

Two men loosened the rope round YEW's wrists. He made a few motions with his arm, saying:

»They fastened the rope as tight as they could; my wrists hurt and my hands are quite numb.»

Just then GEORG and EFFE were brought in, and CHANG ordered them to be freed.

We were completely in CHANG's power. The room was full of soldiers with rifles and pistols ready for use. CHANG could dictate as he pleased.

»One lorry, one driver and enough petrol to get to Aqsu. The lorry is to be brought here at once. Meanwhile you (YEW and myself) are my prisoners.»

It would have been cruel to send one of the Mongols with this gang of robbers. EFFE was only twenty. GEORG was the only one who could possibly go. For that matter, he volunteered to go before I could give him any orders.

GEORG and EFFE left the room escorted by soldiers. The small car could stay where it was; they were going to walk. EFFE looked into the car to lock it. It was full of soldiers. I had asked him to see whether my attaché case was still there. If it was not he was to come back immediately and report. It contained my diaries and manuscripts, all our passports, maps and other things of importance. He did not come back, so the case was not stolen.

When GEORG and EFFE had passed through the door of our yard and were making for the drivers' room their escort shouted:

»Halt! If you move a step we fire!«

They evidently feared that HUMMEL, BERGMAN, CHEN and KUNG, and the drivers and servants meant to fire.

GEORG answered quietly that if the car was to be got ready it must first of all be unloaded, and then loaded with the petrol and spare parts that would be needed for the journey to Aqsu. He must therefore have complete freedom of movement. To this they agreed. Two armed soldiers shadowed every step he took.

BERGMAN had already gone to bed on the *k'ang*. A soldier entered, pistol in hand, shouting at him that he was to dress. HUMMEL was already in the yard. No-one was allowed to remain indoors. They did not understand what had happened and were in mortal fear for YEW and myself, who had been detained unarmed.

For an hour and a half YEW and I sat as CHANG's hostages at the table on which the candle stood. Pleased with his coup, and the way in which he had succeeded in coercing us, he gradually thawed. In the course of his talk he said:

»I haven't treated you like this for the fun of it. It was a matter of life and death for me to carry out MA's orders. I am sorry your resistance compelled me to use force. Soviet Russia has just occupied northern Sinkiang, Ili, Chuguchaq and Altai, and shot General CHANG P'EI-YUAN, the military governor of Ili, who was an ally of MA CHUNG-YING. Urumchi itself is occupied by the Russians. These events have made MA's position extremely serious. It was of vital importance for him to send his subordinates at Kucha and Aqsu instructions in accordance