

But we decided not to wait, and KUNG began cutting a passage at once. By evening his thirty sturdy fellows had cleared away the ice for a distance of 40 m, leaving a channel 3 m wide.

In June, 1933, the Turkis in Qara-shahr had risen in rebellion, killing multitudes of women and children. Peace had been restored by the cavalry general MA, whom HUMMEL had attended. But it had not lasted for long. The Torguts had swept down and murdered women and children in the villages round Qara-shahr, the town itself being effectively defended by the population. The male inhabitants of the villages had fled westward.

MA CHUNG-YING had thrice sent negotiators to the Torgut prince to win him and his people over to his (MA's) side; but the emissaries had been killed. An attack on Qara-shahr was therefore now awaited. One was astonished at our having succeeded in getting from Toqsun to Qara-shahr with whole skins, for it was just between these two places that the Torguts had ravaged the country. We were told that we should not find the crossing an easy matter. The CITROËN expedition had had much trouble in mooring the ferries to the landing-stage and getting the cars and lorries on board without the scows capsizing.

Here too, of course, the promised supply of petrol was not forthcoming. There was not a drop to be had in Qara-shahr. We were shown six 50-gallon drums in a yard, which were said to have been full when the CITROËN expedition presented them to the town authorities. The last remaining trickle had been given to PAI for his trip to Aqsu.

During the days that followed the mayor himself directed the work on the S-shaped channel across the river; and our fellows helped. It was said that each spring two human beings and three beasts of burden had to be sacrificed to the river before it deigned to break up. A couple of horses and some cows that fell through the ice were saved, but two donkeys were drowned. The three ferry-boats were fast frozen in the ice. Twenty Torguts, who lived in four yurts on the right bank, were busy cutting them out. They were acting as ferrymen, being given this privilege because they were considered more skilful than the Turkis. They received fixed wages for the work; in addition, they were entitled to take presents from their passengers. At the same time they were held as hostages for MA's emissaries to the Torgut prince, nothing having been heard of the fate of these men.

We were told that only about 70 Chinese families lived in Qara-shahr, and all of these had been compulsorily converted to Islam.

CHEN measured the river one kilometer below the ferry-place, carrying out the soundings and the measurements of the speed of the current through fifteen holes in the ice. The breadth of the river was 220.5 m, its maximum depth 2.7 m, and the volume of water 45.26 cub. m a second.