

### III. D E L A Y I N C H U G U C H A Q

**O**n my first arrival in Chuguchaq,<sup>1</sup> in May, I had been detained by a flood that closed all the roads. I was now held up by something much more serious.

The day after our arrival we four Swedes and our host drove to the yamen of the Governor, within the walls of the Chinese town. Outside the walls live Mohammedans and Russians. The Governor or *tao-yin* was a man by the name of LI SHAO-CH'IN, whom I had already met in the spring. He was small and round, had a large head and a rubicund physiognomy. In his swollen face the eyes formed a couple of narrow slits. The man himself, however, was the soul of honour, an incorrigible joker, full of humour and comical fancies, jovial and hearty, and obviously unwilling to so much as hurt a fly. He spoke Russian, not well, but all the more funnily for that, and quite understandably.

We sat down at a little table in his reception-room, to be regaled with cigarettes, tea and melon seeds. So far, so good. But this innocent beginning was followed by gherkins and an endless supply of vodka; and even if one is not in love with this drink, common politeness and manners require one to drink *kan-pei* or to the bottom when bidden by one's host, and when he himself sets a good example. And LI certainly did! Chuckling in his infectious way, he declared himself to be the most inveterate toper in the whole of Sinkiang.

I informed LI that we intended to continue on our journey already the following day. But matters were not so simple. »If it only depended on me you might set off at once,» he declared; »but now, since YANG's death, conditions in Sinkiang are quite changed. No-one is allowed to go to Urumchi without special permission, neither foreigners nor Chinese.»

However, LI offered to send a telegram to the new Governor-General at once, asking permission for us to continue in the cars. He referred to the telegrams on this telegraph-line as »camel-telegrams», for it had happened that camels

<sup>1</sup> The flourishing frontier town of Chuguchaq is known among the Chinese as T'a-ch'eng, which as LATTIMORE supposes, may be connected with the Mongolian name Tarbagatai. This latter, that one generally hears used for the mountain in the vicinity, means »With Marmots».