

thickened, and mysterious darkness enshrouded us on all sides. Contours ran together, and still the river sang its age-long hymn.

The road left the river and wound up the heights to the right. A difficult, steep bit of going with sharp-edged ledges took us to a new ridge, then we rolled down and away from the mountains.

## ARRIVAL IN KORLA

Reaching level ground once more, we proceeded among the ploughed fields and farms of the Korla oasis, crossing canals and bridges and a few patches of mire caused by flood water from the irrigation canals. The road here formed a willow avenue between houses, some intact, some demolished. The former had been inhabited by Turkis, the latter by Tungans. KHOJA NIAZ HAJI had looted them.

This rural road gradually became the main street of Korla. Here the houses were still standing, and we passed several boarded-up shops. Ancient trees were glimpsed here and there, their trunks effectively illuminated by the headlights. Crowds of men and boys stared at us.

Again and again the convoy was stopped by soldiers, who came rushing into the middle of the road with rifles at the ready. KUNG shouted to them: »We've got some of your officers here; speak to them!«

A colloquy ensued, and we were given free passage until we were stopped by the next sentries. The soldiers were impudent, and clearly itching for permission to fire. The atmosphere was here very different from that of Qara-shahr. One felt that in this little town a rough, undisciplined and savage soldiery held sway. We were prepared for the guns to go off at any moment.

At last our convoy stopped outside a gate. We inspected the place; it was pretty good, but there was no available space for the cars. BERGMAN, YEW and GEORG went to some other premises belonging to a wealthy Turki named ABDUL KERIM. Here there were a big yard and some rooms. We drove into the yard and parked the cars in a row. A small room with one larger mud *k'ang* and a smaller, wooden *k'ang* was just enough for YEW, CHEN, KUNG, BERGMAN and me. HUMMEL took up his abode in the shabby passage leading to the kitchen. GEORG, EFFE, TSERAT and JOMCHA moved into a bigger room on the other side of the yard. Our servants slept in the kitchen. The yard itself was closed to the street by a stout wooden entrance gate, which was made fast at night with a cross-bar. On the west side another gate led into a large open yard only partly surrounded by walls.

We were politely received by our host and a few bearded old Turkis, who asked us if we would like to drink some tea and eat some *ash*. The latter was already cooked, and could be eaten either there or at the place we had visited first. BERG-