extend his hands to them. Hushing the audience once again he said loudly, "I thank you for your trust in me. I hope you will not force me to bear this heavy burden on my weak shoulders."

At this juncture Hikmat Bayar, Turkish Ambassador, who had been living in Kabul during the whole course of this upheaval, got up from his seat, and addressing the Sipah Salar, said: "Afghanistan was about to collapse and lose its political entity entirely. Even now great dangers threaten the country from all sides. Habibullah with his band of gangsters is still at large. The social order has altogether disappeared from your country. It was only you who could release the capital from the rebels. In case you don't come forward to accept this sincere offer of the people, I am afraid the publication of this news will encourage Habibullah and other miscreants to avail themselves of the opportunity and bid for the throne once more. This undoubtedly will disappoint your *lashkars* and make them disperse. Then you will be held responsible of the calamity that may follow. I, in the capacity of a representative of a Muslim State having very cordial relations with Afghanistan, beseech you to accede to the request of your people. Even now, as you know, thousands of people, with ropes and axes, have gathered together outside the Hall, impatiently waiting for your decision. The moment they learn that you have rejected the offer, everything will be in disorder. The city and even foreign embassies will not be spared and thousands of people will surely lose their lives. History and foreigners will certainly hold you answerable for all the bloodshed and destruction that might happen. As you and your brothers have never hesitated to sacrifice your lives and your family for the sake of your country, it behoves you now to come forward once again to sacrifice your frail body for the welfare of your countryman." The speech had not yet been concluded, when the people from all sides rushed forward to pay homage to their national leader.

The Sipah Salar, seeing the commotion and excitement of the people, had no choice but to accede to their request. Hushing



*His Late Majesty
King Mohammed Nadir Shah-e-Shaheed
(1929-1933)*

the people once more he said, "From my heart of hearts I don't want to be a king, but your insistence makes me accept it. I promise I will never hesitate to sacrifice my all, including my life, for the sake of my country."

Hearing him accepting the throne, the Hall resounded with shouts of "*Allah-o-Akbar*"—God is Great—and long live our saviour. The people, standing outside the Hall, on hearing the news, began to shout for joy. They fired into the air and beat their drums as loudly as they could. The tension was over, peace was restored and everybody seemed happy and contented. As the Citadel was not yet considered safe, the Sipah Salar decided to stay at night in the house of General Mohammad Hashim Khan. During the day he would go to the house of Sardar Fateh Mohammed Khan to attend to public affairs. Shortly afterwards people from all over the country sent their allegiance to the Capital by all means available. The circulation of this news contributed a good deal to the restoration of peace and order.

A few days later, Habibullah was arrested with his band of ringleaders. On the insistence of people and the decision of the general assembly, they all were executed.

Thus, the upheaval, which had caused the people untold miseries and innumerable sacrifices for nine months and which was about to destroy the country itself, subsided completely by the grace of God and the bravery of the people themselves. Peace once more reigned throughout the country and people started a new life.

In the end I think it my duty to express my sincere thanks once again to those who took part with us in this great drama of national deliverance.

I pray for the welfare of the people and the progress of the country. I hope that our national flag will always be flying high and fluttering in the free atmosphere of our beloved country and that the people will be able to lead a happy and prosperous life.

**GENEALOGY OF THE MOHAMMEDZAIS
(OF BARAKZAIS)**

