

upon our arrival the chief had sent a courier to the Chinese authorities in Kansu, his nearest superiors, to ask how we were to be treated. And now he was waiting for instructions, and was therefore forced to give us an evasive reply in the meantime. If this was really how the matter stood, the prince was rather to be praised than blamed, for it showed him solicitous for his country. Perhaps, again, it was a question of politics. It was believed that half the Torgut population sympathized with the Outer Mongolian republic, and might declare itself for the latter at any moment. SIU, however, gave no credit to this suggestion, pointing out that in this case precisely the prince himself would lose his title and his dignity. He was doubtless conservative and loyal to China, and unwilling to part with the little power he had.

Of course, he had every reason to be suspicious when one fine day thirteen well-armed Europeans and seven Chinese suddenly swooped down on his peaceful neighbourhood like a swarm of locusts, with a caravan of a couple of hundred camels. Such a thing was quite unprecedented. China was, it must be remembered, in a state of war — and what could be the meaning of our sudden arrival? Very disquieting rumours of our caravan had preceded us, exaggerated to gigantic dimensions by Mongols and Chinese merchants. It was said that a whole army of soldiers was on the way, that we had immense caravans, whole towns of tents and an arsenal of weapons. And sure enough, first came the advance guard and took up its position on the bank of the river; and a few days later a new large contingent. This was obviously a serious business of a military character. The prince had indeed every reason to be cautious.

We decided to use consideration and to go about the matter circumspectly. We would inform the chief in all friendliness of our intentions and our desire to establish a station in his district. SIU put this into writing, and leaving aside a preamble consisting of courtesy-titles and expressions of politeness the letter read as follows:

»We have arrived this day at your camp exclusively for the purpose of paying you a visit. To our profound regret we hear that the day does not suit you and that we cannot meet you personally. Our expedition, which is under the protection of the Chinese Government and the Federation of learned Societies, is on its way through the northern parts of Shansi, Kansu and Sinkiang to make scientific investigations. It is also our intention to establish meteorological stations near Sogho-nor, in Hami, Urumchi and other places to enable observations over a number of years of rainfall, winds, temperature etc.

We have now arrived at the left bank of the Edsen-gol and have already set up our station. We therefore consider it to be our duty to visit Your Highness and your officials in order to explain all our intentions to you and to crave your protection for the station. As our expedition is an organization for scientific research, all the members are learned and educated men. Politically we belong to no particular group or party, and the function of the station is purely scientific. We have no intention whatsoever of occupying ourselves with politics. Dr SVEN HEDIN has for twenty years been the good friend of the PANCHEN HUO FO (TASHI LAMA), and has frequently travelled in Tibet to explore the country. On these occasions he has always enjoyed the greatest hospitality at the hands of His Holiness. Now, too, he has several times visited His Holiness in Peking and informed him of the plan to visit these countries. His Holiness has lent his encouragement to the plan in every way.

Professor SIU PING-CH'ANG has great respect for the yellow religion. As regards the staff of the station, we can guarantee that it will in no way flout the customs and traditions of the country nor cause any damage to temples, stupas or obos etc.