

»How would it be, as you are in the southern part of the province already, if you first went to the new arm of the Tarim and Lop-nor, then to Kashgar and last to Urumchi? »

»That would suit us admirably, and I should be infinitely grateful to you if you could get that programme sanctioned.»

When I asked the general how far we were at liberty in Korla he replied:

»You must not go outside your gates. There are still Tungan desperadoes in the town, and bands of soldiers are still roaming about looting.»

Meantime, General BEKTEEV promised to take charge of our telegrams and proposed that I write one immediately. He would send it by courier to Urumchi in five days; from that place the telegraph was working irreproachably.

He was going to Kucha in a few days' time, and asked if he might borrow our small car for the remainder of his stay in Korla. I proposed that we should lend it to him for his trip to Kucha, and expressed the hope that on that journey he might have an opportunity of finding out what had happened to our drivers, perhaps even of helping them if they had got into trouble.

Last of all the general asked:

»Do you remember, doctor, when we last met? »

When I hesitated to reply, he continued:

»In the autumn of 1928, when you were planning a trip from Urumchi to Lop-nor. I called on you at your quarters and asked if I might come too.»

»Well, and what did I say? »

»You said the whole thing was undecided, and that CHIN SHU-JEN refused you permission. But now it is no longer CHIN who holds the keys of Lop-nor.»

BEKTEEV was well aware of my earlier activities in Eastern Turkistan, and I could see that he was willing to assist our plans. It was certainly a wonderful stroke of luck that we had fallen into his hands, of all people's, and at the moment when we most needed him! He had reached a fairly high rank in the army of the Emperor NICHOLAS, and emigrated after the revolution to Urumchi, where he had lived for thirteen years, earning his living by giving Russian lessons. On the outbreak of war in Sinkiang he had been appointed commander-in-chief of the northern army. He did not say a word about his displeasure, which PROSHKURAKOV had conveyed to us, at our having helped MA with the lorries. He was pleasant, friendly and jovial throughout.

In the afternoon the colonel came with two mechanics. They had a look at the small car and repaired some minor defects in the engine. When this was done, and he had received 100 silver dollars in exchange for Urumchi tael notes, he got into the car and vanished in a cloud of dust.

It soon appeared that our dealings with the White Russians were unprofitable. They ruined our wireless apparatus, we got the small car back feeling distinctly sorry for itself, and it was stupid of us to get rid of silver at a time when the value