

▶ Like giant chessmen, mud-brick pigeon towers dot the landscape near Isfahan (following pages). Built in the 17th century by melon farmers, each of these avian high rises collected and stored natural fertilizer from as many as 10,000 live-in pigeons, which raided outlying wheat fields. Today, their glory years ended by chemical fertilizers, the towers are neglected and largely empty.

Approved For Release 2001/03/07 : CIA-RDP86-00700A000400170007-2



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