

On the evening of the 14th a Torgut force, one or two regiments strong, arrived at Yangi-hissar. One of their patrols had come across TSERAT and asked who he was and what he was doing. He had shown them YEW's certificate and told them that he and three others, with our cars, had been forcibly carried off by MA CHUNG-YING. His own car had had a breakdown and he had therefore been left behind.

He remained at Yangi-hissar for four whole days and nights. On the 18th he heard from a Torgut that another motor lorry had arrived from the west, but had not been allowed to enter the village. He asked if he might go out and look at the newcomer. His request was granted. If the lorry, as they feared, was carrying Tungans, he was cautiously to entice them into the place with him and hand them over to the Torgut leader.

He went, and found that the newcomer was GEORG, who related that he had arrived at Kucha on the evening of the 14th and been well treated by MA's men. On the morning of the 17th he had got permission to leave Kucha and return east. Near Chompaq, EFFE's back axle snapped. As all the tools and spare parts were in TSERAT's lorry, GEORG had to go on to Yangi-hissar to fetch them.

GEORG had returned to EFFE and JOMCHA and all three had gone back to TSE-RAT. On the 21st GEORG and EFFE received orders from the Russians to drive to Bugur, while the two Mongols were to go to Korla, where they arrived at eleven the same day. It was expected that Kucha would be bombed on the 24th. The Russians had ten 4-cylinder Ford lorries, 1929 model, running between Korla and Bugur. They had wireless stations all along the road.

I could not understand MA CHUNG-YING's behaviour. Even if he spared the drivers he would, from a military point of view, have been acting in accordance with his rights if he had burned the cars. For if he left them undestroyed they would be taken by the Russians and his flight would be intercepted.

»He must have some kind of sense of honour,» HUMMEL opined. »His friend, the wounded cavalry general MA, gave YEW and me his word of honour that the cars should be returned within four days. This was done, and MA could not help it if the Russians laid hands on our lorries later.»

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A driver in the service of the Russian staff came and told us that our small car had gone to Qara-shahr the day before with Colonel NAREIKA, and had now come back to Korla. He asked for a few quarts of petrol to be able to bring it to us. It was like meeting an old friend again. But the left door had had a knock that had bent the hinge somewhat. The drivers did not point out the damage; the doctor discovered it. They were ashamed, and earnestly begged me not to complain to the general. If I did they were lost. There was a workshop in the garage in Urunchi where the door could easily be repaired. We found later that the engine also was damaged after the Russians' short but evidently reckless career.