

5 *The seventh generation and the blue line*

The 7th generation features characters such as Giovanni Battista I, of the well-established Gavazzi-Spech branch, (yellow and orange line), Carlo Francesco (1688-1733), of the Valmadrera-Desio branch (red line), Don Pietro Francesco (1689-1765) and Filippo (1692-1763), who is the forefather of the blue line, the branch to which Modesto Gavazzi (10th gen.), patriot, traveller and adventurer, belonged.

CARLO FRANCESCO GAVAZZI (1688-1733)

This figure comes from the red line, the Valmadrera-Desio branch of great industrialists and bankers. The information we have about him is scanty. He was born in Canzo on July 28, 1688, to Carlo Antonio Gavazzi and Beatrice De Bernardi. Nothing more is heard of him until 1720, when he was a merchant in Chiavenna.

Commerce in Chiavenna

Why Chiavenna?

Chiavenna, which in those days was under Grigioni rule, was an important commercial centre, located on the border between Grigioni territory and the Milanese State. Above all, however, it was one of the most important way stations along the so-called «silk route», the trade route linking Milan and Lombardy with Germany, via Switzerland.

From Riva di Chiavenna, through Spluga and Coira, the yarns and fabrics of Lombardy reached the villages of Germany, thus introducing that country to silk.

Along with silk, many other Lombard products were sold in Germany. In many cases, the silk merchant was also a carrier of everything else the market of the moment managed to send abroad.

This silk route began in Milan and reached Chiavenna by way of Como and the Via Regina; the fabrics and yarns produced in Brianza, however, arrived in Chiavenna by a variation of this route, which led from Monza to Erba and then Bellagio: from Bellagio, both goods and merchants boarded ferries for the port of Riva di Chiavenna and then crossed to Spluga and proceeded to Frankfurt and the other German cities (the lake route from Lecco to Colico, today normally used for traffic between Milan, Chiavenna and Switzerland or Milan and Sondrio, did not yet exist in the 17th Century).

Canzo, therefore, was right on the path of many merchants travelling to the north of Europe. An amazing number of emigrants departed for German villages from Canzo and Valtassina.



Map of the Grisons with the site of Tschappina (Ciappina), birthplace of Ludovica Schumacher, wife of Carlo Francesco Gavazzi.

The most fortunate (Carlo Francesco Gavazzi among them) succeeded in setting up a business in nearby Chiavenna, where they dealt in both the goods travelling north and those arriving from the north to Lombardy. The others were forced to emigrate beyond the Alps. The registers of the Parish Church of San Lorenzo in Chiavenna reveal that a whole colony of merchants from Brianza and Como were settled in the town, all of them in business of one sort or another. A close network of contacts linked them to each other and to merchants travelling throughout Europe. Presumably, Carlo Francesco Gavazzi travelled between Chiavenna, Canzo and Brianza to stock up on yarn and local goods, perhaps also dealing products originating from the looms of his own relatives in Canzo. In 1722, the parish registers in Canzo reveal his presence in the village, where he was witness at the wedding of his distant relative, Caterina Gavazzi, who married Carlo Giuseppe Valsecchi (after the wedding, the couple moved to Chiavenna, where in 1731 Carlo Francesco was to be godfather to one of the Valsecchi children).

The Chiavenna registers tell us that among the many Brianza-born inhabitants living in Chiavenna for commercial reasons were the following: Dell'Oro of Valmadrera, Agudio of Malgrate, cousins Giuseppe Maria and Giovanni Battista Casanova of Magreglio, the Cranes, merchants of Omegna, and their relatives, and the Bovaras of Malgrate and Parè.

Carlo Francesco developed both personal and business rela-

tionships with his fellow Brianza merchants. All these connections, in fact, were one day to prove extremely useful to his son, Pietro Antonio (sometimes referred to as Pietro Senior) when it became time for him to launch his own career and later his silk mill business. These were all emigrants of great ingenuity, destined for success and prosperity.

The marriage with Ludovica Schumacher

Among this community of merchants Carlo Francesco sought a wife, and married Ludovica Schumacher, the daughter of a certain Jacob Schumacher of Tschappina, a small, remote village perched on the mountain slopes above Thusis. Ludovica was born in Tschappina in 1702¹.

¹ Unfortunately, the registers of Tschappina (whose inhabitants were Protestant), are missing much information. All the records have been placed on microfilm and are preserved in the Coira archives, but at the time of reproduction the originals had already been partly devoured by mice, including the pages relating to the first years of the 18th Century, where her birth registration is sure to have been.



Two views of Tschappina.

The registers mention Jacob Schumacher, Ludovica's father, several times, but there is no sign of the marriage certificate of Ludovica and Carlo Francesco, whose marriage could not have taken place in the only church in Tschappina, which was a Protestant church. It is probable, therefore, that the wedding was celebrated in a nearby Catholic church (since Ludovica Schumacher had converted to the Catholic faith); but in which of the many churches in the valley?

Children

After the wedding, which was celebrated in 1725 or thereabouts, the Gavazzi-Schumacher couple settled in Chiavenna, and some notes from the registers reveal that they had a good number of influential acquaintances and a comfortable life. They lived in a rented house, as can be seen from their death certificates, perhaps partly because Carlo Francesco did not consider Chiavenna his permanent home and probably (like almost all the merchants) dreamed of returning to his place of origin with a goodly fortune someday.

For the four children born to him and his wife he chose godparents of good social standing, proving that he was evidently in touch with the upper class. When his eldest son was born, for example, he was christened with the names of Giacomo Antonio Filippo, and Donna Francesca Scarpatetti, the daughter of Captain Gaudenzio Scarpatetti of Sorset, the Grigioni governor in Chiavenna, was chosen as his godmother.

The godfather of his second son, Giovanni Battista, born in 1727, was the rich merchant Carlo Antonio Bianconi of Caglio, scion of an ancient and industrious Vallassina family, which had already become related to the Gavazzis in the 16th Century. The Bianconi family

were later to gain fame and prosperity in Germany, and especially in Ireland, where a grandson of Carlo Antonio Bianconi, Carlo, successfully established the first large-scale public transport service in Ireland, with carriages which were named after him – *Bianconi*².

As godfather at the christening of his daughter Ludovica Beatrice, Carlo Francesco chose the rich merchant Guglielmo Crane, father-in-law of silk mill owner Giuseppe Bovara of Malgrate-Parè.

These are all indications that he placed great importance on having a tightly-knit network of contacts and influential acquaintances, and that he was well-established in the rich community of Chiavenna, where he associated with people of great enterprising spirit and business acumen.

The «business sense» of Carlo's descendants

Carlo's unexpected death in Chiavenna on April 4, 1733, at the relatively young age of 45 (only four years before – on July 8, 1729 – his wife Ludovica had died in childbirth, leaving him twins), ended his quest for success – a dream that his son Pietro Antonio (his only surviving child) was later to realise, becoming the founder of the Gavazzi family fortune.

One almost has the impression that the road which was to bring the Gavazzis to financial success were already mapped out, and that this untimely death in Chiavenna only delayed its realisation by a few decades.

The home of priest
Pietro Francesco Gavazzi
in Canzo.



As a consequence of his early demise in Chiavenna, Carlo Francesco, a hard-working merchant of great expectations, was unable to leave his small son as substantial a fortune as he would have liked. In its place, however, he left something of equal, if not greater, value – that special gene which provided the intuition, the ability, the «business sense» that was to lead him and his descendants to amass a solid and substantial fortune.

Thanks to Carlo Francesco, the wealth and renown of the Gavazzi family was finally and firmly secured.

DON PIETRO FRANCESCO GAVAZZI (1689-1765)

The priest Pietro Francesco Gavazzi, canon of the Parish Church of Canzo (where he was born on December 14, 1689), spent his whole life in Canzo, where he lived in a house once belonging to his mother Lucia, of the wealthy Morelli family of Caslino.

This house had been the dowry of one of the sisters of Don Gavazzi, Anna Maria, at her marriage with Barzaghi. Later, as a widow with three children, she

² See Molly O' C. Bianconi, *Bianconi, re delle strade irlandesi*, edited by the Provincial Administration, Como, 1993 (Como, Library u.n.l. 7887).

found herself with only the income from her dowry to live on. Don Gavazzi had repeatedly helped his sister with substantial sums of money, and accepted the above-mentioned house from his nephews as payment for the many loans. Also living with Don Gavazzi in this house were the two other sisters, Paola and Caterina, elderly spinsters. Don Gavazzi was evidently fairly well off, and all his relatives, Gavazzi or not, continually came to him for loans. In several different notary acts relating to Canzo (today preserved in the Milan State Archives) he appears regularly as the creditor of sums of money loaned to various people, raising the question as to whether, like quite a number of priests in his day, he was practising usury. Such practices were officially condemned by the Church, but were in reality commonly engaged in by the clergy, who were always careful to collect the debt without incurring legal prosecution, resorting each time to a new subterfuge (in the case of debts collected from his Barzaghi nephews, Don Gavazzi officially bought their house – in actual fact, this counterbalanced the value of the money loaned, and not one lira actually changed hands).

His will (he died in Canzo on April 16, 1765) shows that he kept a ledger of debts and credits, an unusual habit for a priest, as it is well-known that the ordination of priests invariably includes the traditional vow of poverty.

Reading his will, one has the impression that Don Gavazzi quarrelled violently with all his male relatives, probably because of the overdue payment of debts they had incurred with him and which he, implacably and relentlessly, insisted on receiving.

The priest took his revenge in his own way by not leaving the male Gavazzis a single lira, instead lavishing part of his fortune on the women of the house, his aged sisters and cousins, and the relatives from the other side of his family.

In his will, Don Gavazzi named the School of the Holy Sacrament in Canzo as universal heir. His relatives were remembered thus: 25 lire to each of the daughters of his cousin Filippo Gavazzi (Caterina, Beatrice and Marina), «in token of my affection for them», but nothing, on the other hand, was left to their brother Miro, who was not deemed worthy of even a mention.

The same treatment was reserved for Pietro Antonio Gavazzi, the son of his cousin Carlo Francesco (to whom he had on different occasions lent money) and for his cousin Giovanni Battista (of the Gavazzi Spech branch).

Twenty-five lire also went to each of his Barzaghi nephews and nieces – Pietro Francesco,



Another view of the home of Pietro Francesco Gavazzi in Canzo, which previously belonged to the Morelli family of Caslino.

Giuseppe and Lucia – the children of his sister Anna Maria Gavazzi (wife of Barzaghi) and the same amount was left to his great-niece, Caterina Alimonta of Pontelambro.

To his sisters Paola and Caterina he left his property in usufruct.

In his own way, however, Don Gavazzi did have a dynastic sense, and if he left the males of the family out of his will it was only «because they were undeserving», certainly not through any fault of his. He made up for this in another way: although he saw fit to «punish» his cousins, at the same time he was prepared to favour those of their descendants who had entered the priesthood. In his will, Don Gavazzi stipulated that with the income from his inheritance, one hundred masses yearly should be held for his soul. If a descendant of the above-mentioned cousins – Miro, Pietro Antonio and Giovanni Battista – chose to become a priest, it was to be the task of this priest to hold the hundred masses, receiving in exchange the customary alms, or a donation of money determined by the parish priest of Canzo.

Only the descendants of Giovanni Battista Gavazzi (the Gavazzi Spech branch) were actually to profit from these donations, having among them a canon and a priest.

Pietro Francesco Gavazzi, before becoming a canon of the Church of Santo Stefano in Canzo, was chief chaplain of the Parish Church of San Pietro and San Paolo in Arcellasco from 1723 to 1740. In 1739 he was also assistant curate of the same church.

BLUE LINE

The blue line begins with Filippo Gavazzi (1692-1763) and numbers among its descendants the distinctive figure of Modesto Gavazzi (1828-1868), 10th gen., traveller, writer and adventurer. The nature of his occupations distinguished him from the rest of the family, although in his explorations he was driven by the search for new silkworms.

This branch of the family, in fact, is characterised by unusual traits. While not neglecting their work with silk, these Gavazzis were drawn to the world of adventure, photography, optics and art. Almost all the members of this branch were cremated – a practice that must have appeared revolutionary in those days. They were classed as «modernist» intellectuals with extreme leftist ideas, and as such were naturally attracted to the socialist movement that began to emerge in the 19th Century.

At last, then, we come across a strain of the family that was somewhat different from the standard model of the paternalistic, traditionalist, enlightened, practising Catholic and great industrialist.

FILIPPO GAVAZZI (1692-1763)

Filippo Gavazzi was born in Canzo on October 24, 1692. The younger brother of Carlo Francesco, Filippo Gavazzi was the first tax collector of Canzo in the family. He worked in this profession from 1743 onwards. In 1758 Filippo, at the time of parting from his nephew Pietro Antonio, lost the management of the Tax Office in Canzo, which passed over to his

cousin Giovanni Battista Gavazzi, son of the late Carlo Maria, of the Gavazzi Spech branch, who held the post until 1760, when it was taken over by Giovanni Battista's son, Carlo Francesco, who held it from 1760 to 1767³.

In Canzo, on July 4, 1735, Filippo married Beatrice Verza, born on September 13, 1708, in the same town (where she was also to die on January 27, 1763). Beatrice was the daughter of Antonio Verza, a silk mill owner, and Anna Maria Sormani, herself also the daughter of a silk mill owner, Carlo Sormani. The marriage certificate of October 18, 1741⁴ reveals interesting facts.

The document includes certain details about the bride's personality. Her brother Carlo, as head of the family since their father's death, assigned Beatrice a dowry of 1,100 Milanese lire, as he had done also for his other sister, Giovanna, who married Giacomo Antonio Magreglio. To Beatrice, however, he gave a supplement of 200 Milanese lire as a special token of his love and as a reward for her good nature, for the devotion she showed in caring for their mother Anna Maria, perhaps during a long illness, and for raising with great love the children of the same Carlo Verza, whose mother had died.

All this, moreover, takes on a special meaning when we read in the document that Beatrice, undoubtedly as a consequence of an accident or an illness (the cause is not specified), was missing one leg. In those days, before the invention of artificial limbs, this type of mutilation must have been very difficult indeed to live with. In spite of her handicap, however, Beatrice spared herself no trouble, either physical or moral.

Subsequently, she also acted as mother to her husband's nephew, Pietro Antonio Gavazzi, who lost both his parents at a very young age in Chiavenna.

An additional document mentions a further supplement of 450 Imperial lire, which Beatrice Verza received as a gift at the time of her wedding from an anonymous benefactor. This person, who in the document is referred to as a «charitable person» and «well fond of» the bride, requested to «be kept secret for his own just motives» and consigned the sum to Carlo Verza, to be passed on to his sister Beatrice.

Perhaps this was a person that Beatrice, out of the goodness of her heart, had cared for or helped in some way and who chose to reward her in this way.

In order to celebrate their wedding, Filippo Gavazzi and Beatrice Verza had to request a special licence from the Milanese Curia, since they were doubly related, with second and third degree consanguinity.

On August 22, 1759, Filippo sold a piece of his land in Canzo to a certain Carlo Giuseppe Ambrosioni⁵.

He died in Canzo on January 2, 1763.

³ Information about Filippo Gavazzi can be found also in the documents regarding his nephew Pietro Antonio Gavazzi (Pietro Senior).

⁴ Milan State Archives, Notary Fund, Notary Michele Angelo Curioni, file no. 42441.

⁵ Milan State Archives, Notary Fund, Notary Francesco Antonio Longhi, file no. 44687.

MIRO GAVAZZI (1746-1815)

The silk mill of Canzo

Filippo's son, Miro Gavazzi (8th gen.), first cousin of Pietro Antonio, was born in Canzo on November 13, 1746.

He obtained his professional training in the silk mill owned by his uncle, Carlo Verza, in Canzo. Later, in turn, he bought a silk mill in partnership with two other people. The mill had eleven looms and produced high-quality silk veils.

Miro's partners were Costantino Bianchi of Canzo and a Frenchman named Giovanni Dehors, a native of Rohan living in Canzo, who in those years had many contacts with France (the Barni family traded with Lille, the Gavazzi-Spechs had a branch in Paris, etc.). Dante Severin, in his book *L'industria serica comacina durante il dominio austriaco (1737-1859)* («The silk industry of Como under Austrian rule»), published in Como in 1960, mentions the Gavazzi & Partners silk mill of Canzo. He writes, in fact, that the Milanese Chamber of Commerce Commissioner, Gaetano De Magistris (sent by the Government to the province of Como in order to assess the progress and the problems of the silk trade) also visited Canzo with Royal Chancellor Greco, on August 31, 1789, and inspected the silk mill in question, which he mentions in his report. Today, this report is preserved in the State Archives of Como.

In the words of De Magistris: «The Silk Veil Factory of Canzo, managed and owned by partners Costantino Bianchi, Miro Gavazzi of Canzo and Gio. de Oro of Rohan, in France, possesses 11 batten looms, which I found to be in all parts in good working order. The factory, having the possibility to take on apprentices, has enormous potential, as it lacks only labourers, commissions being plentiful.

The attendants of the above-mentioned, with the exception of one Piedmontese native, are all from Canzo, trained by the above-mentioned partners».

Later, Miro and his heirs took over the whole company and their silk mill in Canzo continued to prosper, although it remained one of the smallest of the local factories.

To their mutual profit, Miro Gavazzi and his cousins of the Valmadrera branch remained on excellent terms. In fact, from two recently-discovered letters written by Miro to his cousin Carlo Gavazzi, it is clear that the two branches also had important business relations. These letters, which were both written in June 1813, prove that at the time, Miro Gavazzi was managing the silk mill that the Gavazzis of Valmadrera owned in Parabiago. The tone and contents of the letter, moreover, suggest that this mill was run by Miro in partnership with his cousins Carlo and Giuseppe Antonio Gavazzi.

The marriage with Anna Maria Sormani

On September 12, 1772, in Canzo, Miro married Anna Maria Sormani (b. in Canzo on 26.7.1753, d. in Canzo on 17.8.1826), the daughter of silk mill owner Francesco Sormani

and Caterina Barni. The Sormani family of Canzo, who were first silk merchants, then spinners (in the 1700s, according to the Teresian land registers) and later wealthy silk mill owners, married into the Gavazzi family several times over the centuries⁶.

The Sormani family was among the wealthiest clans in all of northern Brianza.

Their silk mills were prosperous, both regarding the extraction and throwing of silk. In the 18th and 19th Centuries their Canzo mill was one of the most important in Brianza⁷.

Thanks to their financial success, the Sormanis moved to Milan, where they bought a large, luxurious home in Via Manzoni. They became related to the Prina family of silk mill owners, who in turn were related to the Gavazzis and the noble family of Brivio⁸.

Trade relations with Germany - Filippo, Giuseppe and Costantino (the sons)

Miro's mill, though small, exported part of its yarn production to Germany, as did the other silk mills of Canzo.

The task of placing the yarn on the German markets was seen to personally by Miro's eldest son, Filippo, born in 1774, who was a silk merchant in Germany, where he lived for many years, marrying Margherita Haller, of Munster.

We cannot be sure in which German city Filippo settled, but most likely it was Frankfurt; what is certain is that in Germany he looked after the business interests of his father's silk mill.

In the 1806 contract confirming the payment of his sister Bianca's dowry, who in 1801 married silk mill owner Stefano Fermo Sormani of Canzo, it is written that in Frankfurt in 1805 the 400 lire sum representing the dowry was presented to the bridegroom by his brother-in-law Filippo, which the Sormani family declared to have received, as we read in the document, «in much good gold and silver money».

This leads us to believe that Filippo had been instructed by his father Miro to take this sum

⁶ Caterina, daughter of Pietro Gavazzi, married Giovanni Angelo Sormani on May 18, 1583; Angela, daughter of Battista Gavazzi and Isabella Conti, married Filippo Sormani on July 1, 1585; Clara, daughter of Pietro Gavazzi and Margherita Bonacina, married Cristoforo Sormani on July 28, 1601; Caterina of Filippo Gavazzi married Giuseppe Antonio Sormani on September 9, 1767; Miro of Filippo Gavazzi married on September 12, 1772 Anna Maria Sormani; Bianca of Miro Gavazzi married on January 24, 1801 Stefano Fermo Sormani; Anna Maria Caterina of Miro Gavazzi married on April 20, 1822 Antonio Sormani.

Where the kinship was not direct, it was formed by the union of the Gavazzi and Sormani families through the female line. For example, Beatrice Verza, wife of Filippo Gavazzi, was the daughter of Antonio Verza and a certain Anna Maria Sormani. Likewise, Luigia Verza, wife of Giuseppe Antonio Gavazzi, was the daughter of Carlo Verza and a certain Giovanna Sormani.

⁷ In a report following the gathering of statistics in 1845, which is preserved in the State Archives of Como, this silk mill is mentioned: «Mr. Venanzio Sormani (son of Stefano Fermo Sormani and Bianca Gavazzi) another of the most distinguished silk extractors, operates three silk mills in Canzo with 69 burners, one of which, with 27 burners, is his own property, and all three are set up according to the so-called «sans mariage» system. He is also the owner of a spinning factory containing 96 machines with 108 spindles per machine for a total of 10,368, plus 520 cleaning spindles and 248 doubling spindles. This silk factory is in operation all through the year, a very unusual occurrence, and succeeds in processing approximately 11,437 kilograms of silk of varying degrees of fineness, according to the norms regulating the quality/price ratio of the weave».

Venanzio Sormani was also the leaser of the Serbelloni silk mill in Cornaredo. The Sormanis had leased the Cornaredo mill in 1840. (At the same time, he also bought - from Duke Serbelloni - the cocoons and the firewood necessary for running the factory), and in Canzo he was the owner of «houses, with silk factories and two shares of water», as well as various pieces of land, (arable land, either plain or for grapevines and mulberry trees) for an extension of 171 poles.

⁸ Their grand tombs in the Milan Monumental Cemetery bear witness to the success of their commercial business.

from the till of their German branch, in order to fulfil his responsibility regarding the dowry of his sister – thus confirming the interests that the family had in Germany.

Filippo returned to Canzo for a few years, and it was here that his wife Margherita gave birth to their son Primo Antonio Miro.

They then returned to Germany, where Filippo died suddenly (the exact date of his death is unknown, but it was before 1815, since in his father Miro's will, drawn up in this year, Filippo is not mentioned, being already deceased). After their return to Germany we have no more record of Primo Antonio Miro and his mother Margherita Haller.

Primo Gavazzi was mentioned in the will of his paternal grandmother, Anna Maria Gavazzi Sormani, as beneficiary of the inheritance which would have gone to his deceased father, but his grandmother specified in the will that she did not know at the time of making the will (1826) whether or not he were still alive. She charged the local magistrate with conducting a search for her grandson in Munster, Germany, which seems to have been the last known residence of Margherita Gavazzi Haller and her son. If he were found, seeing that he was not yet of age, his grandmother had appointed the parish priest of Canzo as his legal guardian. We do not know the outcome of this search; it may be, therefore, that there are still Gavazzis in Germany today, descendants of Primo.

Germany, however, continued to be the foreign market in which the Gavazzis of this branch sold their products. After Filippo lived and died there, his brothers Giuseppe and Costantino remained in constant contact with German tradesmen. So likewise did the sons of Costantino, two of whom, Modesto and Elmiro, followed the example of their uncle Filippo and married in Germany, while they were there representing their father's company.

After Miro Gavazzi's death, the silk mill was run by his sons Costantino and Giuseppe. Later, when Costantino moved his business to Milan, Giuseppe carried on alone until his death, when his widow Carola Pellizzoni, known as Carolina, ran the business on behalf of her son Tiziano. The Gavazzi silk mill of Canzo, which was still in operation in 1845⁹, closed down when Tiziano Gavazzi (10th gen.), moved with his mother and his sisters to Gavardo (Brescia), probably to carry on the same business, or perhaps to remain in the sector as a silk mill manager. Tiziano was also the last owner of the old Gavazzi house in Canzo, which was sold to the Gavazzi-Spech family when he moved.

The wills of Miro and his wife Anna Maria

In his will¹⁰, Miro does not mention his daughter Caterina and his grandson Primo Gavazzi (son of his own son Filippo, whom he outlived), who, however, appears in the actual division of the inheritance. A curious fact emerges from the will. Miro left his own bed to his wife, with these words: «From the said disposable portion, however, must be deducted the

⁹ It is, in fact, mentioned in the 1845 report, preserved in the State Archives of Como. It was probably still in operation in 1872. From the guide of Pier Ambrogio Curti *Il lago di Como e il Pian d'Erba*, published in 1872 (Dominioni Editore, Como, 1995): «The twill for which Canzo was famous was later replaced by silk, and silk mills were established by the Verza and Gavazzi families».

¹⁰ May 20, 1815: the will of Miro Gavazzi is preserved in the State Archives of Como, Property Notary Francesco Sormani.

equivalent value of the bed in its entirety, which has always been used by myself, inasmuch as the said bed, complete with benches, straw filling, two mattresses, pillows, blankets, sheets and pillow cases, I leave to my dearest wife Anna Maria Sormani as sole owner, as a token of goodwill and in thanks for the service and the good company she bestowed upon me».

The curious matter of this bed was later to re-surface in the will of Anna Maria¹¹, Miro's widow. Unlike her husband, she remembered all her children in her will – Costantino, Giuseppe, Bianca, Caterina, and also her grandchildren Primo Gavazzi (son of her son Filippo, who had died before her) and Giuseppe Ronchetti (son of her daughter Giuseppina Gavazzi Ronchetti, whom she had also outlived).

Regarding her grandson Primo, at the time of drawing up the will Anna Maria did not know if he were still alive, as he was presumed to be in Prussia, as mentioned above, having gone to Germany with his own mother, Margherita Haller, after the death of his father. Evidently, Margherita and Primo had never sent word to their Italian relatives.

Today we know that Primo Antonio grew in Munster, married Franziska Gelhoet and had a child, whose name was Wilhelm Georg Franz Gavazzi, born in Munster in 1836.

On 13 January 1845 the family moved to USA and landed with the Ship Adler in New York. Wilhelm changed his name into the more “english” one William. He became a liquor dealer (as it appears in a census of 1860 from Kingston, Ulster, New York).

In New York Antonio and Francisca (her name, too, was modified) had two children, Adelia (in 1842 (?)) and Katy (in 1848) Gavazzi.

In another census of 1870 (from Union, Hudson, New Jersey) William appears married with a woman whose name was Theresa, 4 years older than him, born in France, in Strasbourg, from french father and german mother. Theresa was a keeping house real estate.

In her will, Anna Maria also remembered the poor of Canzo, and left money to the local church for charity.

The most curious thing about this will (and also an earlier version of the same) lies in the fact that the testatrix, in token of her affection, left to her granddaughter Maria Sormani, the daughter of her daughter Bianca (the latter having married an extremely prosperous silk mill owner, Stefano Fermo Sormani) the celebrated bed, which she in turn had inherited from her husband Miro. Anna Maria also gives the following detailed description of this bed: «My bed, composed of two mattresses, two sheets, two pillows, a quilt, some thick blankets of different colours and four pillow cases». This she leaves to her beloved granddaughter «in recompense for her services to me, and for the love she showed me»¹².

¹¹ April 11, 1826: First Will and Testament of Maria Sormani Gavazzi, widow of Miro Gavazzi, preserved in the State Archives of Como, Property Notary Francesco Sormani.

¹² Subsequently, the Gavazzi brothers and sisters – Costantino, Giuseppe, Caterina and Bianca – together with the trustees of Primo Gavazzi (son of the late Filippo Gavazzi) and Giuseppe Ronchetti (son of the late Giuseppina Gavazzi), divided the inheritance of their mother and grandmother Anna Maria Gavazzi Sormani, and sold some of her possessions (from the acts of Notary Francesco Sormani, no. 2008 of April 24, 1828 and 2050 and November 18, 1828).



Sign of the Calzolari company at Corso Vittorio Emanuele 13

CASIMIRO COSTANTE (COSTANTINO) GAVAZZI (1790-1857)

Costantino (b. in Canzo on 7.10.1790, d. in Milan on 2.11.1857), 9th gen., together with his brother Giuseppe, continued operating their father's silk mill in Canzo¹³.

From correspondence between Costantino Gavazzi and the Chamber of Commerce of Milan¹⁴ it appears that Costantino requested and was granted membership in the association of *Silk Brokers* of Milan. Following this, when he opened his own silk mill, he was accepted among the *Commission Agents*¹⁵.

One of these documents reveals that Costantino, as *Silk Broker*, frequently worked also for the Gavazzi & Quinterio company, a sign of continued relations between the two branches of the family. Probably, these relations finally came to an end with the closing down of the silk business belonging to Costantino's heirs and with the death of the older Gavazzi generation of both branches. The young descendants, in fact, no longer having any reason to remain in contact, eventually lost contact with each other.

Costantino had already become a member of the *Silk Commission Agents* in 1826, an indication that sometime between 1824 and 1826 he had opened his silk mill in Nerviano¹⁶. Costantino opened another silk mill in Pianello del Lario. On October 5, 1822 he was married in San Satiro, Milan¹⁷, to Teresa Duroni (b. in Canzo on 15.3.1802, d. in Milan on 25.2.1857), the daughter of Antonio Duroni and Giustina Molteni¹⁸.

The couple had 15 children. These included Miro Antonio Marco, known as Antonio, who in 1847 set up his own company as a «Haberdashery Dealer» in Milan, in the district of Paschi Vecchi, and Modesto Miro, the adventure-seeking traveller who will appear a little later on.

¹³ After the latter's death, he recovered a credit relating to his father's silk mill (notary act by Sormani, June 5, 1816).

¹⁴ Documents dating back to 1824 from the Chamber of Commerce of Milan, section II – Inland trade, box 36 1788-1850, file 2 d, page 15.

¹⁵ The silk traders of Lombardy were divided into three categories: 1) *Bank and Silk Dealers*; 2) *Silk and Silk Waste Dealers*; 3) *Forwarders and Commission Agents*.

¹⁶ The company «Costantino Gavazzi – *Silk Commission Agents*» with premises in the Rovello district, no. 2279, notified on 2.7.1826, with notification no. 3600.

¹⁷ On his arrival in Milan, Costantino Gavazzi took up residence at Via Rovello no. 17, in «Casa Cagnola», opposite the «Torre di Londra» Hotel. He later bought the entire Casa Cagnola, which then was passed down to his son Antonio and his grandsons Costantino, Alessandro, Italo and Virginio. Today the house is no longer standing.

Modesto, Elmiro, Alberto, Giuseppa, Paola, Emilia Maria and Carolina, (the children of Costantino) after having left the house in Via Rovello to their brother Antonio, lived altogether in Via Sant'Agnese no. 16.

Modesto then moved to piazza Sant'Ambrogio, and, after his wedding, to Via Borgonuovo.

Alberto, after marrying, lived in Corso Monforte no. 18; Angela, their sister, lived in Via Vittorio Emanuele no. 13.

Alessandro, the son of Antonio, lived in Via S. Vittore no. 12.

Virginio, son of Antonio and brother of Alessandro, lived in Via Nino Bixio no. 10.

¹⁸ The bride brought a dowry of 4,655.11 Austrian lire, which was added to by the bridegroom with a counter-dowry of 1,918.80 lire. The bride's trousseau was valued at 1,745.05 lire. Of special interest is the long list of objects brought by the bride as dowry, including furniture, jewellery, clothes, etc.

From the act it emerges that the bride, a native of Canzo, was related to the noble family of Carpani and, having lost both her parents, lived with an aunt, Donna Maria (or Mira) Carpani (September 18, 1822, marriage licence of Costantino Gavazzi and Teresa Duroni; act no. 1514, folder no. 5767, notary Sormani, Como, State Archives).

Teresa Duroni was the sister of Alessandro, an optician and tradesman in Milan who, thanks to his contacts with Paris, pioneered the daguerreotype in the principal town of Lombardy and who in 1845 published the *Practical Study of Photography*, by Marc Antoine Gaudin. In 1837 Duroni, who was a dispensing optician, had opened a shop in Piazza del Duomo; he was also, however, as mentioned earlier, one of the very first daguerreotypists, and later, as a natural consequence, became a famous photographer.

Duroni was also a patriot during the revolts of the Risorgimento.

After his death, Alessandro's company was divided into two separated businesses, one dealing in photography and the other in optics.

One of the many children of Teresa and Costantino, named Angela, married Icilio Calzolari, another famous photographer and daguerreotypist who was very active in Milan. Calzolari succeeded Duroni, his uncle, in the «photographic company». The shop was situated at number 13 of Corso Vittorio Emanuele (see also the note in Giuseppina Bossi Gavazzi at page 97).

A different destiny was reserved for the dispensing optician's shop, which eventually moved to the prestigious Vittorio Emanuele Gallery, after its construction. The shop can still be found here today, under the name of «Marziali e Farneti»; the sign above the window, in fact, still bears the ancient name of Duroni and the date 1837.

In the years 1855 and 1856 Costantino appointed his two sons, Antonio and Modesto, as general proxies of his company.

On March 29, 1860, two and a half years after Costantino's death, the heirs notified the Chamber of Commerce of the closing down of the «Costantino Gavazzi Company» and the creation of the company «Sons of Costantino Gavazzi», belonging to Antonio and Modesto Gavazzi, with a silk mill in Nerviano and a spinning factory in Pianello del Lario¹⁹ and with offices and warehouse in the district of Rovello 2296, Milan.

In 1866 Antonio and Modesto wound up the «Sons of Costantino Gavazzi» company, which was later re-established under the same name, though this time with Antonio as sole owner. On his return from Bukhara, in fact, Modesto received appointments in the diplomatic world and was consequently obliged to abandon his father's business.

MIRO ANTONIO MARCO (ANTONIO) GAVAZZI (1826-1873)

As we have seen, Antonio carried on his family's business, working, according to the registers, first as «silk dealer», then «silk merchant» and finally becoming the owner of his own silk mill. He was the fourth of fifteen children, and the elder brother of Modesto Miro, who was to become famous for his journey to Bukhara.

On November 11, 1849, Antonio was married in Milan, in the Church of San Fedele, to Isabella Gilardoni (b. in Milan in 1826, d. in Milan on 3.8.1865), daughter of Giuseppe Gilardoni²⁰, accountant in the administration of the Court of the Hapsburgs in Milan, and of Amalia Quattri. In 1886 Miro founded a company «for the operation and trade of photographic articles» in partnership with a certain Edoardo De Socher.

In 1887, according to the archives of the Chamber of Commerce in Milan, in a volume entitled *Industrialists in the Boroughs under the Milan Chamber of Commerce*, it appears that in this year the Gavazzi silk mill of Nerviano was still in operation, still going by the name of

¹⁹ The Pianello spinning mill was probably the one built by the Tranquillo Bosatta & C. company, which the Gavazzis had leased.

²⁰ Giuseppe Gilardoni (1800-1830), son of Pietro Gilardoni (b. 29.1.1761), Head Administrator of the Royal Stables at the Royal Palace of Milan, who married Isabella Bossi.

The Gilardoni family worked in optics and had a shop in the «Galleria».

In 1859, Giuseppe was the first to climb the Duomo and hoist the Italian flag after the fall of Austria.

«Sons of Costantino Gavazzi», though actually, in this period the mill belonged to the sons of Antonio: Costantino jr., Alessandro, Italo and Virginio Rinaldo.

The silk mill of Nerviano employed 407 workers and was registered as a «silk winding mill». There is no indication as to exactly when this mill was closed down, putting an end to the silk trade for this branch of the family.

Cremation

The sons of Antonio and Isabella expressed the wish that after their deaths they should be cremated and that their ashes should be placed in the cinerary cells of the Monumental Cemetery of Milan.

This is rather unusual if we consider the funeral customs of the family, the fact that the Catholic Church refused to perform funeral services for those who chose cremation and, above all, the fact that this decision was made over one hundred years ago.

These family members, therefore, were among the first advocates of cremation, a funerary practice that in Milan was promoted by silk industrialist Alberto Keller, one of the pioneers of Lombard industry and a passionate upholder of cremation²¹.

MODESTO MIRO GAVAZZI (1828-1868)

Patriot, traveller and adventurer

Another member of the 10th generation was the colourful figure of Modesto Miro Gavazzi, patriot, traveller and adventurer and distant cousin of Pietro «the Great».

Modesto was the son of Costantino Gavazzi and Teresa Duroni. He was born in Milan on May 21, 1828. He was named after his godfather, Modesto Picozzi, a broker of merchandise and silk. He married Anna Springmuhl of Elberfeld (Germany), who was born in Elberfeld on September 15, 1834 and died in Milan on October 10, 1912. She was the daughter of a silk mill owner, Filippo Springmuhl, and Guglielmina Mayer. The couple had no children. Elberfeld was one of the most important collective manufacturing centres of the silk market in Germany.

He was SIAM promoter member from 1855 to 1868. In the sixties he was member of Society for the Fine Arts in Milan (together with other Gavazzi). He was sodality member of Italian Geographic Society. He was town councillor from 1865 to 1867.

The «Five Days» battle of Milan

Modesto was a patriot, Mazzinian and a friend of many Milanese *Carbonari*. In 1848, after a period spent as a soldier, he came back to his family following the disaster of Novara, and returned to his studies in law.

²¹ Those of the Gavazzi family who chose cremation were: Virginio (d. 1898), Costantino (d. 1899), Alessandro (d. 1904) and Italo (d. 1921). The Gavazzis of this branch of the family were all laid to rest in the Monumental Cemetery of Milan.

Once graduated as a lawyer, however, he found himself unable to exercise his profession as a notary, being forbidden by the Austrian authorities in punishment for his anti-Austrian activities. And so he fell back on his father's business, working with his brothers in the family silk mills and dealing in silk. The *Storia di Milano* by the Fondazione Treccani²² mentions Milanese journalists during the Risorgimento, saying that «small newspapers of clear Mazzinian inspiration – *La Domenica*, *La Solitudine* and *La Società* – were published in Milan by the «*antro radaelliano*» (as the Radaelli printing works was then known), a meeting place for Giuseppe Piolti de' Bianchi, Carlo Baravalle, Salvatore Mazza, Alessandro Magni, Margaroli and Gavazzi, all rather socialistic youths, seized by the journalistic fever».

The 1848 insurrection in Milan against the Austrians resulted in a new provisional government, but immediately there arose conflicts regarding the future of Lombardy in the light of the relationship with and support requested of Piedmont.

The Provisional Government thought it wise to reassure the «good citizens» that the destiny of Lombardy would be discussed and decided upon by the nation.

In short, this government, in the conflict between monarchists favourable to an unconditional fusion with Piedmont, monarchists campaigning for a negotiated fusion, and republicans, chose to declare its own neutrality and, in accord with the ideas expressed by Carlo Cattaneo, decided to place itself at the service of the will of the people.

Again in the above-mentioned *Storia di Milano*²³ we read that «some years ago, a Milanese historian, Antonio Monti, based on the unpublished memoirs of Piolti de' Bianchi, claimed that Casati, evidently troubled by commitments previously made with Carlo Alberto, was reluctant to sign the proclamation (relating to the political structure and the neutrality of Lombardy, in 1848), but was forced to do so at gunpoint by Correnti and Modesto Gavazzi, while Piolti de' Bianchi kept watch at the door of the hall where this scene took place, preventing anyone from entering».

This gave place to a dispute with another historian, Caddeo, who rejected the fact – a dispute in which the daughters of Piolti de' Bianchi and Cesare Correnti also took part; Caddeo's position was that nothing of the kind had ever or could ever have happened – a theory which finds us in complete accordance²⁴.

²² Volume XIV, page 497.

²³ Volume XIV, page 389.

²⁴ Rinaldo Caddeo, in fact, in *Il Risorgimento* (1949-50, pp. 122-123), in the chapter entitled *Cesare Correnti – Gunman?!*, wrote concerning the proclamation of March 22, by which the Milanese Municipality, being transformed into a Provisional Government, called upon the goodwill of the people for the sake of attaining independence, promising that «once the cause was won» the nation would discuss and decide upon the «destiny of Lombardy», that is to say, establishing either the «fusion» with the Piedmont or the creation of an independent State.

However, since Count Gabrio Casati, newly-elected president of the Provisional Government, with the majority of the same Government, supported the first solution, he was hesitant to sign any proclamation. «The document was to be drawn up by Cesare Correnti (although the only signature found among the papers of the Provisional Government is that of Vitaliano Borromeo) and Gabrio Casati refused to sign it. So Correnti and Modesto Gavazzi entered the hall of the Taverna house, where the Government was situated and, while Giuseppe Piolti de' Bianchi guarded the door, they pointed two «real pistols» at the recalcitrant president, faced with which the shocked Casati signed. This event was alluded to by the author of the unpublished memoirs of Piolti, who kept the story secret for the rest of his life ...

Now it would appear to me that Monti, by lending his credibility to this information, gave it a significance which it does not possess, both because it lacks confirmation from other sources and because it is disproved by various practical and moral points».

It is a fact that in 1848 Modesto was present at the side of Count Gabrio Casati in the hall of the Taverna Palace in Milan, although what exactly his role was in the Risorgimento we do not know.

What is certain is that he was among the patriots in the Five Days Battle.

After these events, he took shelter in Switzerland, in Roggiano, on the borderland, and took part to insurrections of autumn 1848 inspired by Giuseppe Mazzini who was in that period in Lugano.

In early november, together with about 50 revolutionaries, he tried to conquer Bisbino Mount, above Como.

This expedition, arranged superficially and disorganized, got nipped in the bud.

There was a fire clash with a battallion of 800 austrian hunters, and at the end Modesto and his fellows were obliged to escape again in Switzerland through the mountains.

The only wounded of that inauspicious Bisbino expedition was just Modesto; he was hurted in a finger of a hand.

The expedition to Bukhara

Around the mid-1800s, the silk world began to feel a pressing need to solve the problem of *pebrine*, the silkworm disease that could be defeated only through the introduction of fresh silkworm eggs from the Orient.

Various attempts had been made and expeditions were organised for the sake of finding supplies of eggs to be imported to Italy to strengthen the national breed of silkworm.

In the context of these incidents, an expedition was organised in 1863 by the resourceful Ferdinando Meazza, who was not new to such initiatives, along with Modesto Gavazzi, Count Pompeo Litta Biumi Resta and a certain Riboldi.

The three main protagonists of the expedition to Bukhara (from L'Illustrazione Italiana, December 28, 1863).



On behalf of Italian and French silkworm-raising companies, the expedition intended to bring back high-quality silkworm eggs from Asia, the Far East and Bukhara to Europe²⁵.

The plan, as it was to be carried out, consisted in travelling first to Moscow, then to Petersburg, then back again to Moscow, and from Moscow to Orenburg, an important city and stronghold at the foot of the Ural Mountains, where Russia kept their disciplinary battalions and prisoners condemned to forced labour in the mines. From Orenburg they would travel across the Kirghiz Steppes to Turan or Bukhara, choosing the place that proved most suitable to their purpose of gathering eggs.

Travel companions

The head of the expedition was Ferdinando Meazza, whose family had a silk mill in Bellinzago of Gorgonzola.

Meazza's life was chock full of interesting events. Very well-known in his native Milan, he always played a leading role in the philanthropic and artistic exhibitions in Milan, where he was for 16 years running permanent president and eventually honorary chairman of the great Patriotic Arts Society. He was not yet 30 years old when, already working as a silk dealer, he was included in this expedition. In spite of the misadventures of the Bukhara expedition, Meazza continued travelling, still on behalf of silk-producing companies; visiting both Japan (as many as eleven times) and China. For almost five years he lived in Russia as representative of the Lombard Factory of Chemical Products, an industry that was later wound up, causing him to lose a good part of his fortune as well as a valuable collection of works of art and rare objects accumulated on his travels.

Meazza was gifted with an extremely dynamic nature; he was energetic, outgoing and enthusiastic, and remained so until his death, at the age of 75.

Count Pompeo Litta Biumi Resta was born in Milan on February 29, 1828. His father Antonio was a horseman and officer in the great army of the first Kingdom of Italy, extremely gifted in mathematics and geography, and author of a superb *Historical and Geographic Map of Italy*.

He received the name of Pompeo from his paternal uncle, the illustrious author of *Renowned Families*, who was a man of learning and performed heroic political and military feats.

He always managed to stay out of the quarrels, uproars and social turmoil that marked the troubled times in which he lived, and cultivated with great passion studies of a more elegant nature; he loved literature, was talented in music and earned well-deserved praise for his paintings. The Gallery of Modern Art in Milan owns two of his works, and he also taught Daniele Ranzoni²⁶.

²⁵ In a note from *La Perseveranza* of April 22, 1863 it says that «certain locations in Persia should be able to offer us new silkworm eggs and good cocoons, and yet more in the Khanships of Khiwa, Bukhara and Koquand».

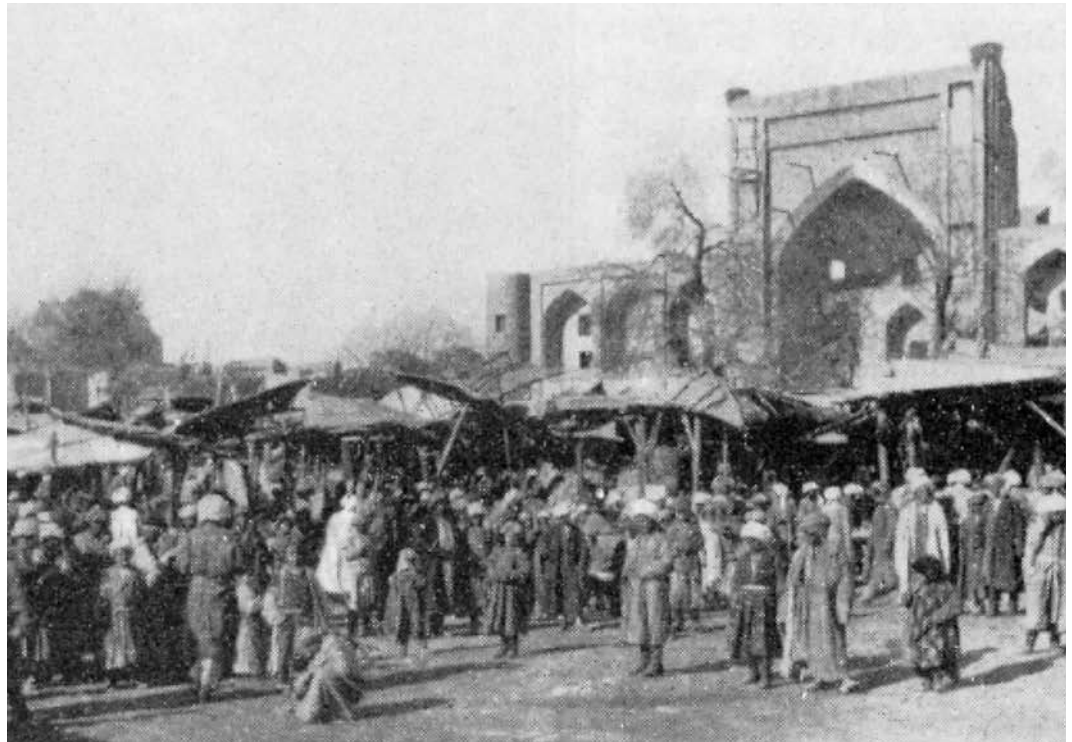
²⁶ In *Note azzurre* by Carlo Dossi (Adelphi, Milan, 1964) we read: «Count Pompeo Litta, an amateur painter who makes, as Mrs. Confalonieri says, magnificent frames for his paintings, invited Cesare Confalonieri to lunch one day, and served him stale bread, cheese leftover from the mousetraps, beef fit only to make shoes, wine made without grapes, and four *zacherelle* (split almonds) and four walnuts. On the door leading to the dining room was written in large letters: «and if at times life seems bitter – think of Bokhara» – and Confalonieri, patting Count Pompeo on the shoulder, remarked, «You should change the inscription, you know, and write instead: «and if at times life seems bitter – think of Litta's lunch»».



Map of Central Asia dating back to the expedition to Bukhara (1863), organised for the purpose of purchasing high quality silkworm eggs in the Far East.



Bukhara: the Reghistan
(from W. Rickmers,
The Duab of Turkestan,
Cambridge University
Press, Cambridge, 1913).



During the Five Days Battle of Milan, Litta was president of the War Committee, and it was at this time that he became friends with Modesto Gavazzi, his contemporary, who as we have seen, was involved in activities against Austria. In 1848 he was also part of the Provisional Government.

He died in Milan on May 17, 1881.

Bukhara

Bukhara, a city in «Transoxiana», is part of modern-day Uzbekistan, north of Afghanistan, on a plateau that extends as far as the foot of the western offshoots of the Himalayas.

Bukhara was once the capital of the Khanato Uzbekho (later Emirate), which was made vassal of Russia in 1868, in the conquest of Turkestan, and was subsequently incorporated by Soviet Russia in the Federated Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan, with Samarkand as its capital.

Bukhara was a large settlement long before Alexander the Great marched through with his armies. Islam arrived in 674 A.D., when the city was besieged by 24,000 Arabs. In ancient times it was said that unlike other places in the world, where the light falls from the sky, in Bukhara the light rises from the city. Arab historians called it «paradise on earth».

The city has always fascinated travellers. Marco Polo was so taken with its splendour that he remained here for three months.

Silk was an ancient tradition. According to ancient writings, in the 4th Century B.C. a certain Chinese princess was given in marriage to the King of Kokan. As her dowry she brought, hidden in the curls of her hair and the flowers of her bridal head-dress, a great

quantity of silkworm eggs. Thus it was that the small state of «Bokhara» was introduced to silkworm cultivation.

In the 19th Century, Bukhara was for European travellers and adventurers one of the most mysterious and unreachable places in the world. Those who ventured there, in fact, ran a real risk of never returning alive. The Moslems of the area, anxious to preserve their independence, killed almost all the infidels they were able to lay hands on. Very few returned from Bukhara to tell of their exploits.

Preparations for the expedition

Modesto, for the occasion, and in line with his natural desire to record, assimilate and study, had learned Russian and studied the geography of Asia.

In describing the adventurous journey, which began at the beginning of 1863, I will use his own words, as he kept a journal throughout the entire trip.

Modesto had worked as a journalist. He loved writing and wrote well; it was natural for him, therefore, to keep a detailed, diary-like account of everything he saw.

The newspaper *La Perseveranza* published several articles on the expedition, following its progress and including the written accounts of its leaders, Meazza and Modesto.

The whole story of the journey, moreover, was later summed up by Modesto in a «letter», written to «Commendatore» Cristoforo Negri and published by the Turin-based newspaper *La Stampa* in 1864.

I have therefore pieced together and condensed his writings, in order to give a better account of the story as he lived it first-hand.

A remarkable and premonitory article appears in the April 5, 1863 issue of *La Perseveranza*, in which Modesto wrote:

« We were assured that the Imperial Government [Russian] would energetically demand our liberation, in the very likely event of our being taken prisoner ... For the «Frenks», that is to say, citizens of any country outside Russia, the situation is very different, and once inside the territory of the Emirs of Bukhara, Khiva or Kokand, they are all simply considered infidels and are treated accordingly ...

And now that we have made so much progress in our venture as to consider it near to conclusion, we once more wonder whether we will succeed, because before us lie difficulties in the form of both men and things.

Goodwill and energy have not once failed us so far and, we hope, will not abandon us for the rest of the journey. Yet even if we should not succeed in reaching our destination, we would at least have the satisfaction of having done our utmost for the benefit of our country, putting to the test whatever intelligence, courage and self-sacrificial spirit we possess ».

Modesto, then, well-aware of the dangers that faced him, set off nevertheless with a true spirit of self-sacrifice, firmly convinced, along with his fellow travellers, that it was all for the good of his country and would solve an enormous and basic problem for the economy of northern Italy, which depended almost completely on the manufacture of silk.

In another article in the same newspaper, dated June 30, 1863, he wrote:

«... the protection we needed from the Imperial Government was not so much for ourselves, who were to venture into Asia with no more than permission to cross the border, as for the interests of our country in the success of an expedition which could bring great benefit».

The journey began in St. Petersburg, which Modesto describes thus:

«In St. Petersburg it is almost impossible to walk; for six months of the year the pavements are covered with snow, for two or three more with deep mud – during the other months they are under repair. As a solution to this difficulty, there are innumerable small sleighs for hire, which cross the city in all directions and at all hours, along with those that are privately owned. Thus one frequently finds oneself entangled in a swarm of these little vehicles, a predicament from which only a Russian driver is able to extract himself».

Modesto was able to catch the character of these people, halfway between easterners and westerners, a mixture of Slavic and Tartar populations, and unearthed elements that revealed the origins and the interbreeding of the races. He writes:

«There is at times a certain indifference which recalls the apathy of the Turks; there is the lack of aptitude towards industry, the gentleness of ways and characters, the craving for luxury which are decisively eastern, and also, I would venture to add, the way of greeting with such seriousness, and without the friendly smile which, in our European nations, is instinctive and involuntary».

In the letter to «Commendatore» Cristoforo Negri, Gavazzi wrote:

«In St. Petersburg, while we were seeking the support of the Imperial government, we learned as much as we could about the character of the people of Bukhara and the conditions of the country, in order to construct a code of behaviour for our stay in that city. We gleaned our information from men who were in a position to provide it, either due to their high social ranking, to their experiences in having travelled to the region, to studies made or through trade relations.

The total of this information led us to the conclusion that the dangers awaiting us in that country were real and many, but we took comfort at the same time in the firm conviction that our status as merchants, which we had to maintain with great care, would keep us safe.

At Oremburg we found further confirmation for this idea, after hearing of the characters of the Emir and the *toxabai* (finance minister), his favourite. We were informed that the one was inclined towards moderate government, and an improvement on his predecessor, while the other, for whom the Emir had great respect, was courteous in his manner and blessed with common sense and prudence.

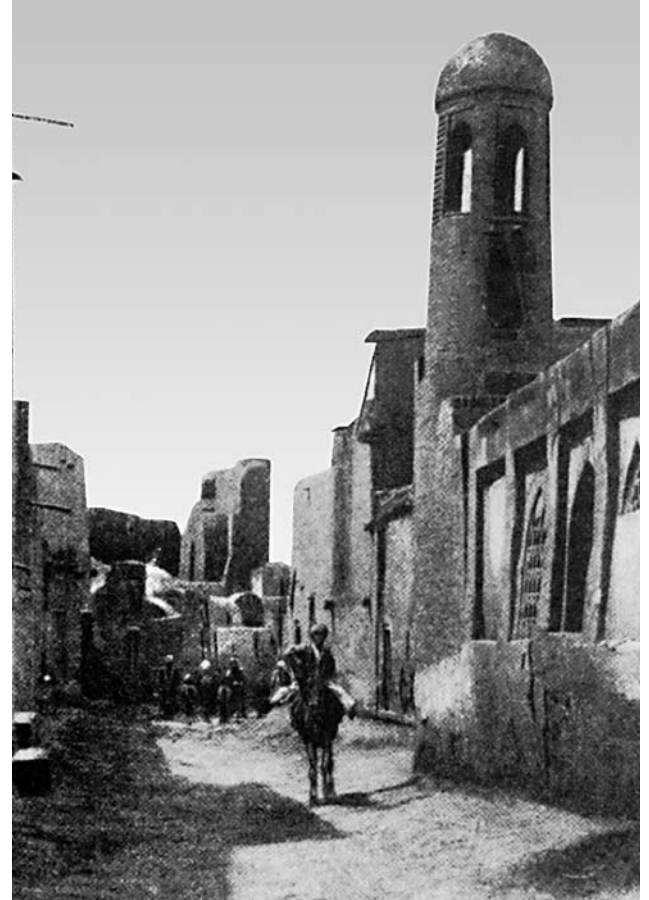
It was at Casalà, in Sir-Daria, that we gathered the last pieces of information regarding the disposition of the Bukhara government, silk production in the Khanship and the reception we should expect. These were so reassuring and backed up by so many solid reasons of commercial convenience that it seemed logical to us to nurture great hopes for the success of the expedition. To better fit in with the character of a country where friendships are virtually unknown, but even more to free us from the strict watch which we knew to be exercised there over foreigners and allow us greater freedom of movement, Meazza assumed the role of head merchant, myself and Count Litta that of clerks, while Riboldi retained his own role as specialist in the packaging of the eggs ».

The departure

Turkish couriers, guides, and translators were recruited for the expedition.

« Their perfect knowledge of the country which they had to cross, as well as that of the tribes and single individuals who they would encounter along the way, the communion of races and that particular solidarity which binds them together, constituted a guarantee against harassment and pillage on the part of their fellow countrymen. Throughout both the European and Asian sides of Turkey, the Europeans who have settled in the coastal cities still profit from this special quality of the Turkish people, which we do not know whether to call a sense of morality, tribal pride or true loyalty towards their inland trade operations.

The guides and couriers generally recruited for inland journeys, for the habitual transportation of sums of money (at times considerable) as advanced payments for the year's products, and of the merchandise destined for the cargo ships in the ports, are all Turks, and Turks of the kind which should be the most feared, since few of them have not indulged in banditry, and they invariably maintain a certain contact with those who



A street in Bukhara
(from *People of All Nations*).

practise it. It is a common observance among them, however, that before engaging in an honest life, they should first take this road. In such a way, they learn to recognise the dangers they run, the arts that are used, and ensure that the ancient trading rules guarantee their immunity. Having once taken a different direction, the sense of duty prevails in them and their old ways have no bearing on their new life; they give their word to missions of trust, and perform them with the fervent zeal of one who considers himself subject to those who have entrusted his with the task »».

After various delays in St. Petersburg due to difficulties in procuring the various permits and overcoming the relative bureaucratic difficulties, the expedition finally managed to set off in late spring, after having obtained the influential support of Her Imperial Highness the Grand-duchess Elena, the Tsar's aunt, as well as letters of recommendation and presentation from the Russian Government and a certificate of Russian protection and the support of the famous Geographic Society of St. Petersburg.

The journey to Bukhara

«« The thaw had swollen many of the mountain streams which flow into the river – in some low, flat areas the ground, normally firm, had turned to marshland, so that we were continually forced to stop and rest.

At times, we had to get down from the carriage and cross the rivers by boat, generally fashioned out of hollowed tree trunks; at others, as soon as we crossed a stream or a swamp, the horses would stop suddenly, with the wheels of the carriage sunk in the muddy earth, and we would be obliged to wait for help: men and horses from the nearest post would come to pull us out. At the passage of the Guberlâ we experienced a more serious accident, which could have had disastrous consequences. In order to cross this torrent, exceedingly fast-flowing and swollen with the melted snow of the Guberlinski valley, we had to use one of those floating pontoon bridges which at home are known as *porti*. This bridge was made up of two boats, joined together with beams, which served as support for the plank floor of the bridge. Two Russian officers, who were travelling a short distance from us, had crossed over before us with their equipment to the left bank of the river; the bridge was then brought back to the right and we loaded two of our carriages, the heaviest, and crossed together with them. As the bridge was about to come to a halt on the left side for the third time, however, bearing a small wagon, four men and as many horses, the beams joining the two boats broke, the weight of the load caused the broken part between the boats to incline, and everything not lashed down was tipped into the river. By good fortune, the men were close to the river bank and, on hearing the first creaking of the beams, had managed to jump ashore – all except one, who was travelling on the second

boat and did not have the time to save himself, and slipped into the river along with the other things. However, by swimming and holding onto the manes of the horses, which were also swimming towards the river bank, and with the help of the onlookers, he was pulled out of the water, followed by the horses, which barely were able to climb the banks, steep as they were and encumbered by trees and bushes. When this was finally accomplished, we turned our attention to recuperating the vehicle, which proved to be a more arduous task. The first attempts, in fact, only caused it to move further away from the bank and sink deeper; we had to take out all the cargo it held, and then, thus unburdened, we succeeded in dragging it to shore.

One of the cases on this wagon contained very important papers, the letters of recommendation for the fort commanders on the steppe and the certificate of recognition from the Russian government for the Authorities of Bukhara. These we had to spread out to dry in the sun; and we considered ourselves fortunate that of the things that had been lost or ruined, these were safe, for the loss of those documents would have seriously hindered the rest of the journey »».

In the Khanship of Bukhara - The long march

« As we left the Russian border, our little caravan included us four Italians, a Frenchman named Eugenio Tessier, as a French-Russian interpreter, a Tartar from Oremburg named Khodja Nazar Tcherganaiew, as Russian-Tartar interpreter, Toulebigondieff, Kirghese, two Kirghese guides for the route and four camel-drivers.

Thus the little expedition team was complete. Finally, on the morning of May 8, 1863, we set off from Casalà. The journey across this particular stretch of the Kirghese steppe proceeded smoothly and without serious mishaps. Along the way we encountered numerous caravans from Bukhara heading for the fair of Nijni-Novgorod, regarding which we attempted to find out about local silkworm-raising, but to no avail, so contradictory and uncertain was the information we were given. However, although on this point our curiosity was not satisfied, the very fact that we came upon so much Bukharese wealth in Russia reassured us that we would travel safely in Bukhara territory »».

Their long journey also took them through an area inhabited by tigers:

« But as we drew closer to the shore of Gian-daria, the vegetation gradually changed until it gave way completely to the «salsola tree», which as we went on claimed more and more ground until it became a dense woodland of trees four to five metres in height, encumbering with branches broken off by the snow large tracts of land on both sides of the river. In this place are the lairs of the tigers which,

according to the Indians, took refuge here after the cane thickets of Sirdaria were all uprooted or burnt. Humboldt, in a letter to rear admiral Boutakoff (which he kindly showed to us), having examined various hides of tigers from Sir-daria, assures that these are in no way different from those of Bengala, and believes there to be a whole colony settled in this region, so different in climate from their place of origin.

To protect us from being attacked by these animals, our caravan leader had us camp at a distance of five *verste* from the first bridge over the river Gian-daria, which we passed only on the following morning, coasting along the left bank of the river until the second bridge, where we camped until after midnight, precisely where the woodland was the thickest and most dangerous. As we walked, we realised that the tigers had their lairs not very far from our path; our horses, in fact, were reluctant to continue and made frequent and sudden leaps sideways. As soon as evening fell, the Kirghese gathered the whole caravan around the tents set up on the riverside, enclosed the camp within a circle of fires (which they kept alight up until the moment we left), and this precaution proved sufficient to guarantee our safety from any attack >>.

The account tells of other adventures:

« The route through Kisil-koum takes about forty-eight hours, and it is necessary to take brief breathers during the march; this means a little over two and a half days, so as to water the camels on the third day, because they cannot go longer without water. This entire stretch of the road, especially at each end, resembles a tomb for the martyrs of the desert, with skeletons strewn across the sand and bleached by the sun, from which the long lines of tired and thirsty camels distanced themselves in fear, almost as if they feared the same fate awaited them.

... During this stretch of the journey, in 1863, we had the good fortune to be accompanied by frequent rainstorms, which in that waterless land was the greatest blessing we could hope for. In the evening of the second day, in order to quicken our pace, we had not set up the tents; after resting for a couple of hours we were making ready to leave, when we were surprised by a sudden storm, which delayed us for over an hour. As soon as the rain stopped, we loaded and mounted the camels and were about to set off, when another, even more violent downpour forced us to once again postpone our departure.

We finally set off at around eleven o'clock at night. As we brought up the rear of the caravan we listened to the drone of the Kirghese camel-drivers, which vaguely resembles our religious chants. Notwithstanding our tiredness, therefore, in the knowledge that the next day we would be able to rest longer, and relieved also by

the refreshing showers and the singing, we carried on energetically, until finally the songs of the Kirghese died down, and then it seemed that even the camels slackened their pace. We had been travelling for a couple of hours in silence and in darkness, when we noticed that the camels were beginning to disperse, and one or two were veering off in other directions. We called to the guides to re-organise the caravan, but received no reply – turning back down the whole line of camels, we found neither guides nor interpreters; they had stopped some way behind to rest, leaving the caravan to continue without them.

A disorderly caravan is extremely vulnerable to attacks from Kirghese thieves, and the disappearance of the guides at this point could have indicated an ambush; among those present, in fact, the word «betrayal» was murmured ... Therefore, awaking the camel-drivers who dozed on the camels, we set about rounding up the dispersed animals. These carried the goatskins and were therefore the most important on that stretch of the journey, and usually the first to be attacked, since, with the goatskins pierced, the caravan, without water, is forced to surrender. After having quickly brought them all back together and organised them once more into a line, we arranged ourselves partly at the head, partly at the tail of the caravan, in order to escort the group more efficiently. And so we travelled until dawn, watchful against any possible surprise attack, and climbing now and again up the slopes to get a good look at the land around. However, the silence and the solitude of the place convinced us that the earlier stir was indeed a false alarm. Several hours later we arrived at the border of Kisil-koum, from whose heights is visible a flatland extending for five hours, without sand, but also without water. At the end of this flatland rises the Boukan mountain range, which marks the midway point between Casalà and Bukhara.

... At the spring of Irlar, on the southern slope, we were surprised by the unusual sight of a group of three or four enormous willow trees, growing amidst some small bushes on the bank of a stream that flowed from the spring. While the horses and camels were being watered, therefore, and our own water stores were replenished for the next four posts, where there was none, we stood around the trees, contemplating and touching them, so strange their presence seemed to us in that desert.

The Boukan mountains constitute a dividing line in the distribution of the vegetation on the steppe. In Kisil-koum we still found salsola and tamarisk growing at the height of a man on horseback, and the sands were adorned with the same carpet of fine grass and delicate flowers that we had come across on the first sands of the steppe; but on the far side of the Boukan mountains, although the species vary only in their proportions, they all suffer from the aridity of the earth and the air. The two bushes in the sand which we had seen grow into trees, the salsola

and tamarisk, are no more than small, sparsely-strewn bushes here, while the more vigorous wormwood, asafoetida and camel-thorn dominate the area. The springs are also scarcer, becoming one with the nature of the earth and yielding for the most part such salty water that they are almost useless to travellers, serving only to barely quench the thirst of the very salt-tolerant camels. Man cannot live in such dry conditions; and in the Boukan mountains and the cultivated land of Bukhara, on the lesser-beaten road along which we had travelled, we only encountered *aïl* of Kirghese and of a few Arabs near the two stopping-places where the water was drinkable, and a hermit among the sands of Bat-pak-koum, who, in order to survive there, must surely have known of some hidden spring, whose water he reserved for himself.

The name of Bat-pak-koum means «sands of the melted snow», and this desert area does really have a very different character from the dunes we had observed further back. These dunes are encountered more frequently and on lower ground, like the steep banks of certain mountain rivers or certain lakes, in which the water, as it withdraws, leaves behind the marks of past levels.

Some stretches, moreover, we crossed with extreme difficulty, especially the salt marshes of Aigàn-turgàn («Dead White Dog») with their clay beds not yet dried at the end of May; here we learned the reason for its name, as we were forced to leave behind us one of the camels, sunk up to its belly in the tenacious mud.

...Under our tents, in those last days of the march, the temperature was 42° centigrade.

We were close to leaving this inhospitable region behind us, and truly the thought of a few days' rest among the cool fields or in the shade of a tree lightened our hearts. From Orsk onwards we had seen nothing, except the willows of the Irlar spring, that could be called a shade tree, since the *salsola* plant, which grows on the shores of Gian-daria to the height of a small tree, bears leaves resembling those of the broom, providing no protection from the rays of the sun. Moreover, during the passage across the second half of the steppe, we rarely encountered natives, as they stayed away from this southern regions with its sterile soil, where only in the spring could they find a few sparse pastures for their herds, and this lack of inhabitants made the way even more wearisome. The month of May is, in fact, the period of migration from the south for Kirghese herdsmen who, having exhausted the springtime pastures and water basins that form throughout the steppe when the snow melts, move off in search of other pastures and water, either along the banks of the torrents and rivers or at the northernmost point of the steppe, rich in marshes and vegetation. We frequently came across the caravans of emigrants who, at times taking us for Muslim brethren, dressed as we were almost in Bukharese style, would place their right hand on their breast, lower their heads in sign of reverence and

proffer the universal Moslem greeting: «es salaam alecum» (a Tartar corruption of the Arabic: «essalam aleika», or «peace be with you»)

To the Kirghese these periodic journeys, undertaken by the whole family and often the whole *aul*, over considerable distances across the steppe, are an important event, and are undertaken with a certain solemnity. We would see them from afar on the horizon – a wavering black dot followed at a short distance by others and then a long, dark line which moved forward, growing thicker as we drew closer, without being able to pick out any of the objects that formed it. Only after a few hours' march could we see they were members of the Kirghese caravans travelling towards the summer posts, made up generally of a whole *aul*, or village. These caravans follow certain rules, which the Kirghese observe religiously. A girl, mounted on horseback like the men (for such is the way in which the Kirghese women ride), leads the march, dressed all in new clothes, with the «scekpend» or overcoat open in the front and turned up so as to show the edges of the brightly-coloured Bukarese silk tunic. A white and exceptionally clean cloth is wrapped around the head, forming a kind of cap such as those made of paper and worn often by our sculptors when they are working, and hangs down to cover the sides of the face, the neck and the shoulders. The feet are shod with boots of copper-green coloured shagreen or Moroccan leather, engraved with multi-coloured patterns, the work of craftsmen from Bukhara or Kasan.

Behind the girl follows the line of camels, carrying, among the household goods, the rest of the women, the boys and girls and sometimes also the lambs, for the journey on foot is too arduous for them.

Another woman on horseback rides alongside the camels, usually dressed in less conspicuous, but richer clothing, her status displayed rather in the fine trappings of her horse. Further behind, spread out in a long line marching in the fore, are the horses, often in a proportional number to the men, so as to keep the pace and prevent the animals from dispersing. Behind these, following at the same speed, are the camels and the rams bring up the rear. Before arriving at the border of the cultivated lands of the Khanship we had sent ahead, borne by Touleb, a letter in the Persian language addressed to the *toxabai*, in which Meazza informed them of our coming, indicated the purpose of our journey and requested permission to stay for a set period in the Emirate, in order to make the purchases necessary for our country, less fortunate than his own, and promising to respect the laws of the State and at the same time asking for its protection.

Touleb, arriving at the first village and encountering its guards, was not allowed to continue. They demanded the letter he carried, and this was sent on to Bukhara by means of a courier. In the meantime, he was ordered to remain where he was and wait for us. We reached Ourdandsi-bazar on the morning of June 2 and camped a

short distance from the village on a small patch of grassland enclosed on all sides by willow trees, mulberry trees and poplars, which quickly became crowded with inquisitive onlookers. Upon learning of our arrival, the head of this border village and the head of police came to pay us a visit, complaining because we had taken the road leading to Ourdandsi-bazar instead of that leading to Kagatan, which is the one indicated for caravans. We apologised for our ignorance and asked their pardon on behalf of our guides, who were perhaps more ill-informed than ourselves. We were excused, and our visitors in turn expressed their regret that there was no possibility of accommodating us in the village.

Later on, these two officials invited us to go to Kagatan, but, towards evening, this invitation was revealed to be a command, and we realised that awaiting us in the other border village was Mehemet-Scherif, brother of the *toxabai*, who held the office of *caraoul-begui*, or head of the guards. We departed, then, at around half past nine in the evening and, two hours later, having almost continually skirted the last quicksands of Bouiraukoum, we went down to Kagatan and into the house of the *caraoul-begui*.

Despite the fears of the Moslems in our company who, as soon as they set foot on the irrigated land, advised us to remain armed and on guard against surprise attacks, the initial reception was hospitable. A meal of fruit, cakes and rice «palau» was prepared for us, according to the customs of the land, and although this was offered to us with the words «eat, it is not poison», their manners were refined and courteous. Afterwards we were asked to declare the money and goods in our possession that were subject to customs. They sealed all our luggage, sacks and trunks, and on the morning of June 3 we set off for Bukhara, accompanied by Mirza-fat-oullah, one of the secretaries of the *caraoul-begui*. On the way, so as not to arouse suspicion, we pretended not to pay attention to our surroundings and were careful not to ask any indications or names.

By the evening of that same day we had arrived at one of the gates of Bukhara, but too late to be admitted. We stayed in a *caravan-serai* just next to the gate, and the next morning at dawn Mirza-fat-oullah told us we had permission to enter, but without long coats and with cigarettes in our mouths, so the whole of Bukhara would see that the new arrivals were not Moslems >>.

In Bukhara territory

And so our group finally set foot in Bukhara in early June:

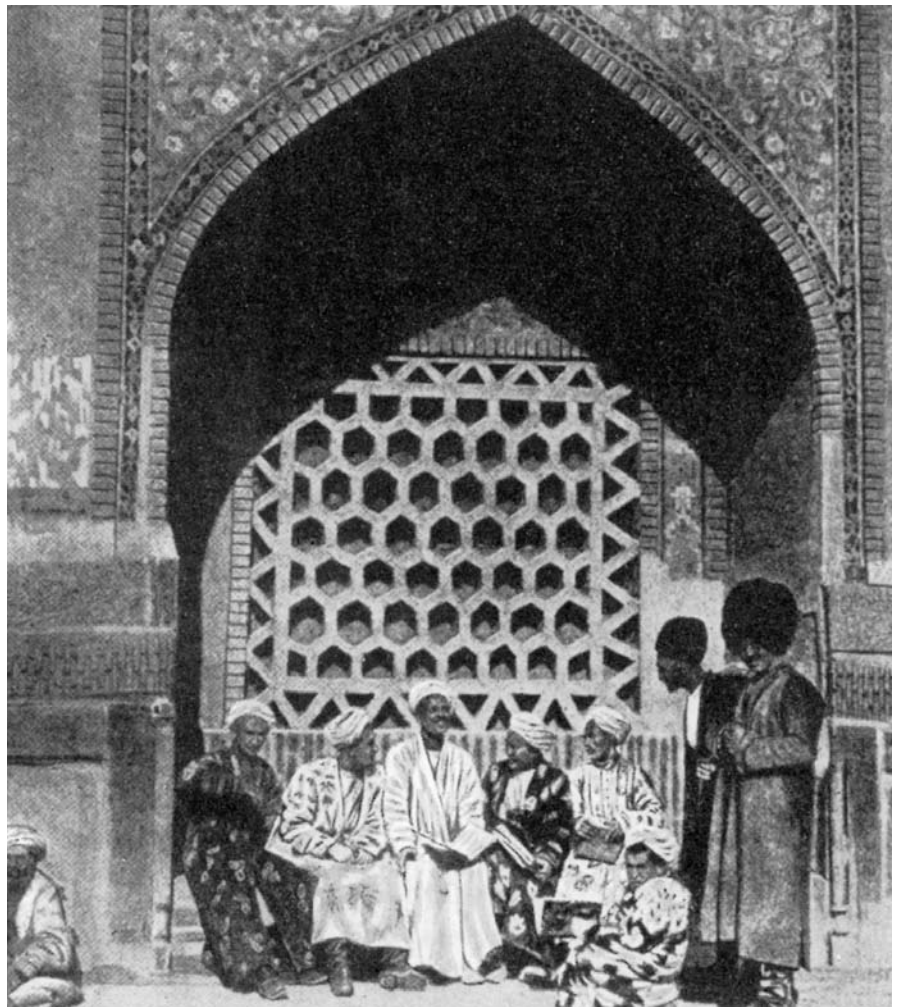
<< During this last march we had travelled some distance ahead of the camels, and as soon as we entered the cultivated land, we went in search of a tributary of the Zerafschan River in order to replenish our water supplies. We found it so

turbid with sand and mud that in other circumstances we would not have dared drink it. Among such hardships, however, tolerance of small discomforts of this kind cannot even be considered a merit, and it was enough to know that this was river water and not salty or stale, such as that which we found in the steppe, for us to drink our fill.

At the time of our arrival, water was being distributed throughout the fields; this was the period, in fact, when the Zerafschan began to rise, and the farmers engaged in this work came to see us out of curiosity. Our first questions to them were about silkworms and, hearing that there were some in the village, we asked if we might see a few. It appeared at first that no one dared to bring us any, and we, knowing how strong was the idea of the «evil eye» in the Moslem religion, were afraid we would not get to see any. However, the promise of a generous recompense convinced one of the onlookers to bring us two, hatched three or four days before from the last transformation, and added that the rest of the silkworms in the village were all approximately at the same stage.

The strong, healthy appearance of those two silkworms and their age when we arrived in that land put an end to our fears of not reaching Bukhara in time for the harvest or finding that the silkworms were diseased, and we were extremely cheered. When we inquired about our *caravanbasch*, the owner of a small piece of grassland near the village gave us permission to camp there, and as soon as we had pitched our tents in the shade of one of the rows of trees enclosing the area, he came carrying two large copper trays laden with bread and fruit, in token of hospitality. We thanked him, took the food and returned the trays with a few Russian silver coins, auguring him and his descendents health and prosperity for many generations to come. We had been resting for a couple of hours when some of the authorities from the village and the border area arrived, demonstrating their power by clearing a way through the crowds (which were gathered around our camp and even under the tents) with a whip. These officials had

School beneath a portico in Bukhara (from *People of All Nations*).



orders that we were to go to Kagatan, where the brother of the Prime Minister would provide us accommodation. And so, that evening, we were obliged to set off again for the other village, accompanied by the authorities of Ourdandsi-bazar; in the company of these and our own Kirghese we made a large and magnificent group, riding all together in the moonlight along a road that bordered the last sands of Bouirou-Koum.

... From afar, we were able to glimpse a minaret and several domes of the city of Bukhara, not especially tall buildings, which disappeared from sight behind the trees as we neared the city. The road became increasingly crowded with travellers who, inquisitive by nature and made friendly by the desire to satisfy this curiosity, followed us for some of the way, enquiring as to our business there. The crowds and the dust raised by the horses' hooves increased as we went along, and as we drew near to the city, in order to clear the roads, we were met by the *arabà*, vehicles built ingeniously without a single piece of iron and running on enormous wheels, commonly used throughout the territory of Bukhara and Khokand for the transport of women and troops >>.

Beneath the walls of Bukhara

<< Seeing as it was already sunset when we arrived at the walls of Bukhara, and that we had in any case to wait for permission from the Prime Minister before entering the city, we lodged for the night in one of those enclosures called *caravanserai*, a spacious courtyard with archways on two sides and small, completely bare rooms, without even a mat or a felt cover, but serving in any case as a shelter for travellers. We rested right in the middle of the courtyard, where we had placed our baggage, and beyond the fence of the *caravanserai*, separated only by a fairly narrow road, we could see the walls of Bukhara, built entirely of mud and equipped with merlons and embrasures, more for decoration than defensive purposes.

... The *caravanserai* of Mirza-Khurt was an old, elongated octagon-shaped building resembling an amphitheatre, the terraces of which were formed of different floors with rooms all the way round, with no opening other than the entrance door.

This was our hotel, and here we were shown the room in which we were to stay. It was so small, however, and so totally lacking in furniture (the use of which is practically unknown among the Moslems), that there was not enough place for us all, much less for our luggage, which we had to leave outside the room on the landing that served simultaneously as a roof over the landing below. In spite of our having left the luggage outside, when we brought in four of our camp beds the room was immediately full, and our interpreters had to sleep on the landing, where we had set up one of our tents.

Once we settled into this place, and after the visit of the *toxabai*, from whom we had to await permission to leave the *caravaserai* and begin the business for which we had undertaken the journey, the crowd of onlookers that gathered outside our room grew continually, and towards evening was so great as to become oppressive. In those countries, moreover, there exists no formality regarding entrance into homes, and the more uncouth of these «visitors» enter, sit down and talk at great length, attempting to gain a few pennies with the promise of service, or merely by offering their precious friendship. At first, seeing that we could not leave the hotel, it was not disagreeable to have continually around us this horde of multi-racial idlers, which gave us an opportunity to study their character a little. As curiosity is a common characteristic of all the populations of Central Asia, in fact, we found ourselves in contact with individuals of different races who spontaneously offered themselves as subjects for study. However, as we became more closely acquainted with them we would have preferred a little less frequent contact with them, or the possibility of choosing our company ourselves.

Some of the first to be distinguished in that crowd were the Calendars, holy men of some kind, regarded by the common people as possessing, in varying degrees if intensity, a sort of divine madness. They are known, in fact, for their custom of going around the city in large groups on Mondays and Thursdays, dressed in the strangest guises but all wearing a distinctive, tall, cone-shaped hat, quilted throughout in silk, and singing aggressively in chorus hymns to Allah or extolling the glories of the *Emir* in order to extort money. These bear some vague resemblance to the «dervishes» of Turkey, and are likewise respected and feared because they believe themselves blessed with divine inspiration. The Government of Bukhara, while maintaining its role as a model of piety, does not exceed its subjects in superstition, but nurtures it and uses it as a political weapon; it keeps, in fact, this whole bunch of scroungers on its payroll, and uses them as informers. Twenty or so of these dishevelled bards entered the *caravanserai* on the day of our arrival, while the *toxabai* were searching our luggage, and stayed for around a quarter of an hour, attracting our attention with their singing and bringing to a halt the work of the *toxabai*'s secretaries. When they had finished, they all lifted their hands together and pronounced the sacramental «Allah akbar»! (God is great!), the solemn formula of praise and goodwill that is customary among the Moham-medans, raising their hands to the level of the face and stroking their beards. The spectators all repeated this same gesture, and the ceremony was over.

On the same day the *toxabai* invited us to spend a few hours in his company at the house of his brother, Giovaci-bey, asking us to bring along whatever unusual and novel objects we had among our gifts for the *Emir*, so that he might see them in advance and describe them. We had brought one of those magic lamps with



Group of Uzbeks in
Bukhara (from *People
of All Nations*).

changing colours, which we hoped would please the *Emir* with its novelty, and this we took with us to the house of the Prime Minister. ».

In the city of Bukhara - the beginning of business

« Once inside the city, we were assigned as accommodation a small room in the *caravanserai* of Mirza-Kourt, where, some hours later, we were visited by the *toxabai* who, together with his secretaries and followed by a crowd of inquisitive idlers, came to check the goods and the money we had declared at the customs of Kagatan. Everything was found in order; we did not declare the price of the objects that he kept for himself or those that we had put aside as gifts for him and the *Emir*. The value of all our other goods we were required to declare, however, and did so.

At the end of this operation, we explained to him the reason for our journey to such a distant land, and asked his kind co-operation in reaching our goal. He answered that he was unable, in the absence of the *Emir*, to grant us the permission to make purchases, but would immediately send word to the *Emir* of our arrival. He was confident our request would be

granted, and assured us that in the meantime he himself would do everything in his power to help us. A few days later, cocoons began to appear on the market, and since these were the object of our continual discussions with old Mirza-Kourt, who, whenever we needed, was always ready with advice, suggestions and instructions, he had some samples of various types of locally-produced cocoon brought to show us, and we pointed out to him which of these would be the best suited to our needs. They were all fine cocoons, and some of an exceptional quality, rarely seen in Lombardy in the days when production was thriving.

The period of greatest abundance on the markets was fast approaching, and we were concerned that it should not pass until we had made our purchases. This could easily happen, if the *Emir's* permission arrived too late, engaged as he was in the war in Kokand. We made repeated requests to the *toxabai* to grant us permission, limited and conditional, if he saw fit, to purchase, and after a few days of insisting, of concessions made in the evening and revoked in the morning, he

finally placed at our disposition a large, comfortable room for packaging the eggs, and engaged one of his agents to buy the cocoons at the market for us, since he could not allow us to go ourselves. He limited the daily purchases to approximately 250 *tenga*, and added that, if the reply of the *Emir* was not favourable, all we had managed to accumulate in the meantime would remain our property, and he would only forbid any further purchases.

It was on these conditions that we set to work, and we were satisfied, because we hoped to accumulate a large quantity in a short time. For us the establishment of a clothing factory and the steadfast disregard of all that did not pertain to the silk industry was a near-guarantee against suspicions we might otherwise have aroused, and we were confident that things would go more smoothly in the future. We were eager to make progress quickly, however, and, after further petitioning on our part, the *toxabai* increased by four times the amount of daily purchases originally allowed us – this was a satisfactory result, assuring us a good part of the stock of eggs that we had hoped to build. The hatching of the silkworms had begun, and, as far as we were able to tell in the few days we had managed to observe the process, was producing excellent results; the workers were a little slow, but quite competent.

Throughout this time Meazza was not allowed any greater freedom than when we first arrived in Bukhara. He was only allowed to go to the factory once a day and was accompanied everywhere by one of the guards of the *caravanserai*; the rest of us were not subjected to such strict limitations, yet even so, our perseverance and single-mindedness served to prevent us from abusing our freedom.

The *toxabai* received us with great honour – one of the courtyards of his house was completely covered with Persian and Turkoman carpets, and he awaited us in a corner of this courtyard. After conversing for some time with us through our interpreters, he expressed a desire to see the light-producing machine we had brought with us. When we had set up everything necessary in a room, we made him and all his company exclaim in wonder with the magic of the thousand rotating chromatropic colours. Afterwards, with our permission, he left us in the company of Giovaci-bey, delegated to take care of us, and invited us to accept hospitality for the night in his house, where we would rest more comfortably than in the *caravanserai*. From then on, this hospitality became very courteous indeed – for the whole evening we were offered refreshments, *palau*, fruit, tea and sugared almonds, and at midnight they set up beds spread with quilts and silken pillows in the room where we were to spend the night (the same that later was to serve as our prison). On the following morning Giovaci-bey came to greet us and asked if we desired anything; later the *toxabai* returned, accompanied by his secretaries, to ask how he should present us to the *Emir*. Before sending off the courier with the

message, however, he wanted to see the play of colours again and examine the mechanism, so as to be able to give a precise description of it to the *Emir*. After further counselling the courier was dispatched. At around three o'clock that afternoon we were given permission to return to our hotel, where we were to remain in custody until the *Emir* granted us permission to go about our business.

... This square is where the Bukharese people generally meet and where public events are held, including executions, which, in Bukhara, are a form of popular entertainment. These are not frequent, however, occurring only a few times a week and exclusively for civil crimes. All the political executions – and these are a daily occurrence – are carried out in secret, in the guards' barracks, or inside the citadel. At a sign from the guard accompanying the people proceeding from the palace, the executioner seizes the offenders, drags them into his room and, making them kneel with their face turned towards Mecca, speaks the words «Bismillah Allah akbar!» (in the name of the great and merciful God), takes them by their beard with his left hand and with his right cuts their throat, letting them fall in their own blood. At the end of this unhappy ceremony, he wipes the blade of his knife, running it between two fingers which, thus blood-soaked, he brings to his mouth to taste the blood, perhaps as a sign of propitiation, or according to a custom of more bloodthirsty origin.

The knife is not the instrument of execution used in the executions in the square of Reghistan. If the victims condemned to public execution are men, they are thrown down from the top of the citadel; this often results in maiming or a slow agonising death, since the fall from a height of ten or eleven metres on soft earth does not always result in instant death. Women victims, those who have not contrived to conceal the sweet sins of love, are shot – an action that almost invariably has to be repeated many times because of the executioner's lack of skill or the inadequacy of the weapons used.

Another grim building, also situated in the citadel near the *Emir's* palace, is the prison of the fleas, which consists in a cistern into which prisoners are lowered, half naked and bound hand and foot, so that they have no way of defending themselves against the insects that populate the hole. These are no other than fleas, which attack goats, horses, rams and camels, and which are extremely abundant in all the steppe region of Russia and Kirghiz. The bites of these insects are very noxious and produce painful swellings and sores; at first glance they resemble bedbugs, but with longer legs, and their bites are only felt some time after they have sucked blood. This punishment usually lasts for one to three days, but in the case of this longer term the victims are rarely taken out of the hole alive, in spite of the savagely strong constitution of the men, who without doubt have a much greater resistance than other races >>.

The long imprisonment

«The *Emir*'s reply should have arrived around June 19, but that day had come and gone, and we were expecting to receive word at any moment when, on the 21st, at around three in the afternoon, one of the *toxabai*'s secretaries appeared at the factory, escorted by some of his guards dressed in red, to tell us that the *toxabai* was awaiting us all at the house of his brother Giovaci-bey, and that we were to make haste.

We went first to the *caravanserai* to change our clothes, and found Meazza there: he had received the same invitation.

From the *caravanserai* we were escorted to the house of Giovaci-bey by the secretary, the red-robed guards and those of the *caravanserai*. Here we were shown into the hall, where the minister and his counsellors awaited us. They politely enquired after our health, our business and the purchases we had made, and then asked whether we cared to eat. We replied that if it were fitting for us to accept, we would accept, but that at the moment we were not hungry. We were told that we could not decline, and we were shown into a room that gave onto the same courtyard; in front of this room a wall was being built to segregate it from the others.

We were followed across the courtyard and into the room by all the guards and various and sundry others who had observed the scene, and shortly afterwards, our interpreters, who had been called aside by the *toxabai*, announced our arrest, without any explanation as to the reason. «And who will take charge at the mill?», we asked, upon which we were told that «the *toxabai* himself will have your affairs watched over.»

Then they wanted to search us, and to avoid this we removed our topcoats and emptied our pockets. Our valuables and keys, the only things we had on us, were taken away, after which we were ordered to hand over to the *toxabai* everything we had brought with us or bought in Bukhara.

After this, we left the prison with two interpreters and, escorted by several guards, we went to the mill, where, the workers paid and dismissed, the doors were closed. From here we were escorted to the *caravanserai*, where, as soon as the *toxabai* (who arrived almost at the same time as us) had entered, the doors were closed behind us.

There, while Mullah Aaron, the *toxabai*'s treasurer, counted our remaining money with extreme care, all the other people in his company left the room, and our personal belongings were put into bags. When the sum of money was found to be correct, the *toxabai* ordered his seal to be put on all the bags, together with that of Meazza, which had been given me in case of need.

In the evening, everything was loaded onto the horses, which had been sent for,

and the whole company set off for the house of Giovaci-bey, with the *toxabai* following closely behind, and our group, still in custody, surrounded by a silent crowd of people lining both sides of the streets lit by numerous candles, that they might better enjoy the spectacle. Thus we returned to our prison, where I, Meazza, Count Litta, Riboldi and Tessier were left to wonder why such measures had been taken.

Khodja-Nazar, Touleb and the other Kirghese of our company were kept in a place separated from ours, so that all communication between us was impossible. Our belongings were placed in a room next to ours, but inaccessible.

... Unexpectedly arrested, and with a subterfuge which made any resistance and any attempt to escape impossible, we were forced to count day by day thirteen long months of mysterious detention, during which, to the repeated threat of execution was added forced idleness, total privation, even of our daily bread, the agonising knowledge of the anxiety our loved ones were suffering, and the frequent shows of foulness and villainy of a race which proved to be more wicked than barbarian. Such strange behaviour is known, and yet we, who have had the opportunity to experience it first hand, do not hold any grudge against the men of the Bukharese Government who persecuted us, except for the little torture to which we were subjected for the sake of their perverse disposition. Apart from this, they have no blame in our suffering, other than that of having yielded to a power greater than their own. In fact, towards certain of them, who in appearance seemed to be our greatest enemies, we owe our gratitude, because perhaps in giving way for an instant to a sentiment of benevolence, or else for reasons of prudence, they halted the blow which was about to fall on us.

On August 3 the *Emir*, having abandoned the war in Khokand, returned to Bukhara. On the 7th of the same month, a kind of judicial delegation, composed of one of his secretaries and two of the *toxabai*'s, entered our prison followed by Khodja-Nazar to hold an inquest. After asking questions concerning our countries of origin, the purpose of our journey and the documents of recognition which we might have for the *Emir* (although these they did not want to see), we were told, «The document of protection from the Russian Government, of which you speak, we do not recognise; on the contrary, we scorn it, and since you have no paper from your own king for the *Emir*, you are all vagabonds and you must die here».

Giovaci-bey, who until this point had taken part in the questioning only as a spectator, after hearing a few moments of the strange questions that the king's secretary put to us after this threat, decided to assume a more important role and, crawling on all fours into the middle of the circle formed by ourselves and our judges, said, «This man continues to weary you; say quickly what you are able to do that is useful or pleasing, and if you have anything that may be agreeable to the *Emir*, he will

keep you as slaves in his service», and he asked us a series of questions, each one more bizarre than the last, to which we answered protesting a lack of knowledge regarding supernatural sciences, which, being no more than simple merchants, was easy to understand. The interrogation ended with the order that we were to teach a skilled craftsman of the village the process of photography, as all the necessary equipment was ready.

The next morning, in fact, our judges re-appeared, accompanied by Usta Ali, a native of the Noyai people of Saratow, in Russia, whom we were supposed to initiate into the secrets of photographic art, and so we began. We had to work on command, and therefore with a certain haste, and with a disorderliness which made progress impossible. After two days of fruitless labour our judges returned and asked us why we did not want to make a portrait of the *Emir*, at which Usta Ali came to our aid, declaring that the unsatisfactory machinery and poor preparations were to blame. The work was then suspended, but since during this time our prison had been kept open, it was left so, as if they had forgotten to close it. After fifteen days Usta Ali came to tell us that by order of the *Emir* a new photographic experiment was to be made, with a new camera and new preparations that had just arrived from Russia, and this time the experiment would be made without haste, and without the supervision of our judges. The tests then turned out satisfactory, and continued for a week. At the end of this time the resulting portraits were presented to the *Emir*, who approved them, admired them and, proud and satisfied at having been the first to introduce into his kingdom the new art of photography, he was no longer interested in going further, and had all the equipment and preparations put away in his storehouses, so as not to have any more to do with the subject.

During those days of work, we had used the pretext of needing something or another for the photography in order to have access to the room where our belongings were kept. Going through our things, we found the paper of Russian authorisation, which we showed to Usta Ali, so that he might make it known at court that we really did possess such a document. When learning of this, the *Emir* told Usta Ali that we would have to be released, although he seemed unwilling to do so immediately. Meanwhile, however, we had been granted a little more freedom; we were allowed to walk in the various courtyards of the house of Giovaci-bey, and the food we were given (which at this and all times was the gauge as to what our status was) had improved noticeably.

It was clear that we were gaining favour day by day, and in line with public opinion, our release was postponed from Monday to Friday, and from Friday to Monday, the days which were reserved especially for the *Emir's* pardon. Count Litta and Meazza, who were music lovers, were called to the palace to display

their musical talents in the square, in the presence of the *Emir*, and another time to give lessons to some of the royal musicians. On these occasions, they were always received with courtesy and consideration, which suggested goodwill. This naturally raised our hopes that our imprisonment would soon be over, especially upon talking with Usta Ali who, due to his frequent visits to the palace, had the possibility of learning what our fate would be.

Early in the morning of October 12, Khodja-Nazar came into our prison and announced the arrival of a mysterious visitor, after which others followed with the same news. Some said this visitor was Chinese, others Persian, European and even Italian, but no-one knew for certain. He was lodged in one of the rooms near our own, and we were able to see him; from his manner he appeared to be European, or at least accustomed to European life; his behaviour, in any case, was definitely not oriental.

Our common destiny (seeing as he also, under surveillance like ourselves, was not allowed to pass beyond the doors of Giovaci-bey's house, although not formally under arrest), the urge to discover who he was and what business he had in Bukhara, the mystery that surrounded him and the hope that we ourselves might be the object of his mission led us to try to find ways to make contact with him and communicate through little notes written in pencil, which we sent and received furtively, taking care not to be discovered.

We found out that his name was Mirza-Jacoub-Khan (Malcom) of Tehran: he spoke French, and from his way of speaking and writing, we came to the conclusion that he was negotiating with the Government of Bukhara for our release. In this very period, however, Usta Ali came one day in great haste to tell us that our situation had worsened. We would have to convert quickly to Islam in order to avoid terrible measures, and meanwhile we should write to the governor-general of Oremburg to inform him of what was happening and what was being said about us; he would make sure our letter was sent without delay. We did not know which of the messengers to trust, but in any case we decided it would do no harm to send news to the governor of Oremburg regarding the rumours that were circulating about us. This was on October 29. Several ministerial secretaries then came to the house of Giovaci-bey, ordered us into our prison, put a lock on the door and called our Kirghese companions to announce their release. These left, returning the following day to take their belongings from among our own, and abandoned Bukhara in haste.

On November 1 Mirza-Boulat, the secretary who, ever since our arrival, had taken it upon himself to keep us informed (a task he performed zealously), went through all our things and made an inventory, and during the next three days, peering through the cracks in our door, we saw all the objects that had been confiscated

taken away one by one, placed in a public auction and disappear one by one as they found buyers. Then we were told that the *Emir* had signed our death sentence, and we had no reason to doubt it, since we knew that this kind of dispossession usually accompanied or preceded capital punishment.

Usta Ali appeared a few days later and again mentioned our conversion, seemingly convinced that this was truly our only hope. We replied by asking him, in the name of the friendship he professed, to desist from such talk, and to let the *Emir* appoint others to the task of making a formal proposition on the matter. We were anxious to avoid having to give a reply that would have seemed very ungracious to he who had proved to be our friend and who appeared to be sincerely concerned for our future.

From this moment on, he made no more mention of the subject, except in jest, showing that he understood that his fervour for proselytising would have been frustrated without gaining any converts for the «true faith».

Since the prison was closed, our food rations had been reduced to proportions barely sufficient to keep us alive, and our isolation was almost total. The bread rolls diminished drastically in size, the evening «palau» was very poor and, as we were materially segregated from the rest of the world, the door of the prison was not opened at all. The meagre meals we were allowed, in fact, were lowered down to us from the wall that had been built in front, leaning against which was a ladder leading to the upper rooms.

The order had been given that no-one except the servant of the house could climb this ladder to see us or talk to us. We received our daily bread as usual, but in such small measure that we repeatedly asked, though in vain, that it be increased – this was the only thing we asked insistently, ready to do without everything that was not vital to our survival. Besides the strict orders from above regarding our treatment, however, what made matters a great deal worse was the ration our guard skimmed off to his own benefit and at the expense of our health.

Our extra undergarments had all been sold; we had just barely managed to hide some of what was in our room on the day the auction began, and all we had left of any other type of clothing consisted in what we were wearing. Consequently, even our need to keep clean was now incompatible with our situation.

As well as the constant fear for our lives and the hardships we were suffering, which in themselves were hard to bear, we were also frequently subjected to the scorn and jeering incited by certain ill-mannered youths, sons of ministers, secretaries and the like, who hung around the house of Giovaci-bey. Thus we spent the winter, with one companion, in the room facing our own, named Mirza-Jacoub-Khan, who had been imprisoned there around mid-November after having offended the *toxabai* with his untactful complaints about poor treatment, and perhaps also for

suspicious, which were always easily aroused in these people when dealing with a man whose business was unclear.

The *Emir* had gone to Samarkand and from there to Issar, where the revolt had detained him for three months. The caravans, returning from the fair at Nijni-Novogorod, came back into Bukhara without any news for us. Finally, at the beginning of 1864 and shortly before the return of the last caravan, we received news of a complaint arriving from Russia and, at the same time, rumours began to circulate that Schepoulat, a Bukharese *caravan-basch* resident in Oremburg, had been arrested.

A tradesman named Kloudow, arriving from Moscow, confirmed to us the news of this complaint. At the same time, he attempted to relieve as best he could our physical plight by smuggling in to us sugar, tea, coffee, tobacco and cheese – all things that can be appreciated only by those who live a life of misery and starvation, who know the importance of using them sparingly in order that they may be enjoyed as long as possible »».

Release

«« The complaint from the Russian Government had shaken the merchants of Bukhara, who sent a delegation to the *Emir* on his return from Issar, to ask him to return all prisoners in the country to Russia – ourselves, that is, along with Mirza-Jacoub-Khan and thirteen Cossacks, captured at various times, who were then serving in the army. This initiative appeared to bear good results, because from all directions, even from Giovaci-bey himself and the secretaries of the minister, we received congratulations for our imminent release.

The *Emir* returned from his victories in Issar on March 25. On the morning of the 28th Mirza-Jacoub-Khan was taken from prison and accompanied to the court by the head of the merchants and several secretaries. We expected that our prison also would now be opened; towards noon it was, in fact, but only our interpreter Tessier was taken out. After a final questioning, he was granted his freedom, and it was said in Khodja-Nazar that Mirza-Jacoub-Khan promptly took him into his service for his return journey to Russia.

These two left on the 5th of the following April, the former with great sorrow and with tears in his eyes, since he had become greatly attached to us and feared for our future. Kloudow and Tessier left around fifteen days later, promising us that they would do everything possible for us once they arrived in Russia.

We were now more isolated than ever without our interpreters. It seemed, however, that greater care was being taken of us as hostages, because our food rations had been increased slightly and we were being guarded more closely. Only Usta

Ali and on rare occasions the Cossacks (who were seldom allowed contact with us) came to bring us the news that arrived from Russia; we learned in this way that the Governor of Orenburg had taken measures to deny Bukharese merchants entry into Russia territory.

On June 19 Andali, one of the Cossacks, came to tell us that their sergeant had received a letter from Kloudow, in which he said that within three weeks our and their business would be concluded, and, if the calculation of the dates were correct, this would mean by the 27th of the same month. It was, in fact, on the morning of that very day that all the servants and the slaves of the house of Giovaci-bey climbed up the ladder against the wall of our prison and congratulated us on our release. Andali came later to confirm the good news.

On the 28th of that month the door was finally opened, and Giovaci-bey was anxious to be the first to invite us to leave the room; he accompanied us into another courtyard of his house and had us sit under the willows on the bank of a pool of water used for domestic purposes >>.

Freedom

<< Through Moullah Aaron, the *toxabai* communicated to us that we were free, but that we would have to remain in the house of his brother until our departure. In the meantime, they were making calculations as to how much money they would return to us. This operation lasted longer than we hoped as the *Emir* left suddenly for Karschi, along with his entire court except for the *toxabai*. On July 4 Mirza-Boulat, at the head of a group of seven or eight merchants gathered in council in the courtyard of our prison, brought to us a sum of money in the local currency, which was claimed to be the equivalent of what had been taken from us, including the value of our sold belongings but minus the customs duty and the expenses of our arrest and keep during the period of imprisonment, almost as if it had been agreed upon beforehand. Moullah Aaron was appointed to purchase all we needed for our journey home, and told us that when we left, our weapons (the only possessions that had not been sold) would be returned to us.

Since the day we were granted permission to walk freely in the courtyards, the Cossacks paid us frequent visits, and we gave them part of the money returned to us, so that they could arm and dress themselves, as they were in dire need. The Bukharese Government, in fact, was sending them off on their long and wearying journey over the Steppe in rags, practically barefoot, and without even a little of the tea which is so vital in the desert.

Their visits, however, did not last long; their communication with us must have aroused suspicion and perhaps also a little fear, because they were eventually placed

under arrest and confined to the house of the head merchant until their departure. On July 11 this latter came to bring Meazza to the *toxabai*, who finally gave him permission to leave, and told him that our arrest had been caused by the fact that we had brought no letter from the Russian Emperor for the *Emir*. He concluded by exhorting Meazza to give thanks to the Emir at every step of the return home and to send him, the *toxabai*, news of our journey.

Moullah Aaron escorted us on foot to the gates of the city, where we mounted our horses and headed straight for the frontier. On July 12, having passed beyond the cultivated lands, we saw the Cossacks again, camped at the beginning of the desert to the north of Kagatan, where they had received orders to wait for us.

We greeted each other like old friends. At the beginning of August, 1863, as soon as they returned from Khokand, they had come to visit us in prison and since then, one or two of those we had become friends with came regularly to see us as long as they were allowed to, bringing us fruit or a few eggs and offering their help in any way they were able. Frequently they brought us their purse, begging us to accept it in compensation for our needs, and apologising that their meagre daily wages prevented them from offering more.

In the company of these Cossacks, then, who had shown such greatness of heart and character, and who proved to be an enormous comfort during our journey, and with a guide picked at random, we travelled for several short days as far as the wells before Kisil-koum, where we waited for the Bukharese *caravan-basch* Seid-Aamin, delegated by the *Emir* to hand over the prisoners to the Russian authorities at the border. >>.

The journey home

Free at last, after thirteen solid months of imprisonment, the companions began their long journey home. The account continues:

<< Among the sands of Bouiroukoum and Kisil-koum, in the season in which we crossed them (along a route which the caravans did not usually take), the heat was fierce – between 40° and 45° centigrade at least, judging from the fact that, in the shade of the tents, the metal objects were as hot to the touch as if they had been heated in fire, and those that were left for some time in the sun could not be held in the hand for any length of time. The best defence against this extreme heat are winter clothes, and the Moslems in our company made use of such. We doubled our long robes and, above all, kept our heads well covered to avoid sunstroke.

... Shortly before leaving Bukhara we had heard news of a Russian expedition that was expected to invade Khokand, though at the time it was not known towards which of the nearby States the Russian army was heading. The *Emir*, in

fact, was greatly afraid for his kingdom and his own safety; after ordering our release, he had left in great haste for Karschi, followed a few days later by his army, leaving his minister the task of settling the dispute which had arisen with Russia over our imprisonment »».

The newspaper *La Gazzetta di Milano* of September 16, 1864 reads:

«« At the request of the Tsar the four Italians were finally released, and on the occasion the *Emir* sent a letter to the Russian Emperor, making it clear that only to satisfy the requests of this latter had he agreed to free the prisoners. At the same time, he warned that in the future any foreigner who dared to enter his territory, regardless of his nationality, would be beheaded on the very spot where he was discovered. Having thus survived the dens of Bukhara, our fellow countrymen arrived in St. Petersburg, where a great number of ladies and gentlemen, curious to see them, were waiting at the station. The Minister, Prince Gorciakoff, was anxious to talk with them, and remained in their company for over an hour, listening to a detailed description of their ordeal »».

The newspaper *La Perseveranza* commented on the return of the four prisoners every day from September 23–26, 1864.

«« On September 23, the news was given that the Italians were expected to arrive in Colico on the 24th, and then proceed to Milan via the Como railway. In Colico, the president of the workers' society, a large part of the population and the local authorities were eager to be present at their arrival. At Gravedona, at Varenna, at Bellagio and, in short, along the whole length of the lake people cheered lustily, and firecrackers and cannons were set off in sign of celebration; on some of the surrounding hills bonfires were lit, and the magnificent residence of Count Mondolfo was illuminated. As the steam ferry carrying the four courageous adventurers passed by, fireworks were set off, while from the shores of Borgovico echoed a long «Hurrah!» and thunderous applause. In Como, the reception could not have been warmer, with the lakeside thronged with cheering crowds, and in Milan another heartfelt show of affection ended this triumphant parade »».

The same newspaper also reported certain important information regarding the release of the prisoners, after thirteen months of arrest:

«« ... It would appear that the «jailbirds» owe their release to the Russian Cabinet, and especially to the effective intervention of the Grand-duchess Elena,

Tomb of the Trolliet family in the Monumental Cemetery of Milan, in which Modesto Gavazzi is buried.



aunt of the present Tsar. In an effort to overcome the obstinacy of the Emir of Bukhara, the Russian Governor had ordered firstly the confiscation of goods and secondly the imprisonment of all the Emir's subjects in Russia.

... It is astounding indeed to hear how, since our exiles left that land of cannibals, their journey consisted in one continual series of cheers. In Oremburg, Moscow and St. Petersburg, there were crowds to greet them. Prince Gorciakoff, the Ambassadors of France and England, and the most important families prepared for them great banquets, and the cheering concluded with well-wishing for Italy and its prosperous future >>.

The outcome of the expedition

The expedition of Modesto Gavazzi and his companions to Bukhara did not bring about the desired results, but it did cause great resentment on the part of Russia for the way in which protected and authorised merchants had been treated. The Emir paid dearly for his bad behaviour and irreverence towards the Russian Government.

The whole affair, in fact, provoked the reaction of the Russian Empire, which, in the year 1868, brought the Khanship of Bukhara under Russian rule.

Some people believe that the expedition in Bukhara had also a spying purpose. That's the reason why the group was imprisoned.

It would be proved by some documents found in England: a few drawings representing areas, which today we could call "sensitive" (military estates, defences, etc.), that Modesto and his fellows kept with themselves and tried to sale to English men.

The death of Modesto

Upon his return from Bukhara, Modesto was appointed to the Milan City Council and assigned to diplomatic relations. He died heirless at the age of 39 in his home in Via Borgonuovo no. 19, Milan, where he had lived since his marriage, when he moved from his parents house in Palazzo Cagnola.

It is curious to note that Modesto, who himself had

rather socialistic and revolutionary ideas, lived in the same building as Radetzky. His wife Anna had a sister, Guglielmina (b. in Elberfeld on 17.4.1824, d. in Milan on 17.5.1866), who had married a gentleman named Carlo Giulio Trolliet, of Lyons, himself a silk mill owner who also traded with Milan.

Trolliet had a family chapel built at the Monumental Cemetery of Milan, where he is buried alongside his wife and his sister Carolina Trolliet.

Modesto is buried in the same chapel. Today the little building is derelict. In the chapel is a plaque with this inscription, «The wealth acquired from an industrial life he chooses to donate to help abandoned children in Milan» (He himself had no children).

GIUSEPPINA BOSSI GAVAZZI (1830-?)

Giuseppina was born in Milan on June 6, 1830. She was the sister of Antonio and Modesto Gavazzi and had a twin sister named Paola Maria.

Giuseppina was a singer. This was not such a strange fact, if we consider that music was popular among the members of Milanese high society, including both the nobility and the middle classes²⁷. Giuseppina herself was probably not a very accomplished singer, seeing that no facts of particular importance have been found regarding her career.

Music and singing were not foreign to the family of Giuseppina. Her sister Angela, born in 1835, had married – in 1858 – Icilio Calzolari, a native of Parma living in Milan, one of the most important Milanese photographers of the second half of the 19th Century²⁸, whose brother, Enrico Calzolari²⁹ was a well-known tenor (see Casimiro Costante Gavazzi 1790–1857 at page 63).

²⁷ A prominent member of the high society of Milan, Count Pompeo Belgiojoso was gifted with a wonderful voice and had performed in Bologna in a memorable rendering of the *Stabat Mater*, by Rossini; another was Prince Emilio Belgiojoso, a widely appreciated tenor.

²⁸ In 1867 Calzolari took over the factory of Alessandro Duroni at Corso Vittorio Emanuele no. 13, in Milan, and in the same year he participated in the Paris Exhibition with a series of photographic enlargements. These were the years in which the square of the Duomo in Milan was being transformed following the construction of the Vittorio Emanuele Gallery (designed by Giuseppe Mengoni). Calzolari is the author of several pictures which document the project, constituting the first of future reportages. In 1877, he opened two new shops at Corso Venezia no. 77 and Via Manin no. 12. He also photographed Milanese monuments in stereoscopy. He was by this time also a famous portrait photographer, his portraits including some of the most well-known figures of the period. Calzolari was awarded a silver medal for his work in the first Italian Photography Exhibition in Florence in 1887.

After selling his studio in 1888 to the Guigoni & Bossi company, he opened a heliotyping factory in Via Cellini, in partnership with Carlo Ferrario. In October 1891 his name appears among the members of the Lombardy Photography Club, and in 1894 among the participants of the Associated Exhibitions of Milan in the section of Graphic Arts. In 1898, now indulging in photography for pure pleasure alone, he took, near his house, several photographs of the Milanese revolts.

²⁹ A renowned tenor, Enrico Calzolari was born in Parma on February 22, 1823. He studied music under Prof. Boukard and made his first appearance in a concert of the Parma Academy in April 1837. Sponsored by Archduchess Maria Luigia he studied in Milan with Giacomo Panizza. He made his debut at La Scala, engaged by Bartolomeo Merelli on March 11, 1845, in the *Ernani*, a performance which won him great praise; he then sung at the most important venues in Italy, Vienna, Madrid, London (The Queen's Theatre) Paris, Brussels and finally St. Petersburg (from 1857 onwards), where he remained for several years. He had a voice that was slightly guttural but extremely sweet, and he was an excellent singing teacher.

EVA ROVERSI GAVAZZI (1850-1933)

Niece of Giuseppa and daughter of Antonio, Eva Teresa Giuseppa Costantina, known as Eva (b. in Milan on 30.10.1850, d. in Milan on 15.2.1933), was married on October 20, 1873 to her cousin, Virgilio Roversi (b. in Mantova on 17.11.1847, d. in Milan on 29.12.1889). Eva left all her holdings to the Rest Home for Musicians, in Milan, in memory of her daughter Maria Roversi. She left 81,000 lire to the Rest Home. Her daughter, in fact, died at a very young age, in 1920, when she was already an accomplished pianist.