



Fig. 9. Sharply-cut and eroded sediments on the right bank, May 1st

explosion of a bomb. The wash ran across the river, that was a hundred meters wide at that point, and we rolled merrily in the swell.

Again we heard a roaring ahead. Evidently more rapids. We landed to reconnoitre, and decided to shoot them. Soon we were plunging along through a boil of rushing waters. We cleared them without mishap, and were presently in calm water again.

IN THE YARDANG COUNTRY

It was getting dark. We must pitch camp, as soon as we found a suitable place with level ground for the tent. But such spots were rare in country so broken up by *yardang* formations. The camping-ground we finally chose was an original one — the top of a *yardang* ridge, 7 m high, with a surface as smooth as a floor. Here the tent was pitched and the cooker set up. Our boatmen preferred the depression below. The ridge ran from N. N. E. to S. S. W. From its summit there was a splendid view over a labyrinth of *yardangs* stretching as far as the eye could see. The river at this point was only 50 m wide.

The river soon widened to 80 or 90 m, and there was a good current. Small sandbanks gave rise to funnel-shaped eddies. Fresh landslips were continually heard — the river was hard at work, carving out its bed.

The landscape changed in character, becoming more and more confused. It was as though the flowing water could not make up its mind what course to take. CHEN, who, as I have already mentioned, had been to Lop-nor and the Qum-darya in the winter of 1930—31, declared that we were just at the beginning of the delta. We wondered rather anxiously if we should succeed in finding the main arm that would take us straight to Lop-nor, or if we should go astray in a labyrinth of lakes and little waterways.

The *yardangs* grew higher. They assumed more and more fantastic shapes, resembling tables, projecting roofs and mouldings with deep shadows underneath. Sometimes they had a deceptive resemblance to towers, walls, old houses and