

MAN, CHEN and I accordingly drove back there, and were ushered into a middle-sized room, where a candle was burning on a table.

To our surprise, we found here the four Tungan officers who had come with us from Turfan. The leader of the party, the same young CHANG SAN-YUN who so badly needed a thrashing, sat down at the head of the table. We realized that this encounter was due to a mistake; but now it was too late, so we put the best face upon things that we could and sat down at the table. There was no *ash*, but a pretty substantial Chinese dinner with many dishes. An invading army requisitions what it wants from the bazaar, and lives well without paying a farthing. It was in a feast of this kind that we were now unwilling participators. Commander CHANG was icily cold and stiff, helping himself first to the dishes and not looking in our direction; but CHEN forced him into the conversation.

As soon as the rice had been served, we rose and went to our own quarters, where the others had got the *ash* that had been meant for us all. We had gone to our escort's quarters by mistake, and had eaten their food.

#### PLAN FOR A RIVER JOURNEY

Two of our Chinese comrades paid a visit to the magistrate. He advised us to wait for a week till he was able to get information about the situation at Kucha, which he considered anything but safe.

We decided to follow his advice, which, as it happened, suited us particularly well, as I should now be able to make a short tour on the Konche-darya, or at any rate a few days' journey down the river to some point whence I could be brought back in the small car. There were no canoes or other boats at Korla. Accordingly, from our three large planks, eighteen empty petrol tins, boards and rope, GEORG was ordered to construct a raft on which with two men and provisions I could drift downstream, the farther the better. BERGMAN, with CHEN, EFFE, TSERAT and a couple of Chinese boys, was to go with two lorries via Buyantu-bulaq down to the new river, the Qum-darya, where we might meet if circumstances allowed. My trip to Kucha was to be postponed till later.