

Through the bottomless mud of the streets, where in the course of our stay a couple of horses and even children, it was said, were drowned, we drove in a little procession of little blue Peking cars. Along the main street of the Russian quarter we went, through the Turkish quarter and the mighty gates in the wall of the Chinese town till we came to YANG's *yamen*, a complex of red houses with courtyards in between. We had to go across two of these square courtyards before we reached the presence-chamber. The soldiers outside the gate presented arms, and we were met in the vestibule by the ruler of Sinkiang, surrounded by the two ministers FAN YAO-NAN and LIU WEN-LUNG and some officers and soldiers from his body-guard.

At last we stood face to face with the autocrat who at the eastern frontier of his province had accorded us such a chilling reception, and who, if he had so chosen, might have destroyed our plans and forced us to turn back. With stonily serious mien and penetrating looks he mustered us each in turn, greeting each with a hand-shake and a scarcely perceptible bow. One felt very clearly that it was he who had the power here in the country and that we were quite at the mercy of his lightest whim. He was a tall, powerfully built man, of dignified and noble bearing, who carried his head high and gave one an impression of majesty. His look was dreamy, melancholy and searching; he had a broad, strong nose and snow-white moustaches and goatee beard. He was, in a word, imposing and fascinating, and one always feels a certain interest in observing at close quarters a man who by dint of his own will and shrewdness has been able to achieve such terrific power over other men.

We had heard much about this remarkable man. We knew that he had been born in Yünnan in 1862, that he had held a number of different official posts in Kansu and had gradually risen in rank until he was finally appointed military governor of Sinkiang, in which capacity he had put down revolts and riots among Tungans, Kirghiz and Mongols in Altai and Ili. And this post he had held ever since 1911, the year of the revolution, or for a full seventeen years. During this period he had crushed all attempts to rebel against his power with a hand of iron. He had encouraged commerce, improved roads, introduced the motor-car, founded an electric power-station and an engineering work-shop and was still busy with new plans of improvement. We knew that ever since the beginning of the civil wars in China this man had kept Sinkiang out of all the fighting. The one man for whom YANG seemed really to feel respect was FENG-YÜ-HSIANG, »the Christian general«. YANG ruled over a realm measuring 1200 kilometers from north to south and 2000 kilometers from west to east. The total area of this vast region is about 1,600,000 square kilometers, so that it is more than three times as big as Sweden; but on account of its limitless deserts it is inhabited by only about three million Turkis, Mongols, Kirghiz, Tungans, Taranchis, Tachiks, Dolons,