

»I eat only on Sundays!» replied SÖDERBOM.

The man then said in a milder tone: »You are our guest, you must eat.»

»I'm a foreigner, and I can eat only foreign food.»

The Mongols were convulsed with laughter and the chief of police went.

All the »criminals» were led out on the courtyard, an area of but a few square meters. The Buriat whispered to SÖDERBOM that he would recommend him to Moscow, where there was better order than here in Lanchow. From the adjacent courtyard, where other prisoners were confined, a half-smoked cigarette came flying over the wall, evidently thrown by someone who feared to be caught in the act of smoking. The Buriat snatched it up and it began circulating; but when it came to SÖDERBOM's turn only the paper mouth-piece was left.

When the cell-door had been closed again the Swede was served with fine Chinese food: meat courses, bread and other delicacies. The chief of police entered and tried once more to persuade him to eat.

»No! I'm no criminal. I refuse to eat in a prison. If I die of hunger there will be a row in Peking, and you'll have hell to pay!»

SÖDERBOM's request for writing-paper was granted. He wrote in English and German to the missionaries in the town, but the letters were confiscated. In a letter to the Governor he asked to know the reason why he had been thrown into prison. The chief of police took charge of this, as he did not want to face his responsibility, and was uneasy at the absence of any documents proving SÖDERBOM's criminality.

The prison was horrible — dark, cramped and wretched, and full of lice and bugs. FAN, his recent travelling-companion, came to visit him and did all he could to have him released, saying to the chief of police that it was a shame to use a stranger so.

When the Governor was informed of the matter he immediately gave orders that SÖDERBOM should be released and taken to MA. The latter had for two months been living in a room at the police-station; and he had been well treated, though he was allowed to go out only once a week to bathe.

MA knew that a telegram had arrived from Dr TS'AI YÜAN-P'EI¹ and this was probably the reason why SÖDERBOM's period in prison had now come to an end.

In Dr RAND, the American superintendent of the hospital of the China Inland Mission in the town, the two found a real friend. To the authorities he gave the fullest guarantees of SÖDERBOM's and MA's integrity; and they afterwards stayed with him for twenty days, enjoying the greatest hospitality at his hands.

¹ As soon as we in Sinkiang had heard of the difficulties of the Edsen-gol staff Professor SIU had telegraphed to Dr TS'AI in Nanking to ask for his support. The latter had addressed himself to Marshal FENG YÜ-HSIANG, who in his turn had given orders to the Governor-General in Lanchow to treat the station and its staff with respect and hospitality.