

hung upon one psychological moment, as on the night of March 5th at Korla. At that moment GEORG had been as convinced as on March 5th that he was going to be shot. That this did not happen must have been because MA saw clearly that the game was up, and that he would gain nothing by taking the lives of two Swedes and a Mongol.

Late on the afternoon of the 16th GEORG had a conversation with MA HO-SAN, and asked him to intercede with Big Horse on their behalf and help them to regain freedom. In the evening our friend HUANG WEN-CHING, the former commandant at Qara-shahr, came to GEORG's quarters and said:

»General MA CHUNG-YING wants to know if you are willing to drive him and his staff to Aqsu.»

GEORG, who had ascertained that a journey by way of Bai, where there was a strongly held front, and so on to Aqsu in all probability meant death to the drivers and the loss of the lorries, replied:

»No, we can't!»

»Will you drive the general to Aqsu in *one* car?»

»If I'm going to drive one car to Aqsu I must go on from there to Kashgar. And if I get there I shall surrender both myself and the car to the protection of the British Consul-General.»

»Why?»

»I'm a Swedish subject and a neutral, and the war is no business of mine. If I don't get General MA's permission to return to Dr HEDIN and the expedition I don't want to hamper their movements, but will surrender myself to the British Consulate-General and send off telegrams and letters telling the whole world that the expedition has been cut off from its car-park and is in grave danger.»

»No,» HUANG replied, »that must not happen. Nothing shall be done that may disturb the good relations between us. You give us the car we need, and the other two can go back. For that matter, you've got a fourth at Yangihissar.»

GEORG declared to me later that the general began to moderate his demands when he and those around considered what GEORG had been saying the whole time — that the expedition, and GEORG and EFFE in particular, would see that General MA gained sympathies and got a good reputation all over the world if he treated the drivers generously. After reflecting for some time, MA said to his officers:

»It's wiser to let them go than break off the good relations we have established with the expedition.»

Then he said to GEORG:

»You can leave Kucha to-morrow. I don't need your help any longer. Here's my portrait. I give it you in memory of our friendship.»