

were flying lower and lower and approaching our quarters. They could not fail to detect the five motors in our yard. Presumably they thought the cars belonged to MA CHUNG-YING, and aimed at them in the hope of delaying his flight by their destruction.

Three bombs fell just east of us, a couple of hundred meters away. Finally, at five minutes past twelve the twenty-eighth bomb fell to the north of us, and after this no further explosions were heard. The airmen departed, disappearing in the direction of Qara-shahr, where they probably had a temporary base.

Hardly had all become quiet again before the doctor was standing at his operating table, taking a splinter of shell out of a man's arm. The soldiers crept out of their hiding-places and crowded round the cars; and the loading of the war material was now completed.

The moment of separation was drawing near. Our spirits were low; we felt that something disastrous was about to happen. We knew that MA CHUNG-YING was quite ruthless, caring little how many human lives he sacrificed if it served his ends. The war was lost; but there was still hope, and he was famous for attempting the impossible. We did not think our drivers' lives were worth much in his hands; and it would be impossible for GEORG to make a getaway this time, as the road along which he must retreat was filled with fleeing soldiers.

For that matter we did not see much of GEORG, EFFE, TSERAT and JOMCHA during the last hours in our yard. After the cars had been given a final look-over and provided with spare parts and tools they had to pack their kit in a hurry. They took with them only a minimum of bedding and clothes, a cup each, coffee, tea, flour, sugar and some tinned food, cigarettes and matches.

At a quarter to one our friend from Turfan, CHANG, the commander of the training corps, came up smiling and polite as ever, informing us that it was time to start now. But there cannot have been such a terrible hurry, for when we asked him if he would have some tea he acceded willingly enough. He stayed for a quarter of an hour, and told us that MA CHUNG-YING had left Korla an hour earlier on horseback, accompanied by a few mounted men. The motor convoy would soon overtake him, and he would then get into one of the lorries.

I repeated to GEORG what I had said before — that his and his three comrades' lives were infinitely more valuable than the cars, and that none of them was to do anything foolhardy to save our vehicles. »We can always get on without cars, but not without you!«

They jumped into their driver's cabins, the motors began to hum, and one after the other they disappeared through the gate.

I have never experienced a more sickening feeling of emptiness than on that afternoon of March 13th. The lorries in which we had driven the whole way from Kuei-hua, across half Asia, were gone; only the small car remained. The yard looked empty and desolate. Now we were really prisoners; we had no means of