

appeared that no special passports would be required. Further, I asked permission to establish permanent meteorological stations in Charkhliq and Kucha, where Germans and Chinese were to make observations. This, too, was granted. He regretted, however, that he could not permit us to establish any station in Hami, as this town was situated in the war-zone. But we might take Turfan, Ku-ch'eng-tze, Chuguchaq or Kulja instead.

Despite his serious demeanour, YANG was not above a joke. He asked me: »Why do you take the trouble of riding about in the deserts looking for old ruins? Here in my yamen you have ample opportunity of studying archaeology, for as you see, everything here is tumble-down, and the plaster in this room is falling off in big flakes.»

Such dinners last for a full four hours, and one sits at table the whole time. When we finally rose to drive home our host followed us politely over both court-yards and stood there bowing until we had taken our places in the Peking cars.

We afterwards heard from several quarters that YANG had never before received European travellers with such amiable courtesy. On a later occasion he said to me: »Your expedition is the last from Europe that I shall allow to travel in my province. I intend to close the frontiers on those who attempt to come here in future. But you may stay as long as you wish.»

ANOTHER OFFICIAL DINNER

On March 7th the two ministers with whom we were in constant contact through their respective departments, namely FAN YAO-NAN, the Foreign Minister and LIU WEN-LUNG, the Minister of Education, gave a thundering dinner with occidental, (i. e. Russian), menu for the members of the expedition. It was held in FAN's house, which had been built in the Russian style but with Chinese court-yards. There were lots of speeches and we were regaled with a rich abundance of food and drink. It was evident from this almost barbaric luxury that the Chinese were determined to do us honour in every way.¹

On March 8th LARSON and his column of twelve carts arrived from Hami after a successful journey of twenty-six stages. We now had practically the whole expedition assembled in one spot again, and our quarters became crowded.

¹ FAN's features betrayed him as an inveterate opium-smoker. YANG was said to appoint only hardened opium-smokers to the local official posts in the extensive province. This may partly be gossip but in many cases, that I later on had an opportunity of studying, this proved to be the fact. YANG's ulterior motive was that an inveterate opium-smoker thinks more of his own comfort and convenience than of stirring up unrest among his subordinates. F. B.