

an escort of four Russian soldiers should accompany us to Lop-nor. He assured us that this measure was only for our own safety.

»The order says that you must start for Lop-nor as quickly as possible.»

I turned to GEORG. He said he would require three days to get ready.

»I beg you earnestly», said the colonel, »not to start later than April 1st. It is March 29th to-day. I must go back to Urumchi, but I cannot leave Korla until you have started for Lop-nor.»

»Colonel, we have had a melancholy experience of the bridges south of Korla. Thanks to them, it took us five hours to cover four kilometers. They must be repaired.»

»I'll give orders to the magistrates at once; and I will send my own soldiers to help with the bridge-building.»

»We need a tent for the escort as well as extra rations — rice, flour, tea, sugar, fifteen sheep and other things.»

»Give me a list of all the things you want. And make a note of the quantity of petrol and lubricating oil you want sent to Korla, and how much you would like to have when you get to Urumchi.»

»While we are away at Lop-nor we shall leave one car and all unnecessary baggage at Korla.»

»Excellent! The garrison staff will receive orders to be responsible for all of it.»

»We have 800 gallons of petrol and paraffin left, which is enough for the trip to Lop-nor, but not for the journey to Urumchi. Your people have borrowed 166 gallons from us.»

»It will all be returned. And what you need for the trip to Urumchi will be sent here. SHENG TUPAN is friendly to you and will do all he can to help your expedition.»

After conferring for a moment with GEORG I said to Colonel SALOMAKHIN:

»We must have 100 *puds* of petrol and six *puds* of lubricating oil sent to Korla, and some spare parts. We shall need 200 *puds* of petrol and ten *puds* of lubricating oil at Urumchi.»

We spent the rest of the day talking round the big table in the mess. Time after time GEORG and EFFE cried:

»Is it really true that we're back, or is it a dream? »

#### GEORG'S AND EFFE'S TALE

In the fearful *débâcle* that had been the end of MA CHUNG-YING's arrogant and ambitious invasion of Sinkiang, GEORG and EFFE had used the tactics of keeping up his spirits, making him forget his present reverses, and painting his future in the brightest colours, not caring how thick they laid it on. It must have been ab-