

with the new military situation; and so there was no choice but to take one of your cars. The order that came to-day by telephone was categorical, and it was the best thing you could do to give way. Otherwise anything might have happened. I have nothing to lose and nothing to hope for; and I shall soon be going to certain death at Kucha or Aqsu. What I have told you is secret till I've been shot.»

For a long time he sat lost in thought. Then he said:

»My comrades from Turfan and a number of soldiers are leaving Korla to-night with your lorry. They are going straight to Aqsu. Your driver will be released there and can bring the car right back to you. You can wait here if you like or follow us to Aqsu if you prefer, but not for three days, or until the day after to-morrow at the earliest.»

I objected:

»You ought to give us a receipt for the loan of the lorry. And you must compensate us for the petrol and paraffin you use.»

CHANG refused to give us a receipt, and I added:

»I am astonished to find that although General MA has ordered that we should be hospitably received everywhere in the country he occupies, his subordinates use violence against his guests, and refuse to discharge such a simple duty as to write an acknowledgment of a loan of material belonging to the Central Government.»

He shrugged his shoulders, remarking that in war no laws or obligations were respected. He had no choice but to execute MA's orders.

At that moment the buzz of a motor was heard in the street. The motor-lorry stood at the gate. GEORG and BERGMAN came in, the latter to persuade himself that YEW and I were really alive.

We rose. GEORG got permission to return to our quarters and pack his own kit. He was then to report to CHANG immediately. CHANG followed us out to the small car. We got in and drove home. Even now we had two soldiers on the running-board.

In our quarters everyone was sitting up in a state of breathless anxiety, wondering why we were away so long. They could not conceal their joy at our return.

When we were being bound and partially undressed the soldiers had stolen our electric torches, one or two watches and cigarette-cases, and even a thermometer that YEW had in his pocket. They had also taken my splendid Zeiss glasses from the car. When I complained to CHANG that his soldiers had stolen these things I received the answer that they could not be found. However, the losses were of comparatively small importance. I was glad they had not taken the attaché case — and still gladder that we had escaped with our lives!

In the decisive moment on that terrible night my three companions preserved a magnificent coolness and an unruffled calm. We were unarmed, and our enemies outnumbered us by ten to one, and they were all armed to the teeth. YEW was