

It is with feelings of melancholy that I think of the two Europeans, the Swede JOE SÖDERBOM and the Balt WALTER BEICK, the Chinese student MA HSIEH-CH' IEN, the Mongol chauffeur DONGORA and the four servants who all lost their lives for the sake of the expedition and in its service. It is with infinite gratitude that we remember them and their work — faithful to the very end. This refers also to those of our Mongol servants who have been gathered to their fathers since the winding up of the expedition, such as MERIN, MENTU, TSERAT, TSERCHI and several others.

The only foreign member who has died since the expedition came to an end is Baron WILHELM MARSCHALL VON BIEBERSTEIN, who was killed in a flying accident in Germany in 1935. The thought of his irrepressible good humour and his friendliness will always remain with us as a living and cherished memory. Our thoughts also go to the young Russian PAUL KONSTANTINOVICH VOROTNIKOV, who served the expedition in various capacities in Sinkiang, and who is reported to have come to an unhappy end at Aqsu in the restless times during the great civil war.

Before my inner eye at this moment passes a whole cavalcade of Asiatics who served the expedition faithfully — Chinese, Mongols, East Turkis, Russians, Tartars, Kirghiz, Tibetans, Persians and representatives of other peoples. How willingly would I not now let them feel and understand, in a comradely hand-shake, how deeply I appreciated their faithfulness!

With the same sadness my thoughts revert again and again to the patient camels, who year after year and for thousands of kilometers bore our burdens over deserts and steppes — without other reward than finally to succumb under them.

During these years I had learned how much easier it is to cross the continent in different directions alone, with a few servants, than to lead a great expedition, a campaign with troops of five different nationalities. We often had dark times to go through, and great difficulties to overcome. But now, on looking back over those work-filled years, we find that the cares and troubles have paled, and gradually they disappear altogether. We forget how the sandstorm lashed our faces as with the cruel whips of the air-spirits, and how the drift-snow whirled around our tents like outlawed demons.

Out of this medley of kaleidoscopic recollections, as the years glide past, the happy memories of our expedition stand out in clearer and sharper outline. We see them against the background of the eternal majesty of the Asiatic deserts and the grandeur of an infinite solitude. And still in the distance we hear the dying clang of the caravan bells under the twinkling stars of the silent desert night.

Stockholm, December 12th 1942.

*Sven Hedin*