

We had not far to go to the house that had been placed at our disposal, where we met all our companions. In the gate-house stood the soldiers who had been told off to guard us. None of us was allowed to go about in the town without being accompanied by a couple of armed guards.

Professor SIU told us that at least a part of the misunderstanding that had arisen had been due to an unfortunately or else mischievously worded letter from a student in Peking to our student LI. He had written: »I congratulate you on the two hundred fighting men you have in your caravan.« Presumably he had only wished to say that we were numerous and well-armed against attack. This letter was read, however, by the authorities in Urumchi, with the consequence that *all* letters, both to the Chinese and to the Europeans in the expedition, were sent to Peking for censorship. After investigating the matter the censor had probably informed the authorities in Sinkiang that our mail contained nothing suspect, and the mail from August till November had accordingly been kept at Urumchi, whence it was now being sent to Hami. On the very first evening, in fact, postmaster CHEN handed over a couple of hundred more than welcome letters to me.

On the very first day I had a feeling that our situation was already brighter. True, we were still guarded like prisoners, but we were treated with consideration. Another cause for anxiety, however, lay in a telegram from Suchow, sent by the student MA, one of the three who were left in charge of the meteorological station on the Edsen-gol: »Station No. 1 has been forbidden by the authorities in Kansu. We have been ordered to leave the province. We have no money.«

Professor SIU sent a telegram and wrote detailed letters to the civil and military authorities in Suchow. We arranged for a remittance to be sent to MA and for the rest — were obliged to await developments.

Professor YUAN, whom I now saw after six months' separation, had in the meantime made a bold and fruitful desert-journey from the tract of Tukhumin-sume to the Chen-fan region in Kansu, and from there in a north-westerly direction to the Edsen-gol, where he had visited the station. In the desert outside Chen-fan he had discovered three ancient ruined towns. He had all his men and camels safe and sound, and had performed the journey with incredible cheapness.

During our stay in Hami our relations with the authorities improved steadily. The main baggage was unpacked and examined in LIU's presence. Among other things, a huge portrait of CHANG TSO-LIN, signed and dedicated by himself, was unpacked from one of my chests. This made a visible and deep impression on the general.

A Chinese caravan-leader, who was going to return to Kuei-hua in a day or so with a large number of unloaded camels, was engaged to answer for the return of