

## XX. PREPARING A NEW EXPEDITION

### A SIGNIFICANT MEETING

One Sunday at the beginning of June, when the rain was splashing down on the stones of my courtyard, a tall, slim man in a grey raincoat came striding up to my door. He bore a famous name, for it was none other than General VON SEECKT, MACKENSEN's chief of staff in the Great War, and a few years ago commander-in-chief of the Reichswehr. We had met daily during MACKENSEN's advance through Galicia. Now, after a visit of some duration to Generalissimo CHIANG KAI-SHEK, he had come up to Peking to spend a few weeks there.

The dinner given by the German Minister TRAUTMANN in honour of General VON SEECKT on June 28th, 1933, was to have a strange effect on my fortunes.

Outside it was pitch dark and raining in torrents; but the rooms of the German Legation were ablaze with light. Among the many distinguished guests, a tall, fine-featured Chinese in evening dress attracted my attention, and I asked a member of the embassy staff to introduce me to him. His name was LIU CHUNG-CHIEH, and his title Assistant Foreign Minister. For some time he had been staying in Peking as a connecting link between Nanking and the diplomatic corps, the majority of whose members still resided in Peking.

We began to talk about conditions in Sinkiang. I had been there lately, and long before had spent several years in Eastern Turkistan. The Minister subjected me to a regular cross-examination about my experiences and my opinions, and I answered him frankly.

»In the semi-circle of buffer states under Chinese authority that the Emperor CH' IEN LUNG created round the Empire, only one link remains. Since the inception of the Republic you have lost Tibet, Outer Mongolia and Manchuria with Jehol; and Inner Mongolia is seriously threatened. Sinkiang is still Chinese, but is split at the moment by Mohammedan revolt and civil war. If nothing is done to defend this province, it will be lost too.»

»What do you think we ought to do?» the Minister asked.