

It may not be without interest to mention that DOSTOIEVSKY spent three years in exile in Semipalatinsk. There is a memorial inscription above the door of his house. The famous explorer GRIGOR NIKOLAEVICH POTANIN also spent some time in this town. Once in his youth and afterwards as an old man he was exiled to Siberia.

FROM SEMIPALATINSK TO CHUGUCHAQ BY CAR

On August 28th everything was ready for the start from Semipalatinsk. Two lorries were loaded with three tons of our baggage between them, and the rest, nearly three tons, was entrusted to a big Renault lorry that we had hired from Autotranstorg. The makes of our cars were Dodge Brothers and Graham Brothers, Detroit. It would, of course, have pleased us more to take cars of Swedish make; but as all the motor-cars already running in Urumchi were of the makes mentioned, and the Chinese had equipped their repair-shops and laid in their stocks of spare parts and accessories accordingly, it was wisest not to introduce new types. When old YANG had asked me the favour of buying cars for him I could not refuse his request. For I am no motor-car traveller, as is sufficiently well-known. I certainly had no pleasure of this commission, which only cost me time and trouble, both in Stockholm and on the way to Urumchi.

We had already made enquiries as to whether the ferries crossing the Irtysh took cars. We found a jetty thrusting out into the river for a distance of about seventy-five meters, to a point where the water was sufficiently deep for the ferry. Besides all four cars at once, the ferry was also able to accommodate some carts and a whole crowd of people.

The ferry was attached to a cable that was anchored a little farther up the river and was borne up by some smaller boats. The first stage of the crossing took us to the island of Ostrov Krugly, or »The Round Island», and occupied seven minutes. On the island we waited for the Renault lorry, which was driven by a Russian. As this ponderous and unwieldy giant came lumbering and thundering over the jetty the flimsy little structure began to give under the unaccustomed weight. The lorry took such a heavy list to the right that it was a wonder it did not capsize completely. The uppermost of the seven packing-cases slipped off and splashed into the river. The shore-hands on the jetty were helped by the people who were standing in a long queue waiting to be ferried over, and impatient to be rid of the cumbersome lorry, which for a good hour held up all traffic. Some gallant youths waded into the river and managed to get the submerged packing-case onto dry land. The combined efforts of shore-hands and bystanders were needed to unload the cases from the big lorry and load them onto drays that were driven out onto the ferry. One of these simple vehicles was crushed under the weight