

»CHANG FENG-MING borrowed 60 gallons from us at Hami and promised that the same quantity should be handed back to us directly we got to Turfan. Here is the receipt, in his own writing. CHANG also promised to telephone to you. Has he done so? »

»We had some petrol for you; but as CHANG did not telephone again about it we sent it to General MA's headquarters at Davan-ch'eng.»

»I can't rely on CHANG's word or his receipt, and I have no guarantee that you will keep your word either. The people at Qara-shahr or Kucha may reply that the quantity we need has just been sent somewhere else.»

»If I make a promise I keep it,» said YOLBARS. »It isn't pleasant to ask such a thing of a guest, but MA is sending Mr PAI and fifteen others to Qara-shahr, Kucha, Aqsu and Kashgar to-morrow morning in our lorry. They are to urge these towns to take our side. It is a mission of the very greatest importance, and I *beg* you to help us in this way.»

»I'll telegraph to Qara-shahr and Kucha first, and ask if there is any petrol there,» I said.

»The telegraph line is out of order. Please let me know if you can lend me a smaller quantity at any rate.»

GEORG was consulted, and we decided to offer YOLBARS twenty gallons. He thanked me, and asked if he might fetch the petrol next morning. We were risking being robbed of our entire stock of motor-fuel. But we were in their hands — they could wring our necks if we were absolutely uncompromising. From the way in which YOLBARS talked it was clear that MA's position was weak, and that a great deal hung on his sending this message to the towns in question.

YOLBARS told us that enemy aeroplanes had dropped small bombs and masses of proclamations on Turfan that day and the day before. The leaflets, that were signed by SHENG SHIH-TS'AI, the military governor at Urumchi, contained a threat to the inhabitants of the town to the effect that if they continued their resistance ten large aeroplanes would be sent to bomb them.

As bombers might be expected on the following day as well, YOLBARS thought it inadvisable to let our cars stand out in the open as targets. He proposed a house with a covered passage, where they would be safe.

SOME DUBIOUS CHARACTERS

Two mysterious Russian-speaking Poles had been living in this house for two months — a so-called doctor of medicine, LESZCZYNSKY by name, and his assistant, one PLAWSKY. According to their own story they had the previous year taken part in a scientific expedition that had started out from Tonking and set a course through Yünnan to Tibet. For some unknown reason they had left the