

Tatars and Chinese — though YANG himself stated that in the light of the sum from the collection of taxes the figure might be set at eight millions.

We had been told that YANG was cruel, and that without trial and sentence he had Tungans shot on mere suspicion. Even before leaving Peking I had heard a story about a couple of foreigners who had come to Urumchi and been invited to a reception in the governor's yamen. Half way across the outer courtyard an officer had stopped them and requested them to wait. Three criminals were led up, set against a wall and shot in the presence of the white guests. With a polite gesture the officer bade the foreigners continue on their way to the room where dinner was to be held. YANG, who was considered to be unfavourably disposed towards whites, had chosen to give these strangers a little sample of his power.<sup>1</sup>

He was also considered to be just, and he exacted an absolute discipline in his little army of about two thousand ruffians. On one occasion, shortly before our arrival, when on his usual morning walk through the streets of the town, and accompanied by a couple of body-guards, he caught sight of one of his own soldiers outside a shoe-shop. With an iron-shod stick the man was stealing one pair of shoes after the other. YANG stood still and watched. Then he gave a sign to his men, and they shot the thief on the spot. While one of them procured a little wooden cage the other one cut off the thief's head, which was put in the cage and hung at the side of the shop. There it was left hanging for weeks as a warning to thieves.

The room into which we were now shown was an oblong, white-plastered and rather shabby apartment, the greater part of which was taken up by a long table. The Governor-General took his place in the middle of one long side and invited me to take the seat opposite. Behind him was a stout officer with black moustaches and a jovial disposition, who followed him about as a body-guard. Servants brought in cognac and white wine. Before YANG lay a thick dossier referring to our expedition. He flicked through the papers, took out a letter and handed it to Professor SIU. »This letter,» he said, »is from a nationalistic student in Peking. It arrived here some months ago and was addressed to a student

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<sup>1</sup> NICHOLAS ROERICH, who had rather unpleasant experiences of Governor-General YANG during his stay in Urumchi in April 1926, but who also seems to be rather over-sensitive, writes in his *Altai — Himalaya* that the Peking government many times tried to replace YANG, but that this shrewd old man gathered signatures from the local officials and sent to Peking a »petition of the population» made up by himself, to the effect that only the presence of YANG had guaranteed the peace of the country.

In 1913 YANG suspected his eight relatives of treachery. He therefore arranged a banquet, invited all officials and during dinner, with his own hands, shot the chief suspect; and the guards at the same table made an end to the seven others. In 1918 he had a grievance against one of the Ambans. He sent the disfavoured one to Hami and on the way the Amban was »pasted with paper» and by this unique method he was strangled.

There is one hope — writes ROERICH — YANG is very old, and his »benevolent» strangulation of the huge country cannot continue for long. F. B.