

On March 23rd I had a nervous and uncontrolled letter from Professor LIU FU. Both he himself and the whole Union of Scientific Corporations of Peking were astonished to see that I had allowed the expedition to leave, contrary to my promise, and obviously intended shortly to follow on myself. Instead of waiting for the two Chinese archaeologists who according to agreement were to have accompanied us, I had turned my back on all our contracts! Finally, he threatened that if I left, he would see to it that the whole Chinese press rose up in arms against us. I immediately wrote a reassuring letter to LIU FU, telling him that I had no intention of leaving Peking before everything was settled.

Mr YUNG came to warn me that if the opposition became violent, the Government would for its own sake withdraw the travelling permit of January 1st. For the rest, he was persuaded that the Government would not long be able to retain its position. Obviously commissioned by the Government, YUNG asked me if it were my intention to leave in silence for Pao-t'ou, in order suddenly to set off with the whole caravan for the desert. I reassured him with the words: »No, the expedition will not start without me, and I shall not leave Peking until everything is settled with the opposition.»

The whole day I was rung up by people on the telephone who wanted to convince themselves that I was really in Peking. I was kept under surveillance, spied upon and regarded as a highly suspicious individual. The marshal's foreign commissioner, WU CHIN, rang up to hear whether I had left or not. It looked as if both the marshal and the Government were on the side of the opposition. WU CHIN said that the marshal was afraid that a new storm of opposition might be fatal. The Europeans who had advised me to ignore the Chinese entirely had underestimated the seriousness of the situation. Actually, the question was only whether I was to be despatched in Peking or in Pao-t'ou.

Both Dr WONG and Dr TING had recommended that two young Chinese geologists should accompany the expedition. One of them, Dr CHAO, had already published works of merit. He was an exceedingly likable man, and was overjoyed at the prospect of journeying to the interior. As the protégé of Dr WONG, however, Dr CHAO was not approved by the opposition, who took as a pretext for his dismissal the fact that on some occasion or other he had betrayed his intention of leaving the main route of the caravan now and then to make independent excursions of his own.

CHAO did not accompany the expedition. He was given another geological commission — in Yünnan, where in some provincial inn he was attacked and shot by bandits. His death was a real and great loss for geological research in China. His extensive experience as a field geologist would have been of inestimable value for us. The geologist who came in his stead had worked in the field for only a few weeks and was not recommended by the experts.