

After a two hours' stop for breakfast we drove on, at first over a road so hard and even that we could make a speed of sixty kilometers an hour. But we were soon struggling once more through the snow, and the toil of the night began again. In one of the drifts we stuck fast for two hours.

The river Aq-su was carrying unexpectedly much water for the time of year, but we managed the crossing without mishap, and reached Chuguchaq at half-past eight. And once more we put up at the HOKHRIKOV's.

IN CHUGUCHAQ

We were held up for three days in Chuguchaq, for it takes time to procure sledges, horses and drivers for the journey to Sergiopol. There is no lack of these latter, and they come to offer their services, but the prices they quote are too high, and must be screwed down, which is always a lengthy business. For ourselves and our baggage we needed six sledges. Finally we agreed upon a price of 150 roubles per sledge for the 330 kilometers. This works out at one Swedish crown per kilometer. True, the sledges were roomy and drawn by *troikas*, i. e. three horses, but nine hundred roubles was nevertheless a very stiff price. The drivers complained that the prices of provisions and other necessities had risen considerably since the previous year; and this was true. In 1927 a Chinese *tan* of rice cost eighteen liang, and now sixty. The price of flour in Urumchi had been doubled. One hundred *pud* of coal cost 1.60 liang in 1927, and now 4.50. That the price of grain should have been doubled, although the 1928 harvest was better than that for the previous year, could not but surprise consumers, and a suppressed discontent prevailed among the people. The reason for the higher prices was considered to be the levying of troops that had gone on during the autumn. No one knew the extent of these levies. Rumour had it that 10,000 men had been enlisted, but this figure is probably to be taken as a metaphor. Nor was it easy to conceive what enemy these innocents were to fight. Our old friend Governor LI in Chuguchaq told us that CHIN had sent him three hundred soldiers. He made no secret of his annoyance at this unnecessary encumbrance, and he had on his own responsibility sent half of them back to Urumchi and the remainder to the frontier. But neither LI nor anybody else understood the reason for this mobilization, for things were perfectly quiet everywhere.

We received the cheering news that orders had arrived from CHIN that the whole of our baggage was to be examined not only in Chuguchaq, but also at the frontier-station situated but nineteen kilometers farther on! Governor LI said frankly that he was ashamed at the treatment to which we were exposed. He also sent a messenger to the man in charge at the frontier-station, requesting him to come in to town, so that the two examinations could be made simultaneously.