

or soldier who had committed some error. He was said to have shot down his own cook in this way when dinner was not ready one day at the appointed time. He was imprudently frank, and would tell anyone who cared to listen about his plans. No-one but himself, however, knew what he really meant to do.

The chief-of-staff LI HAI-JO seemed to have plenty of time to spare, for he would sit with us talking for hours. It was curious that neither MA nor LI showed any mistrust in us. We had absolute freedom of movement. We were never allowed to pay for anything; everything was placed at our disposal. This was painful to us when we knew that the goods were simply requisitioned from the poor population, that had already been sucked dry.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

On February 19th the fact that it was my birthday had leaked out, so I was congratulated by Chinese, Tungans, Turkis and Poles as well. The military commanders wanted to get up a big dinner, but we had already invited them to a simple meal. The upshot was that MA's officers, including the head of the commissariat in Turfan, YOLBARS KHAN, were to entertain us to dinner at four, and we them at seven!

YOLBARS' manner of congratulating me was very unusual. He asked YEW to let him examine all our luggage, and remarked that Kashgar was not mentioned on our Nanking passports.

»I am surprised,» I told him, »that we, who are emissaries of the Central Government, should be treated by you as suspects. We have been here three days, and just as we are ready to start, you ask us to open all the boxes that are lashed on to our lorries. As for Kashgar, it is called by its Chinese name, Su-lei, on our passports.»

»I have had orders once for all from General MA,» replied YOLBARS, »to examine all baggage and all goods passing through Turfan; and I must do my duty. It was not done before because I did not see your passports till yesterday. As for Kashgar, I apologize for my mistake.»

In the subsequent examination, the boxes containing our ammunition and instruments specially excited YOLBARS' interest. The former was compared with our arms permits and found in perfect order. He did not discover the wireless apparatus, although he nearly tripped over it, for GEORG had been warned in time, and had put these boxes under a tent carelessly dropped in the middle of the covered passage where our lorries stood.

At four o'clock our hosts arrived. The Poles and 'Professor LI' had also been invited. It was a real big dinner — some thirty dishes with hot Chinese brandy in little cups. Various drinking games were played, the object of which is to make