

and told him straight out that their violence against the head and three other members of our mission would become known all over the world. I said it would absolutely disgrace them and damage the prestige of General MA CHUNG-YING. They would get a bad reputation both in Asia and in Europe.

»CHANG said, 'We don't care a hang about our reputation; we had simply to obey orders.' 'Well,' I said, 'I'm telling you straight out what I think of you. Here I sit, alone and unarmed, among twelve soldiers armed with rifles and pistols. You can shoot me if you like, I don't care. But as long as I can speak I'll tell you the truth . . .'

»On the evening of the day before yesterday we got to Bugur. They were so done up after their awful drive that they had to stay the night there and have a good rest. CHANG had a long talk with the officer in command and other Tungan officers, and heard a lot of news about the war. Then we sat by the fire for some time talking.

»CHANG said to me with surprising frankness, 'I've heard that we can't get any farther than Kucha. The road to Aqsu is blocked. You can certainly go back to Korla from Kucha; we don't need you any longer.'

»'Will you give me that in writing?' I asked. I tore a leaf out of my diary, and he wrote on it: 'GEORG SÖDERBOM is authorized to drive his lorry to Korla; no troops on the road are to interfere with him.' CHANG stamped the paper. I took it as if it were of no consequence, but hid it away well . . .

»Yesterday morning I drove them to Kucha. We got there at twelve. We stopped outside the door of the main guard's yamen. Here I chucked them off; — as a matter of fact they were in a terrible hurry to jump down and rush in to hand over their orders, hear the war news, get some tea and have lunch.

»The minute the last thief had disappeared through the gate I turned the lorry as quickly as I could and raced back out of the town like an arrow the same way we had come. 15 km out of Kucha the engine broke down, and I couldn't move. I thought I was lost. I hadn't got permission to leave the town, and in all probability fresh despatches about the new military situation must be sent to General MA as quickly as possible. I couldn't do anything with the engine. I worked for dear life all day with my heart in my mouth; but I couldn't get the dashed thing to go. But by the time it grew dark I had repaired it at last. I was astonished that nobody had come along and interfered with me, from either east or west; and I thought of going on during the night. But I didn't dare turn on my headlights — they might have given me away. My start from Kucha had been a regular flight, and my late passengers must have been furious when they found I had cleared out. That they didn't send men on fast horses after me at once must have been the result of the experience they had had on the way out, for I had really stepped on the gas . . .

»I was so tired that I slept a bit, but uneasily, for I might expect to have them on my heels at any moment. My own belief is that they had had such terrible