

From LARSON I received a wire saying that the expedition had passed Kuei-hua-ch'eng without any hitches, and that it would arrive in Pao-t'ou within a few hours. This did not tally with a rumour that was then circulating in Peking that the whole party had been arrested as Communists. I made inquiries at CHANG-TSO-LIN's head-quarters, but neither there nor in Wai-chiao-pu had anything been heard about any arrest. It was obvious that there were some hidden and malevolent whisperers who sought to do us mischief by spreading the rumour that the expedition was a blind for German flying plans in collaboration with Soviet Russia.

At the same time came the exciting news of Nanking's fall, in connection with which several Europeans had been killed and wounded.

I was thus indefinitely nailed down in Peking. The days passed slowly, each day heavy with its own tension. What tormented me most was being separated from my companions instead of being allowed to set out. A certain calm prevailed — the calm before the storm. The winds of the new epoch blew more and more strongly from the south; Hankow, Shanghai, Nanking had all fallen — when would the turn come to Peking? It was said that CHANG TSO-LIN was in despair and kotowing to his house gods. American subjects had been ordered to move to the coast. All the unrest that hovered about my expedition should be seen against the background of a great revolutionary political movement. I was sailing in the teeth of a hard head-wind. It was even possible that war might break out in the neighbourhood of Peking, and what effect would such an eventuality have on my expedition? It would be little short of a miracle if we managed to steer our little ship safely past all the hidden rocks and reefs to the open sea of the great desert.

On March 28th I received LIU FU's fifteen points in writing, together with a personal letter in which he thanked me for having provisionally accepted all except seven points, which were to be made the object of further discussion. This document was signed by The Federation of Scientific Institutions of China. Some of the members of the opposition were obviously afraid that I might lose patience and return home.

It would not have been at all surprising if Lufthansa had tired of the whole enterprise when the German Minister in Peking both wrote and wired to Auswärtiges Amt, assuring them that there would be no flying in China in our time. And the introduction of air-traffic was precisely what Lufthansa was aiming at. I was fighting on three fronts, the political revolution that was under way, the opposition, and the risk of Lufthansa's liquidating the whole enterprise. What could I have done? With the expedition in Pao-t'ou and I myself entangled in seemingly hopeless negotiations in Peking! I should have cut such a sorry figure that I could scarcely have shown my face in Europe again. But Lufthansa did not