

interest. We should be exceedingly grateful to receive a message to the effect that you had been pleased to instruct the authorities along our route to afford us their help and protection in case of need. On our arrival in Urumchi we shall pay you a visit in the hope of listening to your wise counsel. We have deemed it desirable to send you this communication in advance.»

### DESPATCH OF A COURIER TO URUMCHI

Our travelling funds were unfortunately beginning to run low. We should have enough for what we might require till we reached Hami, but there we should need more money. I had deposited a considerable sum in Urumchi, and now wished a part of this to be transferred to Hami, so that we might proceed from the latter town to Urumchi without having to worry about funds.

Not less important for all of us was the question of the formidable mail that had doubtless been accumulating for months in Urumchi. We should be arriving in Hami at least a month and a half earlier than in Urumchi. How splendid it would be to receive our post and our Christmas letters already in Hami!

I had therefore given WALZ instructions to set off for Urumchi on October 15th as our courier. He accepted this difficult commission with a delight and a gratitude that he was unable to dissemble. WALZ, who was a Bavarian, a prominent alpinist and sportsman, was a perfect picture of concentrated power and energy, a man of the type for whom no difficulties exist and who love wild and neck-breaking adventures.

The distance between the Edsen-gol and Hami as the crow flies is 660 kilometers. A further 550 kilometers separates the latter town from Urumchi. Thus, by the time WALZ had returned to Hami he would have covered no less a distance than 1,760 kilometers. Actually, however, counting all the twists and bends in the route, his journey would amount to 2,000 kilometers or more.

WALZ was to be accompanied only by the Mongol Tserchi and the Chinese boy who had lost himself in the sand near Khara-dzagh.

Forty days, at the rate of thirty or forty kilometers a day, ought to suffice for the journey to Urumchi. On this reckoning he ought to arrive in the latter town on November 25th. Five days would probably be enough for his business in Urumchi, whence he could then ride to Hami in a matter of fifteen days, thus arriving on December 15th at about the same time as ourselves. So, at least, we calculated; but much that we could not foresee was to happen in the interim.

At seven o'clock on the morning of October 15th we were all up and dressed to bid our courier god-speed. Fat and flourishing and all ready for the start stood WALZ's eight camels under their light loads. One of them was white and had been