

On March 27th it became obvious that MA's state of mind was seriously abnormal. Moaning and weeping he confided to ZIMMERMANN that he could live no longer, and must take his life. What would Dr HEDIN think if evil rumours about them were to come to his ears? ZIMMERMANN tried to reassure him with friendly words, whereupon MA replied that he was sorry he had acted badly towards ZIMMERMANN and SÖDERBOM. Nothing of the sort had been noticed, but MA was probably referring to one or two odd letters that he had written under emotional stress to friends in Peking, in which he had said something derogatory about his companions at Tsondol.

The following day the post-master from Mao-mu arrived on a visit, and when he entered MA's yurt the young student hastened to ZIMMERMANN, exclaiming: »Come at once to my tent! I mustn't be alone with him!« ZIMMERMANN complied, and the whole time MA seemed to be limp and incapable of volition.

During the days that followed it happened again and again that MA did not dare to be left alone with others. In despair he would exclaim: »When I look in the mirror I see a devil! I am a devil myself!«

On one occasion MA showed ZIMMERMANN a sheet of paper and said: »I stole this certificate from SÖDERBOM when we were in Lanchow.«

It was a document written by Dr RAND during the period when MA and SÖDERBOM were being treated as criminals, in which he vouched for their respectability.

It seemed as if MA were reproaching himself for having taken this scrap of paper, which was now quite worthless. In order to show MA how little importance he attached to it ZIMMERMANN set a match to it. The sick man, who gave the impression of really being harassed by demons, allowed himself to be reassured by this.

One day he was inconsolable because he had stolen a *khadak* from an obo, and ZIMMERMANN showed him how easily the matter might be repaired by hanging a new *khadak* on the obo.

In the beginning of April he suggested that MA should make a topographical excursion to fill up some gaps in their map of the Mören-gol, and at the same time write a description of the country in that region. This would be an important piece of work that must sooner or later be performed in any case. MA could easily take two or three weeks over the job, and in the meantime ZIMMERMANN would look after the station. He had a free hand in the choice of equipment and servants, and in due course he set out. Three days later, however, he returned.

As he complained of insomnia and asked for sleeping powders ZIMMERMANN gave him some, at the same time advising him rather to take strenuous exercise to tire himself out and create a physical need for sleep.

His state grew worse. ZIMMERMANN's friendliness and his attempts to distract him helped only for short periods. His fits of brooding grew more frequent; he was afraid of himself and afraid of being left together with anyone except ZIMMERMANN.