

SARAN GEREL handed me a packet of letters. They were from members of my staff, and contained fateful news! We had been caught between the millstones of Chinese domestic politics. Would they grind us to pieces? Were we going to lose everything?

I give below a brief account of the contents of the letters I received from the columns that first reached the frontier of Sinkiang.

#### WALZ'S REPORT

On November 25th WALZ wrote from Hami that he and his two servants had traversed the desert between the Edsen-gol and Sinkiang by night-marches, often over pathless tracts or without water. One camel had died and another had been left behind in a village near Hami. When on November 11th he arrived at the frontier of Sinkiang he was surrounded by twenty mounted frontier-guards, who loaded their rifles in his presence in order to inspire due respect. Despite energetic protests he was detained for six days as a prisoner. In the meantime an officer arrived on the scene, accompanied by two squadrons of cavalry, four standard-bearers and four trumpeters.

Finally, he received permission to proceed to Hami under escort. The party took a short cut, skirting the foot of the mountain (Qarliq-tagh). The way led through ice and snow, and the going was difficult for the camels. One dark night three of them and one rider slipped down a steep, but without injury. When on November 21st he reached Hami he had covered 733 kilometers.

In Hami he was taken to a house at whose door two officers and twenty soldiers were keeping guard. The following day he was visited by Brigadier-General LIU, who came to cross-examine him.

»I must make my way as quickly as possible to Urumchi to execute important commissions, and I am provided with passport and license to bear arms», explained WALZ.

»You must wait here until I receive instructions from Urumchi», replied the general.

Major WALZ was then disarmed and the whole of his baggage examined. Everything was unpacked, and a thorough search instituted for gold and opium. A metal chest belonging to LIEBERENZ, and containing films, was broken open, as no key was available. Nothing was damaged, however. The young postmaster CHEN, who spoke English, acted as interpreter. Day followed day, and a lively correspondence sprang up between WALZ and LIU. Finally, the general gave WALZ permission to set out on November 27th for the capital; not, however, on horseback, but in a cart and under mounted escort.