

On his arrival at Lanchow, the capital of the province, on April 15th, SÖDERBOM went straight to the yamen; but no-one seemed to have any knowledge of MA's whereabouts. Meantime, he himself had to submit to cross-examination. He was asked how he could prove that he belonged to the expedition, as the fact was not mentioned in his passport. SÖDERBOM had not the same sort of passport as the other members of the expedition, as he had been engaged a long time after them; he had only his own passport, issued by our consul-general in Shanghai and valid only for *journeys* in China.

He was taken out, stripped of everything but trousers and shirt, and thoroughly searched. He was then led to a little hole full of Mohammedan prisoners. A couple of them had been flogged, and there was a smell of rotting flesh in the cell. SÖDERBOM began to feel faint; he was hungry and tired, and had a feeling of nausea. He asked to be permitted to speak with the chief of the military police, who had cross-examined him; and when the latter arrived SÖDERBOM asked what wrong he had done, and why he had been thrown into prison. The man answered that he would soon be taken to an inn where he would receive food.

»Well, thank goodness that's over!» he thought, as he was led over the courtyard and given back his clothes and money. But fifteen policemen armed with Mauser pistols and »cheese-cutters» surrounded him. In a harsh tone the officer in charge of the party ordered him to march, and in this way he was escorted through the streets of Lanchow, jeered at by the populace and accompanied by hundreds of bawling hooligans who hoped to see the foreign devil put to death.

»Now I'm for it!» thought SÖDERBOM; »Now they're taking me to the north gate of the town, where all the criminals are executed!» But to show his unconcern he lit a cigarette.

People crowded in the booths and doorways, hugely enjoying this uncommon spectacle. The mob of hangers-on increased. Finally, they came to a halt outside the town-prison. Here SÖDERBOM was roughly thrust through several doors into a little hole where he was once more deprived of his money and other belongings. In five other such cells in the same yard were four Mongols, one Buriat and two Chinese. One of them had been there for thirteen years, and looked indifferent. Three of the Mongols had come from Manchuria with a Living God on the way to Kum-bum. They had a Mongolian escort and bought uniforms for them. But these happened to be of CHANG TSO-LIN's model — so the wearers were assumed to be from the enemy camp and were thrown into jail. And there they had now been languishing for three months. SÖDERBOM's prospects did not look any too bright.

A turn key gave him a bowl of coarse *mien-t'iao-tze* and the chief of police ordered him to eat.

»I don't eat dog's food!» answered SÖDERBOM.

»Eat!» came the order again.